

MINUTES
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE PRESCOTT PARK POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
7:30 A.M. – Friday, August 18, 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: John Bohenko, City Manager; David Moore, Assistant City Manager

1. Call to Order

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

Chair Watson gave a brief summary of the work done by the committee in the last 5 ½ months stating there are 4 ½ months left with the goal being to have a full report and recommendations to the City Manager by the end of December. He stated the exception is that the scheduling recommendations should be submitted to the City Manager by the end of September so that the Prescott Parks Arts Festival can review it and have it available for scheduling for the next season. He concluded stating that City Manager Bohenko will be on sabbatical for the next 3 months, but the committee will continue to meet.

City Manager Bohenko stated he will be checking in with Assistant City Manager Moore but feels that the committee is doing a great job and will work with the recommendations brought forward. He agreed that the scheduling recommendations need to be resolved in September.

Chair Watson then reviewed some housekeeping issues stating there was a recent site walk held but were unable to go into the buildings so would like another site walk scheduled for that purpose. He stated also, the City Manager is still waiting for the financial documents from Mr. Anderson. He asked that they also provide a pro forma of cost/expenses for different activities such as movie night and the potential loss.

City Manager Bohenko stated that once the financial documents are received he will have Judy Renaud of the Finance Department and Assistant City Manager Moore review the information.

Chair Watson stated that regarding the sound issue, sound testing is ongoing. Finally, he discussed the upcoming schedule of other issues to be reviewed by the committee.

Councilor Dwyer stated that the site walk of the buildings should be held prior to the discussion of the buildings.

2. Consideration of Meeting Minutes

Ms. Lurie-Meyerkopf moved to accept the minutes of July 12, 2017 and July 19, 2017, seconded by Ms. Aichele.

Chair Watson made a minor correction to the July 19, 2017 minutes.

Motion passed as amended.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated that since the last meeting there was a presentation regarding the sound issue to the City Council, with all of the reports online that were presented. He stated the final sound report has been forwarded to the Prescott Park Arts Festival and they can begin testing the recommendations. He stated that the consultant will report to the committee once the testing of the recommendations have been done.

Mr. Gordon related a recent experience of attending a large concert stating that he walked to Prescott Park from his house and thought that the noise would be more than it ended up being. He stated it did increase as he approached Gates and Marcy Streets, but it was not assaulting. He continued that he saw several other small issues such as dogs and beers and that the attendance looked to be over the 1200 maximum recommendation of the Master Plan for the new oval space.

Councilor Dwyer related an experience of being in the park near the Whale statue during a performance of Mary Poppins and had the experience of not hearing the performance as well because of the children in the area and feels that this demonstrates that there are different experiences in various areas of the park. She suggested that this could be addressed by adjusting microphones.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated that is a part of the sound study, not just how to keep the sound in the park area, but also how to enhance it for the audience.

3. Committee Discussion: Commercialization and Signage in Prescott Park

Chair Watson referred to pages 76 and 77 of the Prescott Park Master Plan items 15 and 16 which discusses commercialization and signage. He continued that as a Trustee of the Trust Fund he feels that there are 3 values when approaching this topic:

- What is the appropriate amount of commercialization in any public space and to what degree is it allowed;
- Aesthetic goals of the park; and
- WWPSS - What would the Prescott Sisters Say

Councilor Dwyer offered Tanglewood in Lenox Massachusetts as an example of an aesthetically pleasing model regarding signage and commercialization. She stated that signage and commercialization are 2 different topics.

Discussion ensued regarding the importance of consistency of signage for all of the city parks and for any signage to be in compliance with the City's wayfinding signage. It was requested that the City Planner, Juliet Walker, provide information on that ongoing program.

Ms. Lurie-Meyerkopf asked if the wayfinding signage includes any historic information.

City Manager Bohenko stated it could if it is consistent with the model. He continued that there are other ways to provide that type of information to visitors such as showing a video at the concession stand line. Chair Watson suggested there could also be some type of phone application that people can listen to while in the area.

Councilor Dwyer stated that there is a section in the Master Plan on this issue as well as remembrances. She then asked if we are looking at temporary signage for the festival. She stated that museums are now using projected signage which turns off when the event is over.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated that there are a lot of different issues in relation to signage but feels that the focus should be on the upcoming licensing agreements. He then referred to the handout of examples of Commercial transactions and related signs which show existing examples of what is being used in the Park.

Discussion ensued regarding coming up with guidelines of design, placement, method of attachment but not content.

City Manager Bohenko stated that there should be an addendum in the agreement with PPAF that the signage is reviewed and approved each season instead of for the duration of the contract because the sponsorship, events, etc. change each season so the signage changes as well.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated that regarding content, this is a city park and the City council decides what goes on there and do have a high degree of control of all aspects.

Chair Watson then moved the discussion to the commercialization issue stating that there is a level of commercialization in the park with concessions, ticket sales, merchandise booth, sale of art in the Sheafe building, rentals of blankets, etc.

Ms. Aichele asked if there is anything in the Trust that deals with commercialization.

Chair Watson stated no other than clearly prohibiting alcohol in the park, other issues that have been thought to be prohibited by the Trust were actually not.

Councilor Dwyer stated that commodification is a broad concern and that a certain amount of merchandising is to be expected. She stated that maybe instead of in the park area, it could be done in a building. She stated she would also like the amount of space allowed for the rental tables and chairs to be addressed and feels this is where the aesthetics come into play with values.

Mr. Gordon then discussed the concession stand and merchandise booth which are city-owned and asked if the PPAF leases the buildings.

Chair Gordon clarified that anything built in the park belongs to the City and further explained that when the concession stand was building, the PPAF shared the cost of building it and received a 25 year lease. He stated the bathroom facilities are open all of the time, but the concession stand is not.

Councilor Dwyer stated that during the Master Plan process, there was an interest in having the concessions open at other times as well.

Ms. Lurie-Meyerkopf stated that needs to be kept in mind as well, coordinating implementation of the Master Plan with the agreements and any impact on their activities.

Mr. Barker asked if there are any issues with this at this point as they have been this way for years. He asked if keeping the status quo for now would be the way to go and then revisit it when the Master Plan starts being implemented.

Discussion ensued and will be continued.

4. Public Comment

Chair Watson stated that there is a limited amount of time available for public comment and asked speakers to limit their comments to 2 minutes.

Dan Corcoran – stated that the Taj Mahal concert was extremely well attended and feels it did exceed 1200 people. He asked if there is a number available yet. Asst. City Manager Moore stated not yet.

Beth Margeson – stated that PPAF is a professional organization and is commercial. She continued that there should be consistency with all city parks. Regarding memorials, she doesn't want to see Prescott Park become a memorial park. She continued that the rental of the tables and chairs bother her as well and referred to her handout to make her remaining points.

David Kremfels – stated he likes the word commodification stating it typifies what is happening with PPAF. He stated he is glad that the creeping of the tables and chairs is being discussed and also doesn't like the ropes and padlocks on the gates as the Master Plan calls for fee access in the park regardless of the events. He stated he wants to sit in the chairs in his park.

Judy Nerbonne – asked the committee to think about why the PPAF is able to use the name Prescott Park in their

name stating that it is confusing to people who think they are donating to the Park and not to the Festival.

Paige Trace – stated the City Manager has the authority to oversee the Park and should be given the power to do so and not the PPAF. Finally, regarding dogs in the Park, she feels that the residents know they aren't allowed, but visitors do not read the signage and therefore, there needs to be enforcement by the city.

Ben Anderson – stated that regarding the comment of the PPAF name, they have spent years trying to educate people that they are a non-profit group and not city funded because people assume they receive money from the city taxes. Next, he addressed the issue of the tables and chairs “creeping” into the space stating that is incorrect as they have been in the same area since before he came here 10 years ago and have actually been scaled back. Finally, regarding signage, he stated he has been working with the City over the last 2 years and have been consistent.

Chair Watson asked that Ben provide the revenue of the tables and chairs with the financial information.

Councilor Dwyer requested the policy regarding the tables and chairs and how if it enforced.

Sandra Parr- discussed signage stating she would like it to disappear after the event are over each time. She also dislikes the signage that identifies the stage as the sponsors' stage, platform etc. because it belongs to the city. She concluded that the park is for recreation which can include entertainment, but should not be only for entertainment activities.

Mr. Anderson clarified that they only set up the number of tables and chairs that have been rented per event and there is a limit to what they will allow.

Mary Krempels related a recent incident in the Park where the police were called.

5. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m.