

MINUTES
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE
ON THE
PRESCOTT PARK MASTER PLAN
7:30 A.M. – MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2016
EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

1. Call to Order – Chair, Councilor Chris Dwyer

Chair Dwyer called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

Members in Attendance: Councilor Chris Dwyer, Chair; Mayor Jack Blalock; Councilor Nancy Pearson; Phyllis Eldridge, Trustee of Trust Funds; Stefany Shaheen, Citizen Representative

Members Absent: Thomas Watson, Trustee of Trust Funds; Dana Levenson, Trustee of Trust Funds

Staff Present: David Moore, Assistant City Manager

2. Consideration of Minutes – (November 30, 2016)

Mayor Blalock moved to approve the minutes of November 30, 2016. Seconded by Councilor Pearson and voted.

3. Weston & Sampson Presentation on Preferred Master Plan

Mr. Bolinger and Ms. Ruane gave a brief presentation on the Preferred Master Plan.
http://www.cityofportsmouth.com/ppmp/12.12.16_BRC%20Preferred%20Plan.pdf

Ms. Ruane highlighted the changes made since the last meeting including removing the “cut-through” path in the formal garden; placing the Hovey Fountain at the Marcy Street entrance; clarifying that the trees are not in the sight-line of the stage; terracing of the Bowl area, etc.

They then discussed the moveable stage which would allow for coverage of the stage which can be rented seasonally or purchased. It was also explained that professional companies will store, set up, inspect, take down and transport the stage facility and it must comply with full building codes and inspection by city officials. They continued that there can be screening at the sides of the stage which are taken down after each performance and a movable sound booth can be located up to 300’ away from the stage and removed at the end of the season.

Discussion ensued regarding the pros and cons of a moveable stage and the safety concerns raised by the community with a “temporary” stage.

Next, Mr. Bolinger discussed the Costs of the Park Improvements stating that the costs will be significant no matter what plan is adopted as maintenance has been deferred and the infrastructure needs are great. He then reviewed the phasing recommendations and that Phase I and II will need careful coordination between new and existing park features.

Chair Dwyer asked what the downtime is for relocating the formal garden and would Prescott Park Arts Festival lose a season. Ms. Ruane explained that Phase One is the most intensive Phase as it is laying the groundwork for infrastructure.

Mr. Moore stated it would include the utilities underground and the worst of the seawalls are included in Phase I.

Ms. Shaheen stated it is important to try not to lose a PPAF season and feels that combining Phases I and II would make sense.

Chair Dwyer stated that there is a lot of pre-planning and coordination required that has to go like clockwork as well as cooperation from the weather.

Ms. Eldridge stated she is unsure why it is more important not to lose a season of the PPAF than the formal gardens. Mr. Bolinger agreed stating he thought the formal garden would be done first but feels it would make sense to combine Phase I and II to be able to get both done.

Ms. Ruane stated that it is important for Phase I to include a “wow” moment that people can see and get the public excited about the rest of the project.

Chair Dwyer stated that this would have to start in the spring of 2018 in order to be in line with the upcoming 400th anniversary in 2023 for completion. She stated it is also important for people to understand that the infrastructure improvements are required even without the master plan process and will have major costs associated.

Next, the committee and members of the public that were in attendance were asked to prioritize their preferences of various furnishing/lighting/railings, etc. options with red dots on presentation boards. After 10 minutes, the meeting was reconvened.

Ms. Ruane stated that this was meant to help establish a palette that everyone can agree on and that it is probable that there will be different types of furnishings selected for different parts of the park.

Discussion ensued regarding the City’s program on wayfinding and making sure that this is coordinated with that effort as well as ensuring a proper marker for the Prescott Sisters. Concern was also expressed regarding making these selections too soon in the process with Chair Dwyer stating that this exercise would actually serve to eliminate options going forward that people have no interest in at all.

4. Follow-up discussion on Governance Recommendations

Regarding Page 6, Principles for Future License Agreements, Councilor Pearson stated that there will be a variety of community groups using the stage and would like clarification as to whether the city will be investing in the equipment and/or will each group be expected to provide their own equipment and run it themselves.

Chair Dwyer stated that will be included in the agreements with any exceptions specifically stated.

Councilor Pearson stated that the PPAF has always done their own, but other groups may not have the equipment or personnel to run their own and feels this needs to be clarified.

Discussion ensued regarding the transition period and the makeup of the next advisory committee and its duties. It was stated that it would be an advisory committee and not political. It was discussed that there shouldn’t be a “temporary” or “transitional” group making decisions that the next committee would have to follow.

Chair Dwyer stated there may need to be a transitional group to be able to plan for the upcoming season as there will need to be licensing agreements brought forward that cannot wait. Chair Dwyer then related some concerns from Mr. Levenson in his absence including not having representation of user groups on the committee, but have them fall under the Art Speak representative. Chair Dwyer suggested having a “standing reports” section of the agendas for the user group to be able to report their concerns and activities.

5. Preparation for City Council Work Session

Mayor Blalock stated there is one hour for the Work Session so we will need to keep it moving along as there will be a lot of questions.

Chair Dwyer suggested 20 minutes for the presentation and having handouts for Council review.

6. Public Comment

Dan Corcoran – stated that there is still the concern of noise in the neighborhood and even across the river in Kittery and that there are already ordinances in place regarding noise but they need to be enforced. He then read a statement of behalf of Beth Margeson regarding some of her remaining concerns including the life expectancy of the park after the changes are made, where the moveable stage will be stored off-season, the impact of phasing on the neighborhood etc.

Chair Dwyer stated the life expectancy is approximately 50-80 years.

Arthur Clough – stated he liked being able to weigh in on the amenities of the park, but feels it is too soon to do this part. Secondly, he stated that not all of the minutes of the PPMP are posted on the web. (*Chair Dwyer later clarified that there are 2 different locations that minutes are posted and that they may only have been posted in one location.*) Mr. Clough continued that there needs to be built-in revocation clauses in the licensing agreements. Finally, he discussed his ongoing concern with alcohol use in the park and the lack of enforcement, collection of donations and the shortfall of money going back to the Trust Fund; blocking off access to the park during events, and recent testimony of a neighbor that was told by a consultant that the PPAF activities cannot be curtailed because of the negative economic impact to the city stating that this is a public park and it should not be the economic driver of the City.

Ben Anderson, Director of Prescott Parks Arts Festival – addressed the previous speakers’ misinformation regarding the alcohol use in the park stating that there were zero citations regarding alcohol use. He continued that they hired a “secret shopper” company which found no issues with donation collection or denying access to the Park. He stated that regarding the “mandate to fill bars and hotels” he stated this is a ridiculous statement and their only service is to provide affordable community access to the arts. Next, he addressed his concerns with the temporary or movable stage stating that comparisons to other activities in other cities is apples to oranges and explained the various safety concerns related to a temporary stage.

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.