

MINUTES
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE
ON THE
PRESCOTT PARK MASTER PLAN
7:30 A.M. – TUESDAY, October 11, 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; Councilor Nancy Pearson; Phyllis Eldridge, Trustee of Trust Funds; Thomas Watson, Trustee of Trust Funds; Dana Levenson, Trustee of Trust Funds; Stefany Shaheen, Citizen Representative

Member Absent: Mayor Jack Blalock;

Staff Present: David Moore, Assistant City Manager

2. Consideration of Minutes from September 7, 2016 and September 20, 2016

Mr. Watson moved to accept the Minutes of September 7, 2016 meeting, seconded by Ms. Eldridge. Motion passed.

Mr. Watson moved to accept the minutes of the September 20, 2016 meeting, seconded by Councilor Pearson. Motion passed.

Chair Dwyer updated the Committee on the recently held Council Retreat stating that Ms. Ruane presented an overview of the plans and concept to the City Council and answered their questions. She continued that later in the day, the Council discussed the Jones Avenue property and the City Manager was asked to come back with a plan for a Parks Department which would be a new concept for the City of Portsmouth to have oversight of all the City parks. She further stated that we have the Peirce Island Committee for that area and public works does the maintenance for the park, but we are looking to consolidate services etc. She stated that the various committees that support the parks and city property will be a part of the governance discussion. She continued that David Moore and City Attorney Sullivan have been in touch with the Attorney General Charitable Trust unit to update them on this process and they were interested in the Master Plan process we are undertaking. She concluded that this committee is on target to meet the December timeline for report to City Council.

3. Presentation of Concept Plans in preparation for Upcoming Feedback Sessions

Ms. Ruane and Mr. Bolinger reviewed concept plans that were the result of feedback received thus far but are looking for more definitive ideas from the upcoming public input sessions in order to arrive at the preferred plan.

Mr. Bolinger stated that if the entire 10 acres of the park we renovated it would cost millions of dollars so we need to decide how any upgrades will be phased-in and implemented as well as how to blend old with the new. He stated they have tried to be bold and innovative in the concepts but can dial them back to arrive at a preferred plan which they want to be inviting and have a flow and integration and not be compartmentalized.

Ms. Ruane then reviewed the 2 concepts with Concept 1 having a temporary stage location which

is removed after the season with back of stage noise mitigation with a permanent structure. Also the trial gardens would move closer to the waterfront and the tree planting strategy would combine old and new and help define the spaces. The second version would relocate the formal garden to the passive side of the park and would include playable sculptures.

Mr. Bolinger stated that Concept 1 is mostly green space and much less compartmentalized with the pathways going to the out perimeter.

Discussion ensued regarding the concepts pros and cons.

Councilor Dwyer asked if there were any changes the committee would like to make before the concepts are presented to the public.

Mr. Levenson feels that the discussion of the formal gardens relocation needs to be held as well as deciding where the Hovey Fountain will be relocated. He also feels that there should not be any new structures or additions to the buildings until a very serious review of the space in the Shaw Building is conducted.

Councilor Dwyer stated the feedback would still be helpful.

Ms. Shaheen stated that it should be reinforced that it would allow for the elimination of the trailers. She then discussed her concerns with the older trees overshadowing the formal garden if it were relocated.

Mr. Watson asked what the crowd capacity limit in both concepts would be.

Ms. Ruane stated it is generally the same as the current capacity of 1000-1200 and feels that number needs to be set as the maximum.

Mr. Moore stated that the input has been very helpful and asked that the ideas be spelled out in words and images for the presentations.

Mr. Watson asked that there be 3 boards; current park layout and both concepts 1 and 2.

Councilor Dwyer stated that the committee work between now and December will include legal framework; framework for park use and capacity; recommendations for management/governance structure; implementation; operating agreements with users of park; costs, role of Trustees, City Manager, Public Works Dept., etc.

Ms. Shaheen asked how comments will be captured during the walkthroughs and also is concerned that the meetings on the weekend will not be televised. Mr. Moore stated there will be discussions held and people can also still give their feedback via the website.

Chair Dwyer thanked everyone and stated she had to leave to attend another meeting. She appointed Councilor Pearson acting chair in her absence.

Councilor Pearson opened the public comment:

4. Public Comments:

Dan Corcoran – stated he is concerned with the discussion of moving the stage closer to Marcy Street stating it will only exacerbate the noise problem that already exists. He continued that there is currently very little control of the sound during the festival and if we are going to invest money into this we don't want to have the same problems when we are done. Regarding the waterfront and removing barriers, he cautioned that an incident in Baltimore Maryland occurred with a baby stroller rolling over the side.

Beth Margeson – asked if the Marcy Street entrance is being removed in both concepts. Ms. Ruane explained that there will no longer be any bollards there. Ms. Margeson asked which concept will require less maintenance in the out years. Ms. Ruane stated maintenance would be the same but they are looking to consolidate services and bring efficiencies as well as improve the irrigation system. Ms. Margeson asked if the boardwalks would withstand a hurricane. Ms. Ruane stated some parts may be damaged but they would also serve as a barrier to protect the park itself. Ms. Margeson asked if there are any codes requiring a certain amount of parking. Mr. Moore stated no. Ms. Margeson distributed a copy of the deed signed by Josie Prescott which specifies that any improvements to the park need to improve the park and are not for the users of the park and that all structures were to be removed from the park and not added. She stated she agrees that the stage should be temporary but feels this should be vetted with the Attorney General's office who expressed concern that changes are being made to accommodate one user.

Cathy Baker – stated she feels that they have done a great job documenting the physical aspects of the park but is concerned that these sessions are marking the end of the public input regarding the plans. She stated she is also concerned that the mission of the park is not consistent with the original terms of the will. She is also concerned that conversations regarding programming and operations have been taking place behind closed doors and feels the discussion on who will make the rules and then enforce them needs to be held. She discussed feels the design of the oval lawn is specific to one user and not multiple users. Finally, she read a letter regarding the Prescott Parks Arts Festival (submitted for the record).

Paul Mandle – stated he doesn't know which option he prefers but does feel that the Prescott Parks Arts Festival could hold some of its larger events at different locations, such as the High School. He stated he also likes the idea of creating a Performing Arts venue on Peirce Island and none of the restrictions of the Park would apply there and they could even sell alcohol with the permission of the City and maybe utilize food trucks as well.

Arthur Clough – stated that no one is opposed to having the Prescott Parks Arts Festival but feels that there has been no planning and requirements expected of them which is a fatal flaw in the process. He continued that the PPAF has asked to have the gates closed to the park during events for safety reasons and feels that the issue of alcohol use has not been addressed appropriately. He feels that this is an issue of fairness and that the PPAF isn't being required to comply with noise requirements and is not being charged adequately for the use of the park.

Sandra Parr – stated she was disappointed to be labeled as "anti-festival people" recently and feels that there have been closed door meetings held by the "working group" formed by former Mayor Lister with the outcome of that being the approval to begin the process of building a stage in Prescott Park without public input. She stated she feels these issues should have been resolved before Sampson Design was asked to design plans.

5. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.