

**DRAFT**

**MINUTES**

**MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE PRESCOTT PARK POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

7:30 A.M. – Wednesday, August 30, 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 addressed the upcoming meeting schedule stating that the 09/25/17 meeting has been rescheduled for 10/03/2017 and the next meeting will be 09/13/2017. He also reminded everyone that the public feedback comments are available on the city's new website which is easier to navigate and find information.

He stated that today Public Works Director Peter Rice and General Foreman Todd Croteau will be answering questions regarding the temporary facilities at Prescott Park.

2. Committee Discussion: Temporary Facilities

Public Works Director Rice stated that the city took over maintenance responsibilities of the park this year and the first year has been about learning and getting the feel for the level of service required. He stated that there were no changes to the budget until they see if what they have been doing is adequate. He stated that the term "temporary facilities" isn't the term they use to categorize their responsibilities in the park. He explained that they deal with the gates, infrastructure, irrigation system, wear and tear from the various events, etc. and stated that the expectations are evolving and changing as they go along. He stated that Todd Croteau has been at all of the events held this summer and has worked closely with the PPAF staff.

Councilor Dwyer asked about more immediate needs that they see, separate from future needs.

Public Works Director Rice stated that the electrical systems are antiquated as are the drainage systems. He stated these are things that people can't see but need to be done before the layout of the park can be changed.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated that these items were pointed out at the recent site walk along with the fire suppression and alarms systems. He stated that these items will be addressed as the phasing of the master plan begins.

Public Works Director Rice stated that the fire alarm system is currently under contract in the Sheafe and Shaw warehouse buildings.

Mr. Gordon stated that there has been a lot of discussion on intensity of use and asked if Mr. Croteau sees a difference after a "big" event versus a regular size concert.

Mr. Croteau stated that there has been an improved effort to clean up after the concerts by the users but there is noticeable "rock" litter from people holding down their blankets. He stated these need to be removed before mowing.

Mr. Gordon asked about the impact on the grass areas.

Mr. Croteau explained the various areas of wear including near the front of the stage, the table area and various pathways that are formed.

Public Works Director Rice stated that right now it is regular lawn and not intended for intensive use. He continued that when the Master Plan upgrades begin, it will be designed accordingly and also, there should be rest periods after the season is over which helps reinvigorate the lawn.

Mr. Gordon asked if they feel that having more “black” nights with no scheduled events, etc. per week would make a difference.

Public Works Director Rice stated that this is a policy issue and they will do whatever is directed.

Discussion ensued regarding the current conditions and various reasons for lack of grass in certain areas including the trees which some will need to be removed as they are at the end of their life cycle.

Chair Watson stated that the committee isn’t looking for a policy decision but what would their preference be for maintenance looking towards the best interest of the park and is there an impact on how often the area is used during the season and if it will bounce back in the fall.

Public Works Director Rice stated that they will adapt to whatever the set usage is determined to be. He continued by explaining the various strategies of keeping lawns healthy including aerating to allow moisture and air to circulate, seeding and fertilizing, etc. He stated that when the start putting stuff away at the end of the season they will have a better idea of the total impact of the summer activities and be able to plan accordingly for the next season.

Councilor Dwyer asked if there are any athletic fields that are comparable to Prescott Park.

Public Works Director Rice stated that all of the city fields are overused. He explained that the city just purchased land to development more playing fields and then be able to develop a plan to allow some resting of the grass fields.

Assistant City Manager Moore asked if there are any effects on the grass from putting blankets out. Mr. Croteau says it will deaden the area underneath if it is in the sun for an extended amount of time.

Public Works Director Rice stated that it isn’t irreversible for short periods of time, but can cause dead spots over long periods of time and stated that the time limit prior to the event does help.

Mr. Barker stated he assumed that the blanket area would have a lot of dead spots but was surprised by how well it looked.

Councilor Dwyer asked if they could visually rate the conditions of the difference areas so that decisions can be made regarding what types of turf will be needed in different areas of the park.

Ms. Aichele asked about the gates and roping system of controlling the traffic patterns and if it works well or should there be something in the agreement to change it.

Public Works Director Rice stated that a couple of variations were tried prior to the season but were not successful because of the cross traffic to the pier and feels that the current system is working well.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated that there is also a security and public safety issue associated with the paths as well and will be an issue that will be discussed with the Police and Fire Chiefs as the City Manager wants those protocols in place for the next season.

Councilor Dwyer stated that during the Master Plan process they looked at systems that had imbedded stations that poles could be placed in when needed and removed when not. Next she asked about dogs in the park and if that has been an issue for the staff.

Mr. Croteau stated dogs have not been an issue because the staff will let people know they aren't allowed if they bring them in and he doesn't feel it has an impact on maintenance.

Mr. Gordon asked if a grading system of the events based on crowd size would help rate the impact on the lawn per event.

Discussion ensued.

Chair Watson discussed the concept of rest and rotate which is used on the ballfields. He stated these principles could be used in relation to movie night and holding that in a different location in the city.

Discussion ensued regarding the current needs and the different issues that will be addressed with the implementation of the Master Plan.

Next, Public Works Director Rice addressed the buildings stating that he hasn't done a full facilities evaluation as of yet but has done some walk-throughs. He continued that they are tired old buildings that need upgrades such as roofing, siding, windows reglazed, etc. which are a significant investment. He stated that if this work is done, then it would need to be brought up to current codes.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated that determining the space needs are going to be a major piece of how the buildings will be improved and that the Master Plan process invited rethinking of appropriate uses and tenets of design.

Councilor Dwyer asked if the storage was impacted for the staff since some of the space was used for backstage for the PPAF.

Mr. Croteau stated they put a shed on Peirce Island for the summer but will need a tempered space in the winter but the space will be available then.

Mr. Barker asked about the Player's Ring building stating that is never a part of the discussion. Public Works Director Rice explained that has a difference leasing agreement structure as they do their own maintenance and have done additional work to the building which is in great shape.

Mr. Gordon asked if there is anything that can be learned from the other agreements.

Councilor Dwyer stated that it on a case by case basis and the Player's Ring had an interest in working on the building and as a non-profit were able to get grants.

Ms. Aichele asked about the current stage and truss system and if the city owns them and who maintains them.

Assistant City Manager Moore clarified that the City owns everything in Prescott Park but that the PPAF has temporary equipment they use which is unique to each season. He continued that the intent in the Master Plan is for more exposure to the buildings and stated the Gundalow Company had great success using it in the spring and want to use it even more when available.

Discussion ensued regarding the storage needs of the DPW equipment and potential alternatives.

Discussion also ensued regarding other recommendations of the Master Plan and the impact of substantially reducing current concerns.

3. Public Comment

Sandra Parr – stated that the committee should not be held to the September deadline for finalizing the agreement with PPAF because they haven't submitted the financial information that has been requested. She discussed the storage of PPAF items in the Shaw Building and is concerned that it not being used and can be seen through the windows. Finally, she stated that regarding the safety issue, it is known that the number of people attending directly impacts the safety by blocking pathways, etc. and feels that it should be enforced.

Beth Margeson – stated that the PPAF activities do not meet the building code requirements in regards to bathrooms. Next, she stated that the issue is more about the length of use of the park during the day with multiple events and the number of people that are coming and going all day long. She concluded by stating that regarding the trees, they can't bear weight on the roots or they will die.

4. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m.