

**DRAFT**

**MINUTES**

MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE PRESCOTT PARK POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7:30 A.M. – Wednesday, September 13, 2017

Conference Room A, Portsmouth City Hall

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

Member Absent: Michael Barker, Resident

Staff Present: David Moore, Assistant City Manager

1. Call to Order

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

2. Committee Discussion: Sound and Prescott Park

Chair Watson introduced Eric Reuter, Reuter Associates, a sound consultant hired by the City of Portsmouth in conjunction with the Prescott Park Arts Festival.

Mr. Reuter reviewed a slide presentation. Some of the Key points included;

Project Goal – Understanding the issue knowing that the performances at the Park generate noise complaints with the unknown being what can be done about it.

Strategy – Control the variables; what are the sound levels and how much to the levels vary between events; Do louder events generate more complaints and self-monitoring has been ineffective.

He then reviewed the Scope of Work and the steps that have been taken to date to address the sound issue including the implementation of a lighting system for the sound engineers to be able to monitor the levels visually. He continued to review some of the issues that contribute to the differentials of sound levels and indicated the P.A. systems are outdated.

Discussion ensued regarding the differentials of the levels depending on the location of the audience member, the weather conditions, the level of audience enthusiasm etc. Mr. Reuter reviewed the events that had occurred to date over the summer including concerts large and small; the musical performance of Mary Poppins; movie night; etc.

He concluded by presenting his recommendations for addressing the sound in the future.

Ms. Lurie-Meyerkopf asked what effect this would have on the neighborhood and has there been any monitoring in the neighborhood. Mr. Reuter stated that he feels there would be positive changes with the levels being maintained within the Park, but there has not been any monitoring in the neighborhoods yet. He continued that it took longer than they had hoped and there are not enough events left to make recommendations for this season.

Councilor Dwyer stated that technology changes a lot over time and feels that the recommendations outlined in the report may change, so feels the focus should be on the big picture and long-term goals. She asked if there is a way to include a performance clause in the riders regarding sound levels to incentivize cooperation of guest engineers.

Discussion ensued regarding determining acceptable decibel levels and the basis of the 90-95 decibel level being a City of Portland Maine ordinance and if it is appropriate for a smaller venue such as Prescott Park. Mr. Reuter explained that the 95 level is the measurement allowed at the front of house where it would be the loudest.

Chair Watson stated that the level has not yet been set and if a lower level such as 85 were chosen, it would have an impact on the type of event that could be held in the Park.

It was further discussed that the implementation of the Prescott Park Master Plan will address this issue as well.

Assistant City Manager Moore stated that it is unfortunate that we are unable to implement the changes for this season but that the information will be helpful in starting at a different place next year.

Chair Watson then asked Prescott Park Arts Festival Director Ben Anderson to come to the table to discuss the sound issue. He asked Mr. Anderson if he had any concerns with implementing any of the recommendations.

Mr. Anderson stated that safety is a big issue and explained that they took a look at the ideal location to set the speakers but it was not safe to implement with the current rigging. Discussion ensued regarding ways to improve the current truss and rigging system and utilizing the City staff for implementing a plan.

Next, discussion ensued regarding the recommended decibel levels with Mr. Anderson commending the work done by Mr. Reuter and stating that the lighting system has been well-received by the engineers and feels it has resulted in better compliance.

Mr. Gordon stated that there was some non-compliance as well and there needs to be a strategy to deal with that. Mr. Anderson stated there is a protocol in place to review the expectations of compliance he stated is a few cases it wasn't the band that wasn't compliance but the audience that was enthusiastic. Mr. Gordon stated that more data on the effect of crowd size would be helpful.

### 3. Public Comment

Dan Corcoran – stated he has read the report and stated that there is still some spillover of sound to the back of the area and would like to know what will be done to keep it from going into the neighborhood to the back.

Mr. Reuter stated they will be trying to make use of new technology to cover the affected areas, and further explained that sound barriers behind the stage are not effective with certain noise and feels that sub-woofers are the better investment.

Mr. Corcoran stated that he feels it still comes down to the events, with some not being a good fit for the park.

Brian Kelley – stated that noise is the issue that brings everyone out to speak and feels that if this is handled then some of the other issues go away. He stated that the issue also has a cost impact on the festival and feels that the data will help clarify the issue.

Kaitlin Dow – stated she works for the festival and explained that there are various factors in the performances that impact the decibel levels. She further explained some previous attempts at corrective measures which were not successful in the past and that there needs to be an investment in equipment.

Kathy Baker – stated she has attended performances that were too loud to enjoy and feels the neighborhood complaints are not a good measure of the current situation as she and others have given up complaining. She stated that this committee is their last hope for a solution. She further discussed the times of the performances being limited because there is still the noise from people walking and talking to their cars, etc. after the performances.

Sandra Parr – stated that she is not bothered by the noise as she lives in a different area of town, but feels the neighbors have a right to enjoy their homes in the summer. She stated that she agrees that this could also be addressed through the programming of appropriate sized events for the venue.

Ben Anderson – stated that there are no events that go past 10:00 p.m. and feels that the implementation of the Master Plan will address many of the concerns in the long term.

4. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 a.m.