

July 17, 2020

Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Prescott Park Master Plan Implementation

9-10:30am

Online / Zoom Meeting

Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES

- Nancy Colbert Puff, Deputy City Manager (NCP)
- Peter Rice, Director of Public Works (PR)
- Joe Almeida, Project Manager (JA)
- Beth Margeson (BM)
- Councilor Petra Huda (PH)
- Robin Lurie-Meyerkopf (RLM)
- Genevieve Aichele (GA)
- Tom Watson (TW)
- Cheri Ruane, Vice President, W&S (CR)
- Savy Kep, Landscape Designer, W&S (SK)
- Ted Touloukian, President, Touloukian Touloukian, (TT)
- Boris Angelov, Designer, Touloukian Touloukian (BA)

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION AND COMMENTS

Following the regulations of the COVID-19 emergency response the requirement has been waived that a quorum be physically present. Remote attendees will introduce themselves and identify their location; votes will be counted by roll call.

Presentation (CR):

- Project Team
- Agenda
 - Buildings and Performance Stage
 - Public Engagement Process
 - Project Updates
- Recap
 - Resiliency study shows that Prescott Park is extremely prone to flooding; a resilient approach is required in order to protect the culturally historical buildings – the Shaw and the Sheafe
 - For this meeting Ted will be focusing on discussing the raising and potential relocation options of the Shaw

Buildings and Performance Stage: Relocation Study

TT: presents

- Preservation of these buildings are important to the cultural identity to the park. We have done various assessment studies for the location, programming, and the interior and exterior movement/accessibility
- All options presented have the Stage at the center line of the Performance Lawn and the Shaw raised 4 feet in elevation, lifting it out of the flood plain
 - Option A: lifting the Shaw and moving it closer to Marcy Street opens it up as a public use building and civic space; with the new addition split between the stage, it is able to provide support to both the stage and the Shaw
 - Option B: Places both the new addition and the Shaw closer to Marcy Street creating a stronger connection to the waterfront from the park

- Option C: Centering the Performance Stage between the New Addition and the Shaw (closest to the street); the new addition provides support to the Stage although not connected to the Shaw

CR: presents

- We are coordinating from a historic perspective, the movement and the rethinking of the buildings, to help best preserve its cultural footprint
- Looking at the opportunities from a park first perspective, if we have to raise the Shaw to protect it, could we also potentially move it laterally? It could lead to:
 - Potential reuse for open Civic Spaces
 - Unlocking the multiple possibilities of the alignments of the buildings and how they interact could with each other

RLM: question

- Does the movement of the Shaw include renovation? What is the extent of that? At what cost?

TT: answer

- When you consider the resiliency planning and you need to lift it 4 feet, it requires much change for the preservation guidelines, there are considerations to assessing the exterior features such as the sidings, the frames, and how valuable they are or are not
- When you look at the interior, some floors need replacement to be updated to meet regulation in load bearing, updating bathrooms, and the egress of the building to be more accessible

RLM: question

- Will it be renovated to have office use or public use?

TT: answer

- Raising the Shaw to be 4 ft, it would need to have an accessible entrance, providing different options to come into this beautiful structure
- The idea is to declutter the usage of the Shaw and provide more efficient use of the Shaw, whether it be office or public use, to showcase the cultural beauty of the building

CR: adds

- In the original masterplan, the stage was suggestively placed at this diagonal location to make use of the Shaw to support the stage to reduce clutter on the site that is brought in annually such as the trailers and fences
 - Anyone that uses the stage will need this space for performance needs
 - But with all of the considerations for resiliency it has given us more options to think about the placements of the stage and the Shaw
- For option A it is optimal for a sound perspective and it is benefitting the park first plan by providing support to both the Stage and the Shaw

BM: question

- The park landscaping equipment is currently in the lean to and the garage, if the stage is replacing those two buildings, where would those materials go?

CR: answers

- We are investigating a new maintenance building near Four Tree Island in this parking lot so it would be able to serve the maintenance for all sections of Prescott Park, and be a more efficient use of space

GA: question

- You're talking about upgrading the lean to and the garage, is it possible to put some of the pieces (elevator) in those buildings? Are they not in good enough shape?

TT: answers

- The garage and lean are both 1 story structures that are in the flood zone, they have a slab on grade construction meaning the building would need to be taken apart to update it

CR: adds

- The condition of these structures have a lot of interior rot from past flooding – it would take a lot of time and money to preserve these buildings

Buildings and Performance Stage: Stage Option Cost

CR: presents

- Comparing stage options, we looked at three options
 - Portable stage: rented
 - Using a company
 - Portable stage: purchased
 - Can be used in other places in the city
 - Must find a place to store off site
 - Site built: custom purchased
 - If it is site built it is working with the building alignments
- With a portable stage we are dealing with a kit of standard parts that is “not designed”
- With a site-built structure, we would create a structure in keeping with the architecture, and the culture of the space

TT: adds

- The diagrams are trying to be historically sensitive to the Shaw and the Sheafe, the more temporary option would not look like that, it would be very typically standard and not aligned with the current historical buildings

CR: adds

- Cost
 - Portable stages require much take down and putting up, creating more wear and tear to the stage and to the lawn of the park
 - Looking forward at year 25:
 - The portable rented stage would come out to 7.75 million
 - The portable purchased would come out to 3.45 million (including a full replacement cost of 650k at year 20)
 - The site building would come out to 2.25 – 2.75 million (including a 50k yearly maintenance cost – with 1 – 1.5 million initial cost)
 - Depending on care, it would average to 20 years before it would need to be replaced (for the standard build up/build down stages)

BM: comments

- I was at the city council meeting, it was a work session, and there was no vote
- We must follow the master plan and the master plan said it would be a portable stage
- We as a group cannot authorize anything to change the masterplan, we would need 2 quarters vote to adjust the masterplan, and then send it to the Attorney General's office, and then the trust;
- I think there are practical issues to, so having a stage year-round – kids were playing around the stage, if it's a bigger stage, it could be dangerous
- We are also building very heavily in the area.

PH: comments

- We are down to the portable stage rented and purchased; how much would the city be able to help with the installation costs?

PR: answers

- This is not a simple structure, it must be installed by certified professionals, it is comparable to a permanent building putting up and taking down every year, we do not have the in-house staff to help with that but we could help with the electrical work for the stage
- For the rented version, although it is more expensive, we do not have to think about putting up and taking down and storage, and it provides more future flexibility

PH: question

- Is this location where we were going to put the storm water storage underneath it, would it be put in at that time? It is a onetime deal?

CR: answers

- Yes, while we are working in that region, it would be best to do all the installation of the groundwork in one go, so we do not have to dig up the ground again in the future

GA: comments

- I agree with Peter, you are always going to get the most updated piece of equipment, it seems like the most optimal route however,
- Things are meant to be changed, moves to be adjusted (regarding the masterplan), I think all options should be considered, the issue is that people see it as how it is now, if it was in a different location and in a designed to smoothly fit within the park, the stage could be a work of art, a cultural icon, supporting our maritime history and our cultural placemaking

RLM: question

- Is there information previously regarding somebody donating a lot of money to designing a stage?

BM: answers

- Think it was a mainstage sponsor, donating a million for a permanent stage?

NCP: adds

- We have attendees listening in and one has a hand raised, we can save the discussion for during public comment

Public Engagement Process

CR: presents

- We are big proponents of the public engagement process; we are pulling together a Virtual Open House:
 - Live webinar: August or early September
 - Update folks, introduce phase 1, bring people up to speed, question and answer during the live session
 - Non-Live: a duration of 2-3 weeks
 - Where people can look at all the supporting documents: masterplan, resiliency data, historic photos, etc.
 - Online office hours to ask the Project Team Questions
 - Live Webinar review:
 - Sharing what we hear, updates based on comments, next steps, and timeline
- Looking for endorsements, comments and questions from the committee about thoughts on the process
- We are also game for a socially-distanced live park event

PH: question

- Can you put a dollar amount on these amenities? Flood mitigation is a fixed cost, but what are the cost for these other amenities that we are proposing?
- If we had an idea of the cost of raising Shaw and the new addition, how much would each piece cost and then we can make better judgements as to what should happen first

CR: answers

- We will have a probable cost for those aspects

BM: comments

- It is clearly defined as to what Phase 1 is, it looks like Phase 1 will eat up a lot of our budget, we need to know the financials to make better judgement
- We may have to go forward with moves that make the park resilient and then if things go south, then we can pause and pick it up when there is a larger budget

Project Updates

CR: answers/ presents

- That is all a great point, I want to take a moment to talk about Phase 1 adjustments
- One of the proponents we want to respond to is the resiliency on land and water
- The Priority of Phase 1:
 - Raise and Relocate the Shaw
 - Improve and relocate the stage facility
 - New maintenance near Four Tree Island
 - Improve seawalls and stormwater infrastructure
- There will be a cost point to each of these so we can consider how much is what and what is worth the priority based on cost

PR: comments

- There are 2.3 million authorized by city council, it is pending bond, any more money would come through by private donations

PH: comments

- I would ask for our priorities be to improve the sea wall and the pier, protecting the pier should be our priority. If we start seeing sea level rise, we want to be ready and we do not want to be doing this over again
- I would like to get public input on what would be the most important thing for them after we use the budget for the seawalls, and the stormwater chambers under the park
- What is the timeline on this, so we are not dug up when we are going on our 400th anniversary?

CR: answers

- The dollars are going to make a big difference, we will update this graphic to show the new Phase 1 updates and update the priority list to include dollar amounts

PH: comments

- If we find that it is 2 million for the sea walls, then we would have to go back into the council

PR: comments

- One point of clarification, council has authorized the 2.3 million, so the money can be spent, the bonds are just pending

RLM:

- If we do relocate the Shaw, we need to have accessibility

TT:

- A lot depends on the use of the buildings, if we determine that there will be civic use then we will provide more access
- Accessibility is our top priority; we will be assessing the programming of the building and will determine the level of accessibility to support the Shaw

PH: comments

- If we need to provide access, can we move the new addition to the east side to provide the same access, getting it off the rail?

CR: answers

- As we talk about the importance of the new building supporting the Shaw, to facilitate egress and facilities (accessible entrance and bathrooms), if we talk about the building supporting the stage, it should be adjacent to the stage

BM: adds

- Price tags and Timelines would be helpful to understand better the Phase 1 priorities

NCP: adds

- I would like to add we have yet to conclude a time frame for public outreach

CR: adds

- We would like to start thinking about when this would happen,
- If we were to say in a month, middle of August, to September, for the first Virtual Webinar when would you be available

NCP:

- August 27th, Thursday? – seems good for everyone (ask Tom and Alan)

CR:

- We should meet before then to go over more details

NCP:

- August 14th, Friday – 9 am - agreed

Public Attendee Comments

John Tabor

- Yes, you are correct we (PPAF) have a donor for a purchased stage, and believe we can raise a million and a half dollars (the arts)
- I do not believe our donor would be interested in the rented option
- We would like to put in a million and a half dollars in a public/private partnership
- I would like to quote from the master plan "It has been clear from the very beginning of this master plan process that Prescott Park's identity and heritage have been influenced by the integration of the arts, to the great benefit of all. Despite struggles to balance performing arts programming with neighborhood quality of life and park capacity, there is an overarching belief that arts belong in this park."
- In the cost estimate comparison page, it shows the permanent stage in the life cycle is much cheaper in the long run
- Visually, it gets rid of the trailers, it aligns the buildings, there is no disruption in building up and tearing down
- Either of the temporary stages would need to be covered for the arts fest to not have rain outs
 - If it is a removable stage, it needs to withstand hurricane winds – removing it or lowering the stage
- The permanent option, can be safer, it is cheaper (with help from the donors) a valuable asset to the park – fulfilling the goal of the arts belonging in the park and we need a good stage facility to do that

Judy Nerbonne

- Thanks to Peter Rice and the staff to keeping the park open, it has been wonderful and appreciate all the great thinking
- I hope that whatever we end up, that we keep the park first approach
- If we had a portable purchased stage, then it could be used in other functions

Joanne Wolfe

- Thank you for letting us participate

Kathleen Boduch

- No additional comment

Sandra Parr

- I would like people to know that the masterplan went through all through different
- We should keep in mind that the masterplan emphasized the movable stage

Stephanie Seacord

- Standing ready to help from the City Public Information Office to spread media information

GA: adds

- For the public outreach, we should have someone from the Herald to report what is going on, so the more we can get all the information out there, so it is not just hearsay so that the public can make all the important decisions

BM: ends

- Motion to Adjourn
- Seconded

End of notes: SK