

Adopted August 14, 2008

AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND COMMITTEE

JULY 24, 2008

PORTSMOUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY

5:00 P.M.

Present: Vernis Jackson, Chair; Mary Bailey, Vice Chair; Valerie Cunningham; Councilor Christine Dwyer; Councilor Pantelakos; Jack McGee; Steve Parkinson (Ex-officio)

Absent: Suzanne M. Woodland (Ex-Officio)

Also Present: Cindy Hayden, Deputy City Manager; David Moore, Assistant Community Development Director; Jerome Meadows, Meadowlark Studio; Robbi Woodburn of Woodburn and Company (Consultant); Ellen Marlatt, Independent Archaeological Consultants

Chairperson Jackson opened the meeting and welcomed Mr. Meadows and Ms. Woodburn. She then recognized Mr. Moore who reminded the Committee that the meeting's purpose was to review the design for the African Burial Ground with the design team. At the previous meeting, the Committee provided feedback on the concept and gave particular suggestions for design development.

Mr. Meadows then gave an overview of the work that he and Ms. Woodburn had been collaborating on since the June 26th meeting. He said that the design team worked with the Committee's comments and feedback from that meeting to develop a new site layout and altered artistic elements which included an entrance piece, vertical slabs with negative spaces, and altered community figure planned for the Court Street end of the site. As he reviewed the layout and models, he solicited feedback from the Committee.

The Committee responded favorably to the site layout and the new entrance piece proposed by the design team. Much of the discussion was on materials, including the use of colored concrete, granite block benches, cobbles as well as the use of shrubbery, ground cover in planters, and five trees which would be used to create a feeling of airiness and a canopy over the site. The Committee discussed the color of the concrete proposed to be used in the memorial space along the Western site of Chestnut Street. A yellow color was suggested by Mr. Meadows and the prior use of yellow bricks as a road service in Portsmouth was discussed and the Committee wanted to learn more about that possibility.

The Committee members responded very favorably to the use of trees on the site. Specifically, the use of honey locust trees as recommended by Ms. Woodburn. The trees provide a seasonal interest to the site and the Committee agreed that trees have a lot of meaning in a site like this. The leaves were determined to be favorable in that they would be small, easily managed, and provide an airy, flickering effect on the site. The canopy was strongly desired by the Committee because it closes in the space and creates another visual clue to the sites importance. The concern that tree roots would effect the integrity

of the Burial Ground below was discussed at some length. The Committee discussed ways to insure that the tree system would be nurtured but would have a limit any potential threat the burial ground space itself. The Committee agreed that the need for trees in the memorial for the reasons discussed above outweighed any potential damage which might be caused by their placement on the site, including near the excavated area where human remains are known to be found.

Various lighting alternatives were discussed, including the use of bollards lighting and up lighting. The need to balance aesthetics and concerns of project abutters were discussed. Additional work on the lighting plan will be completed, but the Committee endorsed the use of up-lighting and bollards.

After a dinner break, Chairperson Jackson asked members of the Committee to individually give their feedback on the design as presented by the design team. Members of the Committee spoke and the Committee was generally very appreciative of the work by the design team and felt that the project had taken a major step forward in the design planning. The entrance piece was especially well received and the effort to maintain the simplicity and cohesiveness of the design was recognized as positive.

An area of concern remained the extent which the Petition of 1779 was to be highlighted in the burial ground space. After some discussion about the memory line artistic element, it was agreed that particular quotes taken from the Petition of 1779 would be inscribed in some way along the memory line. Mr. McGee moved that the Committee instruct Mr. Meadows to create a more figurative/symbolic artistic element emphasizing the petition on a vertical slab. Ms. Pantelakos seconded this motion. Mr. McGee noted the opportunity present in the burial ground memorial to highlight this important part of Portsmouth's history. The motion failed 3 to 2 with Mr. McGee and Ms. Pantelakos voting in favor and Ms. Bailey, Ms. Dwyer, and Ms. Cunningham voting in the negative. Chairperson Jackson did not vote. Further discussion took place about a way to acknowledge the petition in the design and Mr. Meadows indicated he would do some more thinking about how the petition could be used in the design.

Chairperson Jackson asked for any more comment on the design. Seeing none, she moved on to the Committee's other business which were the meeting minutes from April 5, 9 and June 26. Mr. Moore reminded the committee that the meeting minutes from April 5 and April 9 both had sealed portions which would need to be unsealed prior to adoption. Ms. Bailey moved to unseal the sealed portions of the meeting minutes from April 5 and April 9. Ms. Dwyer seconded the motion and all voted in favor. Ms. Pantelakos then moved to adopted the meeting minutes from April 5, 9, and June 26th. Ms. Dwyer seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Chairperson Jackson adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.