

August 14th, 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)
- Beth Margeson (BM)
- Councilor Petra Huda (PH)
- Robin Lurie-Meyerkopf (RLM)
- Genevieve Aichele (GA)
- Alan Gordon (AG)
- Tom Watson (TW)
- Cheri Ruane, Vice President, W&S (CR)
- Savy Kep, Landscape Designer, W&S (SK)

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.

TW: Keep in mind that the discussions topics within this group should be made available to the public

Presentation (CR):

- Project Team
- Agenda
 - Project Schedule
 - Crucial Phase 1 Items
 - Updated Draft Phasing Diagram
- Project Schedule (CR)
 - Propose a public engagement meeting in September – more work needs to be done and this allows an appropriate time to for better decision making
 - We talked about it being 2 weeks from now but now we are proposing it to be 5 weeks from now
 - Final design of Phase 1 and preparing bid documents
 - Goal is to have phase 1 constructions in the spring and continue through the summer
 - RLM – What is does the public engagement process look like?
 - CR: Virtual engagement of proposed phase 1 plans and bringing people up to speed, recap what we talked about, and discuss what we are proposing
 - CR: Then there will be two weeks of a “drop-in time” for the public to ask questions
 - CR: Final Presentation – this is what we presented, this is what we heard – and this information is what would confirm the final design package
 - AG – Is there a way we can modify and augment the engagement process throughout, so we get more information about the people engaging?
 - CR: Yes, we can do that
 - TW – Will the staff or committee members be a part of the facilitation of the process as well?

- It would be nice to have the committee members there to answer some questions that the public may have and engage in the conversations
- BM – we are not dialoging with people; we are just receiving their feedback? We do get input, but the vast majority of people don't know something is being done until it is actually being done.
 - Yes, we are there to answer logistical questions

TW – could you put together a one-page outline for the entire plan of the public engagement schedule?

CR: great idea

- RLM – what if there is signage in the park so that people can be informed
 - CR: we typically have a sign that says pardon our appearance – we could be more creative for them by adding some renderings to create excitement from the public
 - Beth – not only do we fail to get input; the vast majority does not know about the process until it gets built and people react, so it will be helpful to have signage
- Crucial Phase 1: Order of Operations & Interdependencies/Cost Estimates of Building Renovations (CR)
 - This is a “park first” approach
 - This is the upper end of the roughly estimated cost ranges
 - Cost Estimates of Building Renovations
 - Raise and relocated the Shaw
 - Renovate the Shaw
 - New Construction Addition
 - Renovate the Shaw – not necessary for this Phase but just including the costs for all the buildings
 - AG – Was there a certain amount of money allocated through city council?
 - NCP – that is the next item on our agenda
 - GA – Would they include demolishing the garage and the lean to?
 - CR: Yes, that would be included in this phase
 - RLM – How would the accessibility be around the Shaw?
 - CR: That why the addition is important because it will allow there to be elevators and ramps to be constructed without compromising the historical structure of the Shaw
 - TW – Is the cost of raising the Shaw included in the previous slide?
 - CR: Yes
 - TW – If we are raising the Shaw, are we also raising Water street?
 - CR: The liberty garden side is higher, and we still need to do some engineering work to understand the movement of the water better to best gage the grade raising
 - CR: We are protecting at the sea wall level and it will help keep the water out, the buildings are retreating, but then the grading will be moving the water away, lower from the building, then we need to connect back to Marcy, it will not be a wall, it will be a gradual gradation so that everything meets so it's connected in the landscape
 - TW – Are the Helical piles necessary?
 - CR: We need to do geotechnical boring to understand what is down there, where bedrock is etc. The garage and the Lean-To has settled so we need to understand subsurface conditions so that if the surface will settle, then they may need to be required – they provide a solid base for the buildings to be on secure ground
 - CR: It may add 20% to the cost, and we need to figure out how many and how deep
 - BM – if everything is done at the same time then it reduces costs?
 - There is an economy of scale – if you mobilize once and the contractor does it at one time while the ground is open, then yes it would be less expensive. There are clear break points, but it is always more efficient to do it all at once, and all the coordination it takes for all the disciplines to be out on site creates more time and cost

- TW – Do these costs include the soft costs, the engineering costs, etc.?
 - CR: We should be conservative and add a 10% buffer to these costs
- AG – I think it is unlikely to get a lump sum that covers everything, should we understand that these are in priority order but can be done separately?
 - CR: Yes, the priority orders are the sea walls, and then the stormwater improvements and with that comes raising and moving the Shaw. The Sheafe is higher and can be done later
- RLM – Can we say in the language of the project/process that accessibility issues will be addressed?
 - CR: Yes, absolutely we will be explicit
- TW: – There are seawalls in designated in other phases – are they included in these costs?
 - CR: The scope is designated along the line of the Phase 1
 - TW: The seawalls facing North are the ones that have not received much work
 - CR: It is a great point to address the ones that need most help
- Design Tents (CR)
 - Supported by improvements and future improvements
- Updated Draft Phasing Plan (CR)
 - Proposed maintenance building near Four Tree Island – extremely efficient building that can help support not only Prescott Park, but also the Island
 - BM – it is important that the public knows that the park needs maintenance work and that this place would be very helpful in providing all the necessary maintenance needs
- Phase 1 Recommendations (CR)
 - Improve Sea walls, adding subsurface stormwater capacity, regrading water street, raising and relocating the Shaw, (which immediately influences staging), (and then the garage and lean to is out – which then makes it necessary for the maintenance building at Four tree Island)
 - The electrical service is a worthwhile inclusion
 - AG – These are basically infrastructure related priorities – the importance of integration with the neighborhoods, we need to site those messages here so that the meaning is loud
 - CR: You are right the priority message needs to be – park first, resiliency, community engagement – that all needs to be part of the message
 - TW – I did some quick math ... part of my concern is that if we do not have the second building, how would we put a stage in without putting another trailer village behind it.
 - CR: We certainly do not want to send the wrong message; the masterplan needs refinement based on conversations
 - CR: I appreciate the question because we need to be consistent with the intent
- PH – What does this phasing include?
 - CR: Water street is the connector between the neighborhood and the river between all flooding and inundation
 - PH: Why not do all the stormwater work right at the beginning?
 - CR: We would need to dig up the entire site, and decide all the finishes, etc. By phasing, we can work on one section entirely from beginning to end and then move on to another quadrant.
- PH – After we do the stormwater and the infrastructure work, we will still see people coming into working on the park?
 - CR: The goal is to do the work in sections and in a discrete way that people will still be able to enjoy the rest of the park. If we do the entire park (it would be expensive) and the entire park would be closed off for years

- PH – When we do the first phase, do we know which section of the docks and sea walls are the most critical, so we do not have any over spill in effort?
 - CR: One of the next phases will be reviewing the status of the seawalls and making sure we are addressing the most critical seawalls in the first phase
- PH – Is that included in the cost estimates? Or are we just doing a ballpark?
 - It is a ballpark of Phase 1 right now, as we dig deeper to the design, we can put actual opinion of probable cost. It is important to understand the costs and so we can phase fiducially
- BM – Would you say that doing Phase 1 is the most expensive part of the park?
 - CR: It's difficult to say, they are all going to be in the range, Phase 1 has a lot of infrastructure and utility and Phase 2 has a lot of above grade finishes in the fountain and pavers and playgrounds and then Phase 4 has lawn and then a lot of storm water storage
- BM – I'd like to say that what you have for Phase 1 is really good, having all the infrastructure stuff and the stormwater stuff is a solid approach for us to bring to the public to get more information on

Project Funding Status (NCP):

- Prescott Park page for the City's Capital Improvements Plan
 - This has been part of the Capital Improvement Plan and this project has always been planned to have a large community fundraising aspect
 - As we move forward as these numbers should be monitored and updated
- Questions about Funding:
 - GA – The first million from the arts is only available if it will be a permanent stage, so we should not depend on that money until we decide correct?
 - NCP: We have a public audience in attendant that will be able to answer
 - Beth – Where is the money coming from for areas 28 and 25 ?
 - It seems that there will be a fundraising effort from the community
- TW – anything else any member would like to discuss before we go to public comment? Should we have future meeting dates?
 - NCP – future meeting dates for this committee?
 - TW – we should move faster, because 1 month is long, two weeks? Discussing availability for the 28th Friday
 - It looks good for everyone – Next meeting will be: 9am, Friday 28th

Public Comment Section

- Courtney Perkins – Thanks everyone for all the discussion and effort, I am a new executive director for the Prescott Park Arts festival – wanted to address the question about funding for the stage, we have a donor that will support 1 – 1.5 million dollars for a site built stage, the festival stage and board has committed to fundraising for a site built stage as well
- Paige Trace – I am a sitting city councilor but speaking privately for myself as a neighbor. What we are looking at for Phase 1 is about a 6-million-dollar cost, with a 2.3 million from the council and then leaving a 3.2 million left to raise. Is that private partner sponsorship feasible to the trust? Is the site build stage permanent feasible? And would the stage being attached to the historic structure have to be brought up by the historical society – can it be done?
 - TW – I believe what we have heard in the past, because it is city land, it is not required to go to their own HDC approval.
 - BM – Changing the master plan will require a vote of the city council to have a 2/3's vote to change it because it was stated in the masterplan that the stage not be permanent.

- Paige – If the city were to accept funding from a private individual represented by Prescott Park arts, is it locking itself into a permanent relationship?
 - Beth – That would be a possibility, but I believe it is a city council issue
- Paige – Isn't the discussion of the permanent stage part of Phase 1? You are saying that they want a permanent stage, but there is not exact location discussed.
 - TW – Yes you are correct, there are a lot of implications involved in deciding to change the master plan to create a permanent stage. Any stage at this level will be a temporary one, until we get through the construction of the new warehouse building
 - CR – We would also make sure that the subsurface infrastructure be built in to accommodate the stage
- Joel Harris – I wanted to speak in favor of a permanent stage. I see it as an asset to the city, not only as a use for Prescott Park but for other organizations, it's another opportunity to create a cultural symbol for Portsmouth – increase the beauty of our city. With current events, we learned that community is important and with a permanent stage we can build on that. And make sure that we do not focus on the technical sides but also the cultural and social sides of the permanent stage.

Public Comment Period Closed

Final Comments?

- Beth – Thank you W&S for putting this together, I understand this a lot more.
- Tom – Kudos to Peter rice for doing a great job for the Park
 - Peter – Thank you, my staff is great, and they deserve the appreciation

Motion to Adorn, seconded, approved

End of notes: SK