

MINUTES
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE
ON THE
PRESCOTT PARK MASTER PLAN
7:30 A.M. – MONDAY, MARCH 14, 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 (via teleconference) and Stefany Shaheen.

Staff Present: David Allen, Deputy City Manager; David Moore, Assistant City Manager

2. Minutes from February 18, 2016

Mayor Blalock moved to accept the minutes from February 18, 2016, seconded by Trustee Eldridge.

Motion passed.

3. Staff Update on Firm Selection and Review of Draft Work Plan

Chair Dwyer provided an overview of the status of the procurement process for the Master Planning consulting firm. At its previous meeting, the Committee recommended two firms be interviewed. She indicated that the firms were interviewed and one firm was the unanimous first-choice of the City staff and Committee representatives who participated in the process. She recommended the Committee endorse this recommendation and recommend the City Manager negotiate a contract with the first choice firms. She continued that she, Trustee Watson and Mayor Blalock conducted the interviews and all felt strongly that Firm C should be the recommendation.

Mayor Blalock stated that to him, it was clear in the written document that Firm C was the top candidate and felt that their presentation was the most inclusive of the vision and scope of work. He stated their methodology of public input was the strongest.

Mr. Watson stated he agrees and feels that they have the ability to seek community input with multiple modes. He continued that he was impressed with how they listened during the interview and being able adjust as they went along in accordance with our needs.

Chair Dwyer stated that Firm C is all inclusive without a lot of subcontracting. She continued that there is a team of 2 that has a great deal of parks experience and they have taken the opportunity to visit the park several times. She stated they have envisioned how to reconfigure

the park to get closer to the water, how to deal with big events after the fact, are experienced with climate change, etc.

Mayor Blalock stated they also were the lowest cost and included more for that cost.

Councilor Pearson moved to recommend the City Manager negotiate with Firm C, seconded by Mayor Blalock. Motion passed unanimously.

Assistant City Manager Moore reviewed the Work Plan Phase 1 – 3

Trustee Eldridge referred to Phase I, Site Analysis, stating that it is good that they have been and will be assessing the park uses, users, etc. but stated that some existing conditions will be altered after June (due to construction of the WWTF upgrades) and would like to know if they will be back at that time.

Ms. Shaheen agrees and asked if they will also be meeting with the Prescott Park Arts Festival and Gundalow Company. Chair Dwyer stated that is part of Phase I.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated that they will also be meeting with the Park Superintendent and Public Works staff to get their perspective and experience of the various activities in the park and they intend to be comprehensive in their recommendations.

Ms. Shaheen stated that PPAF is going through their own review process and feels these should be coordinated. Chair Dwyer agrees but feels that other boards and commissions need to be involved as well before going out to the other groups.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated that this first part has moved very quickly and he is looking forward to sitting down with the consultant and making sure they understand what our needs are going forward.

Discussion ensued regarding the consultants attention to Four-tree Island and making it more welcoming.

Ms. Shaheen referred to Phase 2, Public Input and Participation asking how the information gathered from this process will be shared. Assistant City Manager Moore stated it would be helpful to hear from the Committee on their ideas. He explained that as part of the Sagamore Creek Blue Ribbon Committee, information was posted on the webpage of the city website as it became available.

Councilor Pearson stated she feels strongly about communication and feels that we need a plan and a singular spokesperson so that people know where to get information in one place. Chair Dwyer agrees that will be one of the issues the Committee works on.

Mayor Blalock stated that this may help set a template for other projects going forward.

Ms. Shaheen stated she doesn't want people to be surprised by something they find in a report and they should know what is going on all along the way.

Mayor Blalock explained that the various work projects involved will be married into the Capital Improvements Plan.

Chair Dwyer stated she wanted to clarify something that had been mentioned at a previous meeting that this firm had done work for the city, which they have done engineering work for the City but nothing to do with Prescott Park. She continued that we will want the firm to know how involved this committee will want to be.

4. Committee Discussion Re: Committee's Needs for Background Information

Chair Dwyer indicated that the City's process for developing a Master Plan was discussed at a meeting with the Attorney General's office; and the Office was very supportive of the idea of having a Master Plan. She stated she would like to get information from the City Attorney and Attorney General regarding the parameters of the legal framework of the Park.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated that he has spoken with the City Attorney regarding the provisions of the Trust and he will provide a summary memo as guidance as part of a future meeting.

Trustee Watson stated there are different opinions out there and he would like a sense of how this will work within the Trust and Will provisions.

Mayor Blalock stated that this process will give a clear direction of the gray areas; what can/can't and should/shouldn't be done with the park. Trustee Eldridge stated this has been their goal for a while.

Chair Dwyer stated it has been less clear as well as to who has been paying for what and what are capital expenses versus operational expenses, and that park expenses currently exceed what the annual yield from the Josie F. Prescott Trust Fund can support. She stated in order to implement this plan, money will come from other funds.

Ms. Shaheen stated there are several different issues including legality of uses, current uses, etc. and wonders if there are other communities that have similar situations or circumstances. She stated the Park has changed a lot over the years with the Trustees having been primarily in charge and now the City is more involved.

Chair Dwyer stated we have asked for models regarding legal issues, cost and staffing.

Trustee Watson stated there is a 1964 Master Plan that wasn't followed but feels this should be looked at.

Mayor Blalock stated he agrees with all of these stating that moving forward we need to determine who is going to be responsible for what.

Trustee Eldridge stated that the Park staff doesn't do large Capital projects, but primarily focuses on the day to day maintenance.

Chair Dwyer stated she would also like to know if there have been any requests for uses that have been turned down.

After discussion regarding the scheduling of upcoming meetings on a bi-monthly basis, Trustee Watson asked that the legal frame-work be discussed sooner than later.

5. Public Comment

Beth Margeson – She discussed 4-tree Island stating that she had not known that it was even a part of the Prescott Park until doing deed research and feels it could and should be better integrated with the Park with perhaps a pedestrian bridge.

Cathy Baker – requested the Committee review the Parking and Traffic Safety Committee minutes of March 3, 2016 as they discuss removing of sidewalks and other accommodations for truck traffic in relation to the upcoming Peirce Island WWTF upgrades.

Rick Becksted – thanked the committee for televising the meetings. He then asked that when the consultants do their surveys, that they include a true representation of Portsmouth residents and not just tourists. He stated that he feels that outlying residents don't use the park because there are too many people. He also asked that there be a "Residents Day" at the park and that the use of tables and chairs be discontinued and go back to blankets. Finally, he asked if this firm had any experience with the sound issue as this is an important piece of the puzzle.

Chair Dwyer stated they have a staff of 450 people in New England so they have many different types of engineering experience.

Joe Galli – stated he would like to see the Committee get an opinion from the Attorney General sooner than later and likes the idea that there be a template of how future projects are done.

6. Adjournment

Mayor Blalock moved to adjourn at 8:30 a.m., seconded by Trustee Watson and passed unanimously.