

CITY COUNCIL E-MAILS

Received: April 29, 2021 (after 9:00 a.m.) – May 4, 2021 (4:00 p.m.)

(E-mails received regarding McIntyre combined for Special Council meeting May 4, 2021)

May 4, 2021 Special Council Meeting

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Llor Kressmann (llorallama@gmail.com) on Friday, April 30, 2021 at 16:15:06

address: 228 Highland ST

comments: Dear Councilors,

I was born and raised in Portsmouth and just moved back to the seacoast after completing my education and starting a small business.

I had heard about the relocation of the post office out of downtown but had not experienced it myself until today. It was far worse than my family had described. They described the new location as being in "Timbuktu" so I was prepared for a long drive, I was not prepared for the rest of what I found.

After the long drive which was extremely inconvenient from my home in down town Portsmouth, I anticipated at least a nice building and ample parking. Why else would the city make such a move, I wondered? I was shocked to find little parking for the size of the building and a smaller post office lobby than down town! My heart sank. Also, midday the small lot was almost full and the walk to the door from the car was long. It lacked a sidewalk or space for pedestrians and I felt unsafe moving from the car to the lobby. I considered how this would be for my aging parents in the winter time.

As I proceeded with my business, I could find nothing positive about the new location or how it was an improvement on the last. All I could see was that it was worse than the previous post office. The building is in disrepair, it is difficult to find, the lobby is too small for the need, there is no self-serve kiosk, there is limited parking and a poorly designed, unsafe lot. Why DID you choose to move the post office?

During my travels and time away from Portsmouth, I have seen that the way a city invests or doesn't in their public spaces tells a great deal about what the overall quality of life is in a city is.

The inconvenient location, lack of up-to-date facilities and accessibility and lack of ample parking, speak volumes about the values of this city and whomever was involved in making the decision to move the post office out of downtown. It is a total embarrassment.

I would like to add my name to the list of people calling for the relocation of the post office back to down town Portsmouth and out of Timbuktu. Please, move it back.

Yours sincerely,
Llor H. Kressmann, M.Ed
includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Kathleen Somssich (kat03801@myfairpoint.net) on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 07:05:00

address: 34 Swett Ave.

comments: Dear City Councilors,

The Principal Group did a great job, except for wanting to fill every empty space with a building. I participated in the Portsmouth Listens sessions with the Principal Group and the public's sentiment was as clear as ever: "Open

spaces," "green spaces," "park-like spaces," "preserved views" and the post office. Out of 22 break-out groups, only one group wanted curb-to-curb buildings. The market shed option is a good idea, but it does not fulfill the wishes of the public, when it's designed with height and density. My hope is that the City Council can tweak the design to eliminate the other additional buildings in the plan and reduce the height of the market sheds to two stories or fewer, add green spaces and bring back the post office. This has been the wish of the majority of Portsmouth citizens since the beginning, articulated again and again in forums, charrettes, meetings, etc. Thank you, City Councilors, for all your hard work and patience.

includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Peter Bergh (Pb@princecom.com) on Saturday, May 1, 2021 at 05:38:39

address: 54 Lincoln Av

comments: As someone who put many hours of effort into being part of the Portsmouth Listens, I highly support what Principle Group is proposing. It is reflective of hundreds of people's input, overseen by well-respected professionals, and offers a vision for Portsmouth that is very exciting.

I am disappointed that the Revisit McIntyre group feels like they can co-opt the process. I URGE City Council to respect the professionals they hired and the people who have fully engaged in the process—NOT a small subset who has a very limited, uninspired view of what the McIntyre space should become.

includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Dr. Peter Somssich (peter.somssich@gmail.com) on Sunday, May 2, 2021 at 18:38:59

address: 34 Swett Ave.

comments: Dear Councilors,

Since I'll not be in town on May 4, I wanted to take this opportunity to give you my opinion about the current Proposal made by the Principle Group for the McIntyre project.

I have taken part in all of the public input sessions and surveys regarding this project. I would ask you to reject the current proposal and ask for some modifications and clarifications.

At this time I would like to underscore 3 points:

- 1) There was overwhelming support to have the post office return to the original site. I believe the current proposal allows that to happen. However, is it returning as a full-service post office? I am not sure?
- 2) There was very strong support for a large green space area as part of the development. That does not appear to be the case with the current proposal. The Principle Group insinuates that there is some green space. However, I believe it is not part of the original parcel.
- 3) Many of the elements that have been proposed by the Principle Group are in fact very nice features, e.g. I like the Market Shed too. However, they have over-populated the parcel with too many such elements. I would be in favor of the Market Shed oriented towards the harbor with some nice green space, and a downsizing or elimination of some of the other buildings that have been proposed.

Thank you for your patience, it is not an easy task that you have.

Best Regards, Peter Somssich

includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Robin Lurie-Meyerkopf (talkinrobin5@gmail.com) on Monday, May 3, 2021 at 06:49:48

address: 53 Whidden St

comments: Dear City Councilors

First of all thank you for all the time you. have spent on this subject. I was involved from the very beginning and also involved with the current Portsmouth Listens groups. I am very please with how the process went and the design that was eventually chosen created by the Principle Group. I am dismayed at the re-visit McIntyre group for misrepresenting the design they have been promoting on their survey. It looks nothing like the design we voted on by the Principle Group. I am hoping most people are not swayed by their antics. Please know there are many of us who support the Portsmouth Listens design and are hoping it moves forward. Thank you for your time.

includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Mara Witzling (artgrrl04@gmail.com) on Monday, May 3, 2021 at 08:41:21

address: 33 Hunking St, Portsmouth NH 03801

comments: Please make this part of the record for the May 4 public hearing about the McIntyre Project
3 May 2021

Dear City Councilors:

Although I just completed the latest McIntyre Survey, I want to take this opportunity to underscore my responses. Let me say at the outset that I am speaking from my years of experience as an art historian who has studied architectural and urban history in some depth, and also as a world-traveler who has experienced many successful, as well as unsuccessful, forays into the built environment. I firmly believe that it behooves us to be careful and thoughtful about what we build today, for it has impact on and consequences for the future.

I have participated in all steps of the Portsmouth Listens process. During the group presentations I was impressed with how there were several themes that echoed across the twenty or so groups – people wanted a space that connected to its surrounding environments; people wanted a space that embodied, or was in some way related to, the deeper history of Portsmouth; people wanted a space that was sustainable, environmentally and financially; people wanted a space that was locally relevant and useful; people wanted a space that had open spaces where they could gather. The Principle Group did a remarkable job of listening, of synthesizing these talking points and comments, and of focusing and refining specific issues. They really heard the communal desire to repair a piece of our city and to make the McIntyre space something that was special, a generational gift to Portsmouth. I believe that Option A is an excellent distillation of the group’s stated preferences. It makes many visual and spatial connections to the surrounding streets and landmarks. It provides a diversity of public spaces, both interior and exterior. It’s a destination point – something that does not already exist in town. Many participants wanted “open” spaces, but I believe that in the discussions of the various plans the Principle Group presented, they did not want to create a large open square. Open space does not by definition mean blank, unarticulated space, just as public space can be defined as interior as well as exterior. The idea of a greenway and staircase that enables Chapel Court to function as an entrance into the space is a creative use of a topography that current serves as a barrier. The focal point, the Market Building, a public space covered by an atrium, creates a winter gallery. We need to have a space that invites people in during all the seasons, not only during mellow summer days. Not a lot of people hang out in Prescott Park in January or February, or even Market Square for that matter. During the discussion after the presentation one participant said – “where can I see the sky.” I would answer – you can see the sky from the observation deck; you can see the sky from the Grand Staircase; you can see the sky from the atrium. The advantage of this design is that those are all different kinds of public spaces, with different uses. Perhaps they’re not as obvious as a big, unenclosed square – but they are open and for public use.

I would also like to comment about the Post Office. I really miss having a Post Office that I can walk to in the center of town. When talking about the design, Russell Preston offered the opinion that a post office could be an anchor in the winter gallery, a way of fulfilling the expressed need of the community for services in the McIntyre project that were of local relevance. However, on the survey, we were asked about the importance of a full-service Post Office and I gave it a low priority. That's because during the discussions I became convinced that the space and resources for a full-service Post Office would put too many unnecessary limitations on the site. NONETHELESS – I really feel strongly that the Post Office should be brought back to the site in some meaningful configuration – more than just a kiosk, less than the city's central Post-Office.

Finally, I believe that either design would be a vast improvement over the design that the City's development partner presented, although I did not check "either" as my choice on the survey. In the Redgate-Kane design public space is an after-thought, a corridor here or there, squeezed haphazardly into what is a very densely developed site, a site that benefits the few who are lucky enough to be able to afford high housing expenses and those who collect those fees. I participated in this process because I thought it was a travesty that such an important and central piece of this city, one that has sat as a visual and spatial barrier for decades but now was being gifted to us, was going to be used in a way that was of so little benefit to the city and its inhabitants. Even if neither Option A or Option B is used in its entirety, please do not discard the values and visions that citizens of Portsmouth have expressed regarding this site nor the intelligent, creative, sophisticated ideas that the Principle Group has distilled from our discussions. The buildings of today shape the landscape of the future. In a city with such a distinctive and valued sense of history as Portsmouth this is an adage we should adhere to.

Thank you for taking my opinions into consideration.

Sincerely –
Mara Witzling
33 Hunking St
Portsmouth, NH 03801
603-969-0985
includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Susan Kress Hamilton (skhamilton@phineasgraphics.com) on Monday, May 3, 2021 at 11:56:22

address: 108 Penhallow Street

comments: I agree with others that Portsmouth city planners, elected officials and boards are not looking out for the best interests of its residents and business owners. I thought Portsmouth was better than this but have sadly watched us lose our city! Look around at all the big construction projects engulfing our streets and the developers who are getting advocacy from city hall. The Mark McNabb project for example across from Ceres Bakery on Penhallow Street is a behemoth that will change our cityscape forever. The constant blasting, drilling, and closing of part of Penhallow Street for months has hurt local small businesses, on top of the pandemic. The latest designs re: the McIntyre project are nothing at all what citizens requested—very little green space, a massive infill of the space, an enclosed atrium that looks like a mall! This is an opportunity. Are they listening????

Our business has been on Penhallow Street since 1978 and we have seen the city change priorities from support of small local shops, historic houses, museums and artists studios and galleries downtown to HOTELS, restaurants and tourist type knick knock businesses. What is more important to a community than the day to day compatibility of a city to its residents? When we first moved here we rented a house on Washington Street in the south end and put our car away as we could walk to a grocery store (A&P), hardware store (Peavey's), drugstore (Green's), stationery store (Hoyt's) and market and laundromat (Richardson's)—all our needs were met! Now, they are all gone and there is very little that's vital to a thriving local community downtown. Sadly, Big Money, developers, restaurants and tourists reign in Portsmouth.

Susan Hamilton, Phineas
Portsmouth Business Owner
includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Dixie Tarbell (dixiemcleantarbell@gmail.com) on Monday, May 3, 2021 at 14:57:44

address: 25 Driftwood Lane

comments: Hello City Council,

I want to chime in about the survey issued by a group which disagrees with the results of the latest public process's consensus on the McIntyre's vision. This ReVisit survey was slanted toward their group's vision, and I do not share their vision, which has already cost the city too much in delays and legal snags, and which continues to foist costly delays on the City.

I tried to participate in the survey but the links and fill-in spaces would not work for me, so I couldn't state that I don't agree with their Option B. So: because the ReVisit survey had a biased presentation and because I (and probably others) was unable to fill it out, I hope it will not be considered as a legitimate case against the outcome from the diverse citizens who participated in the Portsmouth Listens public process.

Also, for personal planning, I would like to know how much whichever plan finally gets the go-ahead will cost the tax payers. (I believe the plan from the first process during the previous Council was the most cost effective, keeping with the original criteria which were agreed upon.)

Mainly though, I'm writing to state that the latest Revisit survey does not hold water and should not be given weight against the diverse group's lengthy, thorough process. Thank you for consideration.

includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Bill Hamilton (phineasgraphics2@gmail.com) on Monday, May 3, 2021 at 15:56:57

address: 108 Penhallow St

comments: Dear Councilors,

I plan to attend the Council meeting on May 4th, but would also like to have my concerns about the McIntyre Project listed here.

A) WALKWAY: PENHALLOW ST. is NOT part of the McIntyre project and its closure to become a pedestrian walkway makes no sense at all. It is an important through-street for sensible traffic flow in Portsmouth. In addition, deliveries to the many businesses on the street, including mine, would be extremely impacted: e.g. my paper deliveries sometimes weigh over 500 lbs.; Portsmouth Fabric Co.'s Bernina machine deliveries are sometime by pallet; Moxy, Pink Bamboo & TJ's all have daily deliveries. Resulting trucks backed up on Daniel and Bow Sts. would result in even more traffic congestion. By not allowing vehicular traffic, those coming off the Route One bridge to I-95 would be directed to Bow St., which will be further congested by the new underground parking entrance to be located there. Safe and sensible traffic flow-though is a critical component in city planning. Both residents and tourists need good traffic flow to enjoy what Portsmouth offers.

B) PARKING: By my estimation, over 50 parking spaces will be lost on Penhallow, Daniel, Bow, Chapel and Chapel Ct. The 75 (or so) underground parking spaces will likely not be available to the public, rather tenants of the project. There will be very little parking, including handicapped parking, to access the McIntyre project.

C) GREEN SPACE: There is very little green space in this project (<1000 sq. ft.?). From the summary of Survey results from the 22 "Listens" groups: "Parks" comprised nearly 50% of the "Favorite Places"; "Square" 10%; "Historic Neighborhood" 18%; "Food & Drink" 18%, "Cultural & Entertainment" 10%. The current proposal is NOT in keeping with these "desired" goals. The "Favorite Places" listed on the survey are: Prescott Park (40%), Strawberry Banke (7%), Four Tree Island (4%), Pierce Island (3%), Wentworth-Coolidge trails (3%) and others, which are primarily GREEN. Other open spaces are important too, but not to the extent that this proposal offers. In addition, many of the green spaces shown on the proposal are not even part of the actual property itself. eg. the cemetery at St. John's, the parking lot at St. John's, the lawn at the old Town Hall, etc.

D) USE: The uses listed under the current proposal are NEARLY IDENTICAL to those of a neighboring developing property, the McNabb project, less than 100 feet away: market, retail, residential, office, business, etc. etc. Where are the "local needs" asked for by the survey? With 200-300 sq. ft. micro "retail" spaces proposed, what will they

be? Cafe's, sunglasses, jewelry, hot dogs, fried dough, etc. other "mall" type retail? Certainly nothing essential. And why are 2,500 sq. ft. spaces reserved for restaurants? Does Portsmouth really need more RESTAURANTS?

E) POST OFFICE: Exactly WHO at the US Postal Service has been contacted about a return to downtown and is there a written agreement pending? A kiosk or Mailboxes Etc. is not what was asked for.

F) DENSITY: The current proposal, along with the existing McIntyre Building, comprises almost the same square footage of commercial and residential use as the rejected Kane/Redgate plan, including a massive build-out above the old Post Office wing, which, by the way, was disallowed by the the National Park Service last time. Has this changed?

In closing, I want to emphasize that I am in no way disparaging the amount of work that has gone into this project. From Redgate/Kane's proposal to the 22 "Listens" groups to city staff, to the Principle Group. All worked diligently to promote their objectives. I just don't believe that their objective match those of either the survey results or the findings which these surveys produced.

I ask that you please postpone any final decision on the McIntyre project tonight until the specific data from the survey is further examined and correlated to the needs and wishes of the people of Portsmouth.

Respectfully,

Bill Hamilton

includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Kathryn Lynch (kathielynych@hotmail.com) on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 11:24:45

address: 3 Boyan Place, Portsmouth NH

comments: Dear Councilors,

I am unable to attend the council meeting tonight; I support the work of the Principle Group and the design they have created based upon the input of the Portsmouth Listens process and subsequent renderings of the site. While not every "wish" can be granted for this site, the rendering with the market place is vibrant and accessible, and in my opinion, will become a symbol for Portsmouth for future generations. I appreciate the balance of open space and structures, especially given the proximity to Prescott Park and pocket parks nearby [Court Street, under the bridge]. Thank you.

includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by susan everest (smeverest@comcast.net) on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 12:45:01

address: 45 Lincoln Ave.

comments: I have owned a home in Portsmouth since 1983.

The town is no longer the one I chose to live in.

I understand change is a necessary part of life, but really?

Plan B is more beautiful and livable for the residents of Portsmouth, the people who live here, by far!

Susan

PS This email came to me after noon this afternoon.

includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by John Stephenson (editec@comcast.net) on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 12:52:28

address: 197 Miller Avenue, Portsmouth

comments: Hi - I have been to most of the "Listening Sessions" over the last 4 years. Nobody asked for a giant four-story building above the old Post Office. Also - that was already turned down once by the Park Service.

includeInRecords: on

Below is the result of your feedback form. It was submitted by Joanne C Foster (jocfoster@outlook.com) on Tuesday, May 4, 2021 at 13:50:18

address: 7 Hancock St

comments: I enthusiastically support the Community Plan for the McIntyre property designed by the Principle Group with input from hundreds of Portsmouth residents. I am grateful to the McIntyre Subcommittee for its proactive efforts to ensure that this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is not squandered – leading us through a transparent, professional, and thoughtful community design process with the help of Portsmouth Listens and the Principle Group.

I am not certain that any design could be perfect and meet the needs and desires of all residents of Portsmouth. However, this plan, and the process that led to it, come close. Throughout the Portsmouth Listens process I heard a few repeated themes – accessible, sustainable, innovative, local, affordable, and respects and enhances the beauty of the surrounding area. I believe the proposed plan addresses these community-identified values and goals and then some.

I urge the Council vote to approve moving forward with this community plan.

Sincerely,
Joanne Foster
7 Hancock St
978/836-0822
includeInRecords: on
