

PRESOTT PARK IMPLEMENTATION WORK SESSION

VIA ZOOM

DATE: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2021

PORTSMOUTH, NH

TIME: 6:30 PM

PRESENT: Mayor Becksted, Assistant Mayor Splaine, Councilors McEachern, Whelan, Lazenby, Kennedy, Huda, Tabor, and Trace participating from their respective homes.

PARTICIPATING STAFF:

Karen Conard, City Manager; Nancy Colbert Puff, Deputy City Manager; Robert Sullivan, City Attorney; Peter Rice, Public Works Director; Joe Almeida, City Engineer; Valerie French, Deputy City Clerk

Mayor Becksted called the Work Session to order at 6:30 p.m.

Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff gave a brief introduction and review of the Blue Ribbon Committee's work since being appointed in May 2020. She introduced Chairman Tom Watson.

Chairman Watson thanked the Mayor for inviting him to participate on the committee along with the other members. He reviewed the various highlights of the park and some of the issues that are occurring that need to be addressed including climate change, wear and tear, old trees, etc. He gave a brief background of the previous Prescott Park Master Plan committee which presented a comprehensive plan to the City Council which was adopted on February 6, 2017. He continued that over the last 3 years there have been a number of environmental studies conducted which show that the park will be adversely affected if things are not addressed. He stated the current "implementation" committee needed to look at the components of the original plan and find a way to balance the essence of the Master Plan and ways to adapt to achieve a balance of meeting the current needs and focused on the following:

1. Remain true to the "Park First" them of the Master Plan.
2. Not tinker with the Plan other than environmental
3. Not try to solve all of the perceived problems of the plan that will require further study in the future.

Cheri Ruane of Weston and Sampson reviewed an abbreviated slide presentation of the more detailed report presented to the Council at the January 11, 2021 Council meeting. She reviewed the summary of the proposed changes from the 2017 Master Plan to the current update which were specific to the engineering analysis. The emphasis protecting the park from the environmental changes/rising sea level and keeping with the "Park First" theme. She explained the need to move the Shaw building to a higher elevation in the park and reassessing the functionality of its use from maintenance building/storage to a public space. Also, a site-change of the proposed temporary stage and a site-change of the maintenance facility which was going to go to Mechanic Street but now proposed near 4-Tree Island.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposed changes. There was a concern with the relocation of the maintenance facility to 4 Tree Island/Peirce Island area and why there was no involvement of the Peirce Island Committee in that discussion.

Mayor Becksted opened the Public Comment:

Richard Smith, Co-Chair, Peirce Island Committee – spoke regarding the history of the Peirce Island Committee which was formed 20 years ago with the purpose of preserving and protecting the area for recreational and dog friendly uses without buildings. He expressed his concern with not being involved in the process if Peirce Island is part of the discussion.

Mr. Watson stated it was an oversight and has reached out to Mr. Smith to do a walk-a-bout of the area.

Steve Marison, Co-Chair, Peirce Island Committee – stated he agrees with Mr. Smith regarding being involved in the process but does like the Prescott Park Master Plan overall.

City Manager Conard reviewed the upcoming schedule stating the proposed Prescott Park Master Plan changes are scheduled to be presented and adopted at the February 22, 2021 Council meeting and then Capital Improvements Plan process will be the public hearing being continued on March 8th and also scheduled to adopt at that same meeting.

After further discussion, it was decided that the relocation of the maintenance facility portion of the Master Plan changed would be excluded until further review by relevant parties has occurred. It was also requested that alternative locations be proposed by the staff.

Ms Ruane explained that if the item is withdrawn from the Master Plan revision, then it will remain the same as the adopted 2017 Master Plan which was to relocate to Mechanic Street.

Councilor Kennedy moved to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Huda.
Motion passed on a 9-0 roll call vote.

At 7:55 p.m., Mayor Becksted closed the work session.

Respectfully submitted by:

Valerie A. French CNHMC
Deputy City Clerk