

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION RE: PRESCOTT PARK MASTER PLAN

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
DATE: MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2016

PORTSMOUTH, NH
TIME: 6:00PM

City Council Present: Mayor Blalock, Assistant Mayor Splaine, Councilors Perkins, Dwyer, Lown, Pearson, Spear, Cyr and Denton

Staff Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; Robert P. Sullivan, City Attorney and Kelli L. Barnaby, City Clerk

Others Present: Gene Bolinger and Cheri Ruane of Weston & Sampson's Design Studio

Mayor Blalock called the work session to order at 6:00 p.m. and said that this is a report regarding the Prescott Park Master Plan.

Councilor Dwyer said the Presentation Outline will be as follows:

1. Master Plan Background
2. A Plan for Prescott Park
 - A. Park First Approach
 - B. Key Considerations
 - C. The Master Plan
 - D. Capacity & Use Guidelines
3. Phasing & Budgeting
4. Question & Answer

She said they have worked together since last April and they will listen and take into account comments. She spoke to a public hearing that will be held on January 11th and that the location of the meeting will be announced. She indicated the Committee would come back for a formal acceptance of the report by the City Council at the 2nd meeting in January. Councilor Dwyer said that Cheri and Gene would be providing a review of the physical plan. She reported that funds can no longer support the park and we have many services under the control of the City and the operation of the Park will be under the City Manager and he will assume all the current rules. She stated that they would be looking towards a Council Committee to work with the City Manager and that there would be License Agreements to deal with issues of the park and other things through these agreements.

Mr. Bolinger spoke to his work with the Blue Ribbon Committee on this process. Gene addressed the phases and said there were 4 tasks and a time line when we last met with the City Council and he would be providing information on the conceptual design. He spoke to the reason for a Master Plan process. He stated this is a huge destination point and we need to make adjustments as the park is worn. He said the City will be looking at a multi-million dollar project to bring the park back to where it was. He spoke to the layout of the park currently and stated it consists of 10 acres of open space. He said public outreach has been the most involved process he has seen and reported there have been 23 meetings and 6 public engagement presentations.

Gene said much information was submitted to the Committee such as water, drainage, and electrical systems were reviewed. He spoke to the how people get to the park and how they spend their time. He also stated they looked at people not attending events and just enjoying the park. Gene said the Master Plan is flexible and would allow for meaningful improvements to the park and the document would need to be reviewed in 20 years.

Ms. Ruane spoke to the collective efforts of the process and the 12 design tenets with the 3 most important being:

- Recognition of city-owned nature of the park
- Integrate coastal resilience/adaptation strategies
- Ensure presence for theater, dance, music and visual arts (including public art)

Cheri addressed the key design considerations:

- Trial Gardens
- Formal Gardens
- Park Sculptures
- Car Parking
- Sea Walls
- Stage Facility

She said they looked at a movable stage and with the facility being a seasonal use they feel the movable stage is the right choice for the Master Plan. She spoke to the Master Plan including a boardwalk structure with new entrances at Marcy Street and State Street. She indicated the formal gardens will be between Marcy Street and the water and the current formal gardens will be replaced with the Hovey Fountain and there will be a Liberty Pole Entrance. She further spoke regarding the display gardens, waterfront and the creation of The Bowl that will be an area for sitting and viewing the performances.

Gene spoke to costs and phasing them into the Master Plan. He addressed the phasing diagram and that the total costs are \$14,050,000.00 with total potential renovation cost averages about \$30/sf. He stated that the design and permitting is 15% of construction cost being \$2,000,000.00.

Councilor Dwyer said there are no changes to the docks or the gundalow. She said almost all Prescott Park events range from 800 attendees to 1,200.

Councilor Spear asked about the stage. City Attorney Sullivan said the Attorney General's office disfavors a permanent structure to a movable stage.

Councilor Dwyer said it would potentially have a cover and lights. Stefany Shaheen said this is where you would have a license for the stage.

Mayor Blalock said we want to make conditions for formal arts better now. He further stated that the stage would need to be constructed in conformance with our building codes.

Assistant Mayor Splaine asked about noise, alcoholic beverages and parking. Ms. Ruane said there is a sound consultant and they will look at the site for the movable stage and concluded that the location is the most optimal to manage the stage best as well as create a high improvement in sound.

Assistant Mayor Splaine said the governance should have the involvement of the Trustees of the Trust Fund.

City Manager Bohenko said we have many Boards that are advisory. He said we receive feedback from the Boards and work directly with them and they make recommendations to him as City Manager. He said by 2027 you might have a Parks and Recreation Department. He said you want to have stewards for parks. He further stated it would be a self-supporting fund for all expenditures and revenues and they will be shown in the budget this year. City Manager Bohenko said we will look at how much the general fund is supporting the park.

Councilor Cyr said the Prescott Park is beautiful and would like to see it done tomorrow and said \$14,000,000.00 is low to him. He also stated he would like to know how the Committee feels about allowing food trucks at the park.

Councilor Denton said he would also like to know if food trucks would be allowed in the park. Councilor Dwyer stated many people want to keep trucks out of the park.

Councilor Spear said he would like to know about commercial transactions in the park and see a level playing field. City Manager said when we speak with the Attorney General we would have figures to show and what we want to do. Councilor Dwyer said we are limiting commercialization of the park.

Councilor Spear said he wants to see the community support the plan.

Stefany Shaheen said imagine having this completed by the 400th Anniversary.

At 7:00 p.m., Mayor Blalock closed the Work Session.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kelli L. Barnaby, MMC, CMC, CNHMC
City Clerk