

MINUTES
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE
ON THE
PRESCOTT PARK MASTER PLAN
7:30 A.M. – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 8, 2016
EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

1. Call to Order – Chair, Councilor Chris Dwyer

Chair Dwyer called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Members in Attendance: Councilor Chris Dwyer, Chair; Mayor Jack Blalock; Councilor Nancy Pearson; Phyllis Eldridge, Trustee of Trust Funds; Thomas Watson, Trustee of Trust Funds; Dana Levenson, Trustee of Trust Funds; and Stefany Shaheen (until 8:10 a.m.).

Staff Present: David Moore, Assistant City Manager

2. Consideration of Minutes from May 18, 2016

Mr. Watson moved to accept the minutes from May 18, 2016, seconded by Ms. Eldridge. Motion passed.

3. Master Plan Process Update: Initial Public Input Events

Chair Dwyer began by showing the postcard that has been printed with the upcoming events for the month of June. She stated it will be distributed at the “soft” events as well as e-mailed to various neighborhood groups etc. She stated she was also recently interviewed by the Herald and feels that we have done a good job getting the word out. She asked Mayor Blalock to bring it to attention at the upcoming Ward 3 Neighborhood Meeting.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated we have also reached out to the School Department, Portsmouth Housing Authority and Portsmouth Listens Groups. He stated we also encourage people to go to the website and leave comments. Next, Mr. Moore gave an update of the 2 outreach events held on June 4th and June 11th at the Plains ball field and Chowderfest stating there was a good response and there will be other outreach opportunities at the Hislop ball field and Market Square Day. He then distributed the compilation of web comments received to date. He continued giving a brief overview of the schedule for the June 12th Kickoff Event.

Mr. Levenson asked if there has been any feedback from Weston and Sampson on integrating 4-Tree Island into the discussion.

Mr. Moore stated that people will be verbally encouraged to visit areas of the park they normally haven't, including the island. He further stated that the committee members in attendance will have name tags identifying them as such and can participate as they see fit. Finally, he discussed the background work that has taken place by Weston and Sampson with data collection, interviewing of staff and reviewing the age and condition of the area, inspection of the seawalls with the donation of boat services from the Gundalow Company, etc. He stated there has been great cooperation thus far in the process.

Chair Dwyer stated that this committee will meet next on June 22nd at 6:30 p.m. for the same presentation as the kick-off event, but will not include a walk-through of the park as it is being held in the Council Chambers.

Finally, Mr. Moore discussed the Park Presence Day on June 25th which will be informal and will allow people who maybe have heard the presentation at either of the meetings to come and ask questions in person or others that have ideas and comments.

Ms. Eldridge asked if there will be more meetings and events after June.

Mr. Moore stated there will be 2 more public input evening meetings and 2 more park presence days and we will be drafting an outline with Weston and Sampson for the next Phase.

4. Presentation by Trustees of Trust Funds

Ms. Eldridge introduced Peter Torrey to explain the financial aspects of the Trustees of the Trust Funds.

Peter Torrey, representing the Trustees of the Trust Fund, gave a brief presentation on the various Trust Funds held and invested, reviewed the Capital Improvements to Prescott Park over the last five years, and explained the need for more city funding and involvement now and in the future.

Chair Dwyer asked why Prescott Park is on a calendar year when the City runs on a fiscal year ending June 30th. Mr. Torrey explained that for budgeting purposes, the calendar year makes more sense. Mr. Torrey further explained that there are 87 individual Trusts overseen by the Trustees with the Prescott being the largest. He stated that the Prescott Trust yields approximately \$180,000 a year to support the Park operations, but this funding level has been insufficient to support the Park operations. He continued by explaining the limitations of State law on investment and use of the various Funds and that every 5-7 years an RFP is sent out for investment advisors who work with the Trustees. He stated that the Trustees have a thorough and extensive investment policy which has been approved by the Attorney General as well as a spending policy which is based on a 5 year rolling average and is currently at 4.83%.

Next, he reviewed the FY17 budget document excerpt stating it was important to the City Manager to include it in the budget as it has been more difficult to stay within the \$200,000 and have been in partnership with City Hall as it is a city asset and has required additional funding and assistance, mostly in capital improvements.

Chair Dwyer asked if Prescott Park is totally folded in with the City's insurance. Mr. Torrey said yes.

Chair Dwyer asked about the other smaller trust funds related to the park and if those are drawn upon as well. Mr. Torrey stated yes, Michael Warhurst identified eligible costs for each fund for expenses related to flowers or benches, etc.

Mr. Torrey then reviewed the handout regarding Major Capital Improvements to Prescott Park from 2011-2016 and explained that at one time the Prescott Fund was able to take care of everything related to Prescott Park but how it is no longer the case and won't be going forward.

Chair Dwyer asked about the revenue sources.

Mr. Torrey explained the operating budget is approximately \$204,000 and there is approximately \$180,000 coming in annually from the Endowment. Other revenues include approximately \$5,000

for non-resident weddings and revenues associated with payments from the Prescott Park Arts Festival and Gundalow Company for \$20,000 total. He discussed the docks, which fall under the City's fee schedule and are separate from the Park.

Chair Dwyer asked if they were able to have the budget that they needed and wanted what it would be, excluding capital. A general discussion took place, which discussed funding for additional part-time staff and how upgrades to the park would reduce some of the time consuming regular repairs of systems like irrigation.

Ms. Eldridge stated that Michael Warhurst works with very little and does a lot, but the infrastructure is aging, the trees are aging, etc.

Mr. Torrey stated that he feels that the city has done a lot of things on a low-key basis which have helped including putting their vehicles into the rolling stock.

Chair Dwyer announced the next meeting of the Blue Ribbon Committee will be June 29, 2016 at 7:30 a.m. in the Council Chambers.

5. Public Comment

Beth Margeson – asked how the current fees charged to the Prescott Parks Arts Festival and Gundalow Company were decided.

Mr. Watson stated that since he has been a Trustee over the last 3 ½ years, it has been negotiated, but there is not a formula based on users revenues or based on impacts to the Park but they are currently holding where they are at until this process is completed.

Mr. Levenson stated there was a study done at the beginning of negotiations as a foundation for the negotiations about an annual payment to the Trustees.

Chair Dwyer explained this is an issue with other non-profit organizations who lease city property as there are variables to consider including consideration for the value improvements made to the property by the non-profit, etc.

Mr. Levenson stated that single-use properties are easier to assess and evaluate and are different than a Park. He stated that during negotiations it has been suggested that park improvements have been made and should be considered, but they don't necessary fall within the Trustees priorities.

Mr. Moore further explained that every building and space is different with different needs and restrictions and also have a direct effect on what the City can charge, so there is no uniform approach.

Ms. Margeson the asked who occupies the Sheafe and Shaw Warehouse buildings.

Ms. Eldridge explained that Michael Warhurst has equipment in the Shaw Building and the Trustees office is there as well. She stated that the Prescott Parks Arts Festival occupies the 2nd and 3rd floors of the Shaw Building and in the summer months, the NH Arts Assoc. occupies the Sheafe building 1st floor, as it is not heated.

Mr. Levenson stated that Mr. Torrey now has an office at City Hall and Mr. Warhurst has an office on the second floor of the PPAF.

Councilor Dwyer stated there has not been a city-wide space study done, but no set policy is in place yet.

Ms. Margeson stated they should have the same arrangement with them as Player's Ring and feels that capital needs are huge and someone needs to pay for them. She stated that it is good to use older buildings and not let them just sit and fall apart.

Mayor Blalock stated we have multiple tenants in city-owned property and everyone has an interest in keeping the buildings in shape so we need to come up with a model and specific plan how much each party is responsible for.

Mr. Levenson stated that in 2011 and 2014 major improvements were made to those buildings and the city has major interest in them.

Ms. Margeson asked if the Park is going to be added to the National Historic Registry. Mr. Moore stated it is within the district boundary so if it is nominated, it could be.

Rick Becksted – related the various activities and events he has attended in the Park over the years and his family involvement in volunteering and maintaining the Park. He then asked when the current occupants of the Park will be making their own presentations to the public and what they are looking to make as an investment.

Chair Dwyer stated the consultants have already met informally with the groups as reported at a recent meeting and will come back with a formal report.

Mr. Moore clarified that the next Phase hasn't taken shape yet and will be discussed on June 29th.

Chair Dwyer stated that the Trustees have also been negotiating with these groups so that would put them in an awkward position to discuss in public.

Mr. Becksted stated that we have paid the consultants a lot of money and he is looking for what they are going to do for us for that money and wants an honest opinion.

Chair Dwyer stated they will help us identify the size, parameters and conditions and give various options as to what types of uses.

Mayor Blalock stated that Sampson and Weston will guide us through the process of how to preserve what we have, keep it healthy and how it can be governed in the future.

6. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.