

MINUTES
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE
ON THE
PRESCOTT PARK MASTER PLAN
7:30 A.M. – WEDNESDAY, October 19, 2016
EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

1. Call to Order – Chair, Councilor Chris Dwyer

Chair Dwyer called the meeting to order at 7:35 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; Stefany Shaheen, Citizen Representative

Staff Present: David Moore, Assistant City Manager

2. Consideration of Minutes – (no minutes were available for approval)
3. Debrief on Concept Plans Presentations and Public Forums (October 13th and 15th)

Chair Dwyer updated the Committee on the recent public forums held October 13th and 15th stating it was a terrific experience with input sessions, walks and individual conversations held. She stated there were also written comments submitted which have been reviewed by Mr. Bolinger and Ms. Ruane.

She continued that we are at a juncture point and at this point we need to identify key takeaways of what we would like to see included, things we have questions about still, the physical plan and governance.

Mr. Bolinger then presented the 2 sub plans; Concepts A1 and A2 and B1 and B2 (see website for full details).

Chair Dwyer stated that some concerns with a Boardwalk include safety issues, sightline obstacles and cost. Mr. Bolinger stated that permitting of the boardwalk needs to be addressed as well but having a boardwalk helps with the resiliency of the park and becomes a defining element of the park and the City.

Mr. Moore stated that there is a lot of merit in continuing looking into the Boardwalk but there is more work to be done. He stated that this would probably be done in phases with some stand-alone portions that could be continued in the future.

Chair Dwyer stated that safety by the water edge was a frequently expressed concern during the walk and feels that there should be access to the water where it makes sense but having a harder edge near areas where the current is stronger.

Discussion ensued regarding various schematics for the waters' edge.

Next, discussion was held regarding the relocation of the formal garden with agreement that it would need to be moved at least temporarily to fix the drainage issues in the current site. Some concerns of relocating the included shade trees, lighting, traffic flow, nostalgia for the current location, etc.

Mayor Blalock stated the charge of the committee is not to change the park but to enhance it and feels that the passion for keeping the formal garden in the current location is worth considering.

Mr. Watson stated that the Liberty Pole is also very important to people and feels we need to enhance that experience with some seating and highlighting its proximity to Strawberry Banke.

Next, discussion ensued regarding the use/re-use potential of the Shaw and Sheafe Buildings, including “back of house” for the stage productions, as well as have a permanent versus temporary stage.

4. Public Comments:

Beth Margeson – stated she supports the concept of a removable stage. She continued that the area around the Liberty Pole is very important part of the park as well and that Strawberry Banke will be doing some landscaping so this is a great opportunity to marry these 2 properties. She stated that she also feels the park is underutilized in the wintertime. Finally, she stated the placement of the whale by the water is important for the kids.

Tim Stone, Kittery, ME – property owner in Portsmouth, stated he is a boat owner and member of the Prescott Park Arts Festival. He stated that waterfront access is very limited in the City of Portsmouth, and feels that dock space needs to be preserved. He stated he is concerned with the Boardwalk concept. He stated that none of the schemes presented show a place for loading and unloading of boats. He stated he also would want to maintain the “soft” areas that people can walk into the water. Next, regarding the formal garden, he has always thought of it as a quiet, reflective area and feels that relocating it will defeat this purpose. Finally, regarding the stage, he hears many of the concerts and plays from his area and feels that the decibel level needs to be limited as well as the capacity level can be controlled by not bringing in the big name artists to the Park but to another area in the City.

Zelita Morgan began by thanking the committee for their work. Next, she discussed VIP seating and fundraising during PPAF events and different ways that this may be handled. She stated that regarding the big shows and capacity issues she agrees that this could be relocated to another area. She concluded by stating she agrees with the previous comments regarding the peace and serenity of the formal garden and would like to see that preserved.

Chair Dwyer asked the Trustees of the Trust Fund to address the issue of the docks.

Ms. Eldridge stated that they will not be relocated or changed.

Mr. Moore stated the dock design will be evaluated as it progresses and is a very large undertaking.

Chair Dwyer stated there is an area near the Sheafe that people can access the water for launching kayaks, etc.

Zelita Morgan continued that she is concerned with sea level rise projections and if this is being considered so that the investment is protected.

Chair Dwyer stated that this was discussed early on in the process but it is important to keep this

in the forefront as we continue.

Judy Nerbonne – stated she enjoyed walking on Saturday and envisioning the possibilities in the park. She stated she agrees with Mr. Stone and the importance of having a loading and unloading area for boats. Next, she discussed the safety issues in the park and what protection will be available in the park i.e. a superintendent, etc. She also stated that children enjoy the whimsical garden area and would like that to be preserved somewhere as well. Finally, she stated that many weddings are held in the Park and to keep that in mind.

Mr. Watson stated that he has concerns with bringing motor vehicles into the middle of the park for unloading/loading and suggested a drop-off spot and use of carts.

Chair Dwyer stated that regarding have someone there all the time, it may be something that can be discussed as part of the governance issue.

5. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.