

Accepted November 18, 2009

AFRICAN BURYING GROUND COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 10, 2009

PORTSMOUTH CITY HALL

4:00 P.M.

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

Also Present: Cindy Hayden, Deputy City Manager; David Moore, Assistant Community Development Director; State Archeologist Richard Boisvert from the State Division of Historical Resources; and Kathleen Wheeler, Independent Archaeological Consulting

Absent: Councilor Laura Pantelakos; Suzanne M. Woodland (Ex-Officio)

Vice Chairperson Mary Bailey opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. In the absence of the Chair (whose physical attendance was not practical due to travel), the Vice-Chair ran the meeting and recognized David Moore to provide an introduction to the meeting.

Mr. Moore reminded the Committee that the City's request to reprogram the Economic Development Initiative grant funding originally slated for the Riverwalk Project had been denied by U.S. Housing and Urban Development. He indicated that this delay provided additional time to complete the needed final design work and fundraising. He indicated that City staff would be working to obtain another special appropriation of federal funds for this project.

Mr. Moore also indicated that the design team had been directed to move forward with final design of the conceptual plan as it was presented at the previous meeting. He indicated that the Committee would be brought together in the future to discuss final details, including wording for the petition line and information marker as well as final planting choices.

Mr. Moore indicated the purpose for the day's meeting was to focus on how the recovered remains from the November 2008 test trenching which took place on Chestnut Street. Dr. Wheeler provided a thorough summary about the number and location of the remains discovered and the committee discussed the best way to honor the excavated remains and how to best provide for their reinterment. After discussion between Committee members it was determined that the preferred method of reinterment would be to, as close as possible, replace the remains with the bodies from which they came during the test trenching in November 2008. Dr. Wheeler and Dr. Boisvert advised that in order to insure that the remains were being replaced with the bodies from which they came; some additional analysis of the remains would need to take place. The level of analysis would likely result in more information about the number of individuals as well as gender and age at death. Dr. Wheeler and Dr. Boisvert indicated a qualified scientist would need to perform the analysis. The Committee determined that additional limited analysis (the

degree permissible) of the remains to assist in the replacing of the bones from their original locations would be acceptable.

Mr. McGee raised the issue of the iron pipe which was found during the excavation, which desecrated a human burial. He recommended that the Committee have the burial restored as much as possible by removing the iron pipe. Dr. Wheeler and Steve Parkinson indicated that it would be a difficult, if not impossible, to remove the pipe without further damaging the burial. Other members of the committee expressed an interest in avoiding further disturbance of the graves.

After the discussion concerning the remains, Mr. McGee moved that the Committee recommend that the remains be replaced as close as possible to their original location without additional analysis. The motion was not seconded.

Ms. Cunningham then moved to request that the Committee request City staff develop a scope of work and cost estimates for additional analysis of the remains from November 2008 and report back to the Committee. The goal of the analysis would be to as best as possible, to rebury the remains as close as possible from where they came. Councilor Dwyer seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed 4 to 1 with Mr. McGee voting in the negative.

Vice Chair Bailey then moved on to minutes of October 29, 2008, November 17, 2008 and January 21, 2009. Councilor Dwyer moved to accept minutes of the three meetings. Ms. Cunningham seconded the motion. During discussion, an amendment to include Councilor Laura Pantelakos as present for the January 21, 2009 meeting was proposed as was a clarification about the condition and status of the remains of one burial from November 2008 test trenching activities in the minutes from November 17, 2008. The amendments were agreeable to the maker of the motion and the second; all voted in favor.

Vice-Chair Bailey then moved on to other business and recognized Mr. Moore who reminded the Committee that at one point the Committee discussed moving forward with fundraising efforts by putting together a sub-committee of Committee members to meet with City staff and community members. Councilor Dwyer and Vice-Chair Bailey indicated that they remained interested and Mr. Moore said he would work with them and members of the City staff to meet on this topic.

In other business, Mr. McGee asked if the results of the analysis of the remains are available to the public and who has a right to the information. Additional clarification on this topic was needed, but it was generally felt that the information regarding the burying ground was public.

Dr. Boisvert suggested to the City staff that as part of final design, brass markers be installed to delineate property lines and other key landmarks at the site. Steve Parkinson and Cindy Hayden indicated that staff would look into this.

Members of the Committee asked if there was still a plan to use different colored bricks to mark the locations of burials not exhumed or placed in the burial vault. Mr. Moore indicated this is a detail which will be addressed during final design and would come back to the committee.

At the end of other business, Councilor Dwyer moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. McGee seconded the motion; a voice vote was taken and all voted in favor and the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.