

MINUTES  
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE PRESCOTT PARK POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
7:30 A.M. – Wednesday, July 19, 2017  
Conference Room A, Portsmouth City Hall

Members in attendance: Tom Watson, Chair; Chris Dwyer, City Councilor; Genevieve Aichele, Resident; Michael Barker, Resident; Alan Gordon, Resident; Robin Lurie-Meyerkopf, Art-Speak Representative

Staff Present: David Moore, Assistant City Manager

1. Call to Order

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

Chair Watson explained that at the last meeting on July 12<sup>th</sup>, some of the members of the Prescott Park Art Festival met with the Committee to review the scheduling parameters outline. He stated that this meeting will be for public comment on the same issue.

Councilor Dwyer asked about the dates of upcoming meetings.

Chair Watson explained that there are several more topics to review and would like to have the committee recommendation ready by September for the City Manager. He suggested 2-3 meetings a month for the next 2 months which will be scheduled by Assistant City Manager Moore based on committee availability.

Next, Ms. Lurie-Meyerkopf asked if the comments received via the website could be read during the meeting and volunteered to do so. Discussion ensued regarding the availability of the compilation of comments on the website in a redacted format for anyone wishing to view them.

2. Public Comment Period -Scheduling Parameters

Chair Waston opened the public comment session and asked that comments be kept to 3 minutes as there are many people wishing to speak:

Nancy Pearson- stated she served on the Prescott Park Master Plan Blue Ribbon Committee and stated that with the guidance of Weston and Sampson, they approached the Master Plan with a Park First mentality so she questions the wisdom of changing the variables of the Arts Festival when the Master Plan addresses many physical aspects. Secondly, she discussed her role as a member of Art-Speak stating that the Arts and Culture community and non-profit community are an ecosystem and that the Prescott Park Arts Festival brings in the biggest audiences in the city and has a significant impact.

Mike Labrie – stated he is the owner of the River House Restaurant and has sponsored the Prescott Park Arts Festival for 10 years and has also donated over \$1 million to non-profits over the years and restaurants are being asked more and more to donate to non-profits. He stated that they do donate to the arts but many other requests come in as well. He stated that they benefit from the current schedule of the Prescott Park Arts Festival and do not want to see it changed.

Mark Brighton – stated that in terms of the Park, nothing else matters except for the wishes of the Prescott Sister and it is clear in their trust what they wanted and that is zero tolerance of alcohol. He stated this relates to scheduling because the prime motivator in alcohol at the park is the concerts and with amount of people that attend, there will be drinking. He stated that the PPAF staff has been trying to curb it, but they can't stop all of it.

Kathleen Cavalaro – stated she has sent a letter to Terry Knowles, Assistant Director of the Attorney General's

Charitable Trust Division, with 600 signatures to please stop listening to manufactured problems of people who complain often and loudly. She continued that the PPPAC can set the Arts Festival up for success or failure and feels that the Prescott sisters would be happy that the park is filled with people enjoying the park in a festival atmosphere instead of how it was before, with people always drinking in the park.

Beth Margeson – See email comments

Brian Kelly – stated that part of the Prescott Park Master Plan is to ensure the Prescott Park Arts Festival is able to continue its activities. He stated that reducing the programming will have a negative impact on festival and it would not be sustainable. He stated that there is no electoral mandate to curb the PPAF activities as all of the candidates who wanted reduction in programming lost the election. He asked that the committee not make hasty decisions for the 2018 season.

Jane Nelson – stated that the Arts will be affected by the changing economy and other things not related to this and feels the agreements should focus on the Park as a Park and not on the Arts Festival activities. She stated that the Arts Festival is focusing on pop culture which can be found in other communities already, but could also be put on by the PPAF in other areas of the city that would also like the economic benefits. She stated that Arts take on various forms and will not disappear if the PPAF doesn't want to adjust their schedule. She stated that the costs of these events are derivative and prohibitive to an outdoor riverside park and PPAF has a monopoly there currently.

Russ Grazier – stated he is strongly opposed to adopting the proposed scheduling changes as he remembers when the festival was very small and the board members took out personal loans. He stated the PPAF now has the best leadership in the State and needs to be allowed to continue instead of being micro-managed with an already limited season. He asked how these changes would help.

Councilor Dwyer clarified that there is no proposal at this time.

Chair Watson stated there is an outline for discussion purposed.

Mr. Grazier continued that alcohol is no more of an issue here than at any other State park and they are working to curb the problem and he has never seen anyone drinking there. He stated that regarding local talent, this weekend was a jazz festival with local talent. He concluded that the leaders should be allowed to lead and he stated that there should be no shame in the fact that insurance is offered to the PPAF staff.

Chair Watson reviewed the process of the PPPAC to date to clarify again that they are still reviewing the information and receiving public input and no decisions have been made at this point.

Dan Corcoran – stated that Weston and Sampson did a study that cost \$100,000 of taxpayer money and one of the recommendations is to reduce wear and tear on the park. He continued that it is a city park and the City Manager runs it, not the PPAF. He stated PPAF is a business and the City is the landlord and the city needs to be the caretaker of the park. He stated that people should be able to enjoy the quiet of the park and if the two cannot coexist then fine, but the city is allowed to set limits and decide what is best for the park.

Ben Anderson – stated he would like to give his personal insight of having been in the Park over the last 10 years. He stated the reality is that it is a downtown park and without the events being held there, there would be greater problems that brown spots on the lawn as he has personally witnessed various things and has had to call the policy many times. He stated that the PPAF staff do a final sweep of the park after every event and it is cleaned up and locked up, but things are occurring even then before they leave.

David Krempels – distributed a handout of a chart created by Judy Nerbonne and shown at a previous meeting stating it is a compelling piece of information showing the amount of events, including rehearsals, etc. He continued that the number of events has skyrocketed over the last 7 years and that there are multiple events held on weekend days that begin at 10 in the morning and ending at 11:00 p.m. He stated he doesn't agree with Mr. Grazier that the season is limited. He continued that the neighbors are here because they have been upset for years and are trying to get a solution. He stated that Mr. Anderson should have tried reach out to the neighbors. Next, he stated that he doesn't feel that adding an extra dark night is a great threat to the festival and related that he enjoyed eating dinner on his porch on a Tuesday night in peace and quiet. He then discussed the noise level stating that the newspaper reported that the Hampton Beach noise limit is 75 decibels, but here, even with a noise ordinance it is set at 95 decibels. (*Assistant City Manager Moore clarified it is 90 decibels*). Mr. Krempels concluded stating that Ben Anderson has all of the power to turn the knob on the amplifier and asked the committee to give the neighborhood their nights back.

John Ross – stated he is a local performer and feels that people who live in the city want the hustle and bustle that comes with it. He continued that regarding wear and tear on the grass, it is resilient and will grow back. He stated that he attends many show at the park and has never seen alcohol and is against imposing any further restrictions against the Prescott Park Arts Festival.

Thyra Galli – stated she is a member of PPAF as well as a neighbor. She stated that everyone should be thinking about "Park First" as this is not a neighborhood first, business first or PPAF first issue. She continues that there is a delicate balance and feels that when the operating agreements are done they should be standardized for all of the groups with dates certain and if they do not comply, then there is no more operating agreement.

Mary Krempels – thanked David Moore, City Manager Bohenko, and Chair Watson for all of their work on this issue and feels that there is evidence of smart decisions being made already. She also thanked Councilor Dwyer, who was the Chair of the Prescott Park Master Plan Committee which brought forward the Park First concept. She concluded that she would like to be able to walk through the park unimpeded and enjoy the waterfront and the flowers, but cannot do so during the events.

Seeing no one else wishing to speak, Chair Watson closed the Public Comment Session.

### 3. Committee Discussion on Scheduling Parameters

Chair Watson thanked everyone for their comments. He then stated that the City Manager has still not received the previously requested financials from the PPAF at this point.

Councilor Dwyer stated that this committee will be looking to make long-term agreements with the groups, whether it will be 5, 10 or otherwise years so that they can plan ahead, but it will be difficult while transitioning. Secondly, she stated that the committee cannot make decisions about one specific topic until they are done hearing about all of the topics as they are all tied together. Finally, she stated that the city is the landlord of the park, but the city is also responsible for outdoor programming and if there was no PPAF in the Park, the city would be taking on that responsibility and would decide how to program it. Finally, she stated that we have to be careful when quoting numbers regarding the PPAF, etc. as there are variables that come into play.

Mr. Gordon stated he feels they are being held responsible for viability of the Arts versus silent meals on a porch and he doesn't want that responsibility. He discussed that there is a good variety of programming offered with 5-6 concerts that are the most sound-intensive and having the most significant impact. He stated that the issue of adding another dark night has more of an impact that he was aware. He stated that looking for other venues for the larger events may be a good idea. He concluded that he is still looking for more information including the DPW staff on the impact of the PPAF events.

Assistant City Manager Moore suggested that a site walk would be in order to see the impact of the season to this point.

Ms. Aichele stated that she feels that things are always done in response to a crisis. She continued that 20 years ago it was put into the Master Plan to support the Arts and feels the committee should try to come up with a blueprint for the future but not micro-manage it. She stated we also need to work with the PPAF regarding what will happen when the construction of the Master Plan recommendations begin and if there will be a dark season they should know that as well. She concluded by asking if the committee is only giving recommendations for 2018 season, or also trying to make templates for the future.

Chair Watson stated that this is an advisory committee and the advice could be rejected. He continued that the committee is doing more than just waiting for the City Manager to ask a question and can be looking forward past the 2018 season.

Councilor Dwyer suggested revisiting the charge of the Committee with Mayor Blalock.

Discussion ensued regarding the impact of implementing the Prescott Park Master Plan and need for flexibility with all involved, including exploring other venues for some of the activities including movie nights.

Discussion of upcoming meeting dates and topics was held.

#### 4. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m.