

August 28th, 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.

Amendment to August 14th, 2020 meeting minutes

- Joe Almeida out of the Attendees list
- BM's comment on public input

Presentation (CR):

- Project Team
 - Added the Blue-Ribbon Committee to Project Team list
- Agenda
 - Project Schedule
 - Public engagement process outline
 - Updated Draft Phasing Diagram
- Project Schedule
 - Public Process to begin around mid to end of September
- Public Process Timeline
 - 1st Virtual Public Meeting
 - Planning on having the 1st public meeting around the 3rd week of September
 - Live presentation of Master Plan Recap updates
 - Emphasizing Park First Approach
 - Introduction to Phase 1
 - Open discussion
 - Online Content Review
 - An interim period where we will have all the content for the project so far for the public to look over content on their own time – for about 2 weeks
 - There will also be a scheduled period where the public can drop in and have a chat with the project team
 - Advertise engagement through social media or postcards

- 2nd Virtual Public Meeting
 - A week after the Online Content Review
 - Reviewing public feedback
 - Adjustments to Phase 1 based on feedback
- Questions:
 - RLM: What methods are we going to use to get the message out?
 - CR: We can place messages in the park, social media posts (linking back to city landing page), we have access to listservs and groups associated with Portsmouth
 - Use analog and digital to get the information out
 - PH: Are we going to do a review of what is going out there and is there going to be a vote? I would like to have things discussed already before going to the public.
 - CR: We will make sure that all the content is out there, and the committee will be aware of everything
 - PH: Is the committee supposed to vote on this?
 - TW: At what stage are you referring to?
 - PH: I was not clear on seeing anything be labeled as final and what is included. Does the committee decide this and vote on it before we take to the public?
 - Tom: I do not believe we have agreed on anything so far. I do not believe we should decide before the public process, but we should have a plan for the public to comment on. We should show what we have and then have them review it. Then after the feedback from the public, we should go to the city council with the modifications
 - PH: My concern is that if there are parts of the plan that has not been approved in the original masterplan and we bring it to the public and then coming back to the city council it may not be approved. For example, some of the new buildings proposed and not in the masterplan, do we have to go to the council first to get it approved?
 - TW: I'm not sure we can go to the city council now and say we may need to change the master plan (recommendations). I believe the city council will want us to evaluate these resiliency procedures, etc. and then bring it to the public. For the public process, we should tell them that we are an advisory committee and we want to propose these recommended modifications to the master plan to the public and then bring the information received from the public process and compile a modification list for the master plan back to the city because it needs to be approved by the city
 - AG: I think the overall tone of any public session is #1. Although, we have been meeting amongst us, our overall goal is that we maintain transparency, and if people have input and we have a way to demonstrate that their input is heard. I want at every opportunity to reiterate those two points
- Updated Draft Phasing Diagram
 - Updated the Project Phasing Plan
 - Phase 1 Diagram – Shows the sequence of moves that need to happen in a schematic model
 - Existing Conditions
 - First, address specific sea wall improvements, identifying vulnerable points and some of them would be improved, in some cases we may elevate some areas of the sea walls
 - Storm water improvements – Water Street is very low (6') and as the water rises it can get up to 10' – this plan is to place subsurface pipes under the street so that the stormwater can move under the street rather than flood the park
 - Once we improve the storm water conditions on water street, we would also raise water street, and that would also influence the movement of the Shaw

- Raising and Relocating the Shaw – removing the old transformer and placing a new electrical service
- Regrading the areas around the buildings/relocated stage and the performance lawn
 - The lawn is graded to optimize audience viewing and manage stormwater by holding storm water and then allow it to percolate down rather than flooding vital parts of the park (buildings or paths)
- The Overall Diagram
 - Improving the sea walls can be done independently
 - Managing the storm water in water street is what will influence the other moves to happen
- Costs summary
 - We are prioritizing improving the seawalls and the electrical service, but once we move down the list, it starts to influence the bigger moves and influence the cost
- Questions:
 - TW: If our resources only allows us to do what is in the priority box, if we raised and relocated the Shaw and not renovate it would it be still be usable?
 - CR: Yes it could still be usable in its original purpose, however we wouldn't recommend using the 3rd floor for storage. We would also need to have a plan in place for its future improvements. We need to move the sewer, water, electrical, etc. It is usable in the way it is used now. For it to reach its fullest potential then that's when the renovation would come in
 - TW: If we did only in the priority box, what would happen to the stage?
 - CR: We would shift the stage back to align with the rail – for the first year, it may have to be rented
 - TW: If the stage is relocated to the rail and we don't have enough funds to do the regrading of the lawn and we remove the two or three buildings – does that mean we would need to have the trailer compound back?
 - CR: Yes, we would need to look at the back of house accommodations – we could look at the first floor of the Shaw for storage but there will have to be trailers as well
 - PH: The maintenance facility is moved to phase 1, how much would that cost? In my opinion, I would like to use the funds first for the actual park. Would we be able to use another facility nearby for this purpose? The sewer facility or other areas for storage?
 - PR: No, we do not have enough storage up at the wastewater facility, we would need to build a new building and we do not have storage area anywhere else. The issue is that we have a lot of materials that require storage away from the weather. It's fine if we don't have storage nearby, we can figure how to support the park without it
 - PH: If it is just lawn mowers etc. could we investigate looking at quotes for landscapers?
 - PR: Sure, we could look at private contracts for the operations of the park. The storage management could be phased and in the near term the Shaw building could be used for the maintenance holding – we will implement strategies based on what decisions are made
 - PH: I would like to see the park get going and if we are not going to be using the Shaw at the moment then it would be good to flip it into use (facility storage)
 - GA: What is going to be presented in the public discussions? Just putting myself in the place of someone that has not been privy to the information. Could we show the flood pattern now, and why it needs to be changed? People only see what is on the surface and they don't understand that the infrastructure is the important thing

- CR: Sorry if I this was not explained clearly earlier, for the first virtual public meeting, we will be recapping the master plan and the enabling engineering and resiliency for the park. This will all be laid out in the first meeting for that exact reason. We also want to allow plenty of time between the first meeting and the second meeting for the public to ask those questions. We want to say that this area of the park is the most vulnerable and needs to be worked on first. We just want to refresh everyone's memory and do everything we have been with y'all but in a consolidated way.
- BM: I am not in favor of privatizing the maintenance of the park, although it is nice and quaint there is a lot that goes into maintaining it, it would be better if DPW were to continue maintaining it as they have the experience and institutionalized knowledge. Maybe DPW and the park can both fund the maintenance facility. Also, In phase 1, the main pathway – I didn't see that clearly in the diagram. Also, in the cost estimate summary I didn't see the cost of the temporary stage structure
 - CR: I agree with the DPW is a better option to continue the maintenance, the facility can serve more than just Prescott Park. In the master plan there is a path that is sweeping through the park. Phase 1 might be now broken up into more than 1 piece because of the monetary value. That pathway needs to work in the short term and then ultimately work in the long term. Here the existing pathway is shown we would probably want to straighten that and move it down but eventually must connect on both ends.
- TW: Petra asked what is it going to cost for the maintenance facility, any rough projections?
 - CR: Peter do you have a rough projection? I do not have the information at the moment but can look into later. It should be the most economical structure
 - PR: \$200 sq. ft - \$400 sq. ft – it depends on if there would be office space, or other uses, etc. I do not see this being a hugely elaborate structure. It would need to be heated, so there would be some level of infrastructure
- TW: What is the maintenance transition like presently, aren't there some maintenance materials currently being stored near Four Tree Island? How is the movement of those materials from that location to the park, is it placed on trailers?
 - PR: We now just have the garage and the shed – we have a small shed over near four tree island and they do just drive the mowers over, and moving back and fourth (not necessarily on trailers) there is some synergy relative to the activities in the areas, there's already a lot of back and forth.
- TW: We also talked about the maintenance facility being in that spot of green near Mechanic Street
 - PR: That whole area might be in the works already for a pump system– there hasn't been a formal design or public process – the truck traffic in the types of activity required – it is a challenging corner and area already – I wouldn't want to add to that – there hasn't been a formal design for that pump station, so all things are possible
 - RLM: My concern is affecting the neighborhood; they start working early in the morning and the residents have just finished dealing with the construction renovations we had nearby
 - AG: The optics of creating a new building while we are trying to focus on the crucial steps to the infrastructure of the park- I believe we would be better off postponing the new facility to be for another phase
- TW: How would water street look like with the regrading?

- CR: We may need to split the difference from the end of Water Street to the beginning (near Marcy Street) – it is about fitting the conditions to lay out the grades to meet each other and that configuration in engineering is the next step
- BM: Where is the temporary stage cost in the cost summary? I am in favor of the proposed maintenance facility because with the stage, the Shaw may be also used to store materials for the stage events
 - CR: Sorry about that, 310k per year for the rental
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- (Answering TW's previous question) CR: the liberty garden side is higher and the Sheafe is higher but the middle area is the low point (where the buildings sit), so grading is to be determined in the next round of engineering and design
 - TW: Are we going to be channeling the water?
 - CR: The performance lawn will have subsurface infrastructure and graded so that it is providing more area to accommodate the water, it's not going to be a low wet area all the time, there will be infrastructure to manage it. We are trying to make sure that we have accommodations for that "perfect storm" where the tides are high during a storm with high winds. Our approach is to Protect by improving the sea walls, Retreat by moving the Shaw, and Accommodate by designing a stormwater management system in the Performance Lawn
 - TW: If we end up doing the initial improvements to the seawalls/utilities and raising and relocating the Shaw and we don't have the resources to regrade the Shaw, I am worried about where the stage is going to be proposed – I don't want the trailers to be right on Water Street
 - CR: You are right, it may be that the stage may just stay where it is depending on the order of operations
- GA: I do not see the maintenance facility as not part of the park, it is just away from it. If you build a well for a house, the well is part of the house, but is not inside of the house. There is value for a maintenance facility
- CR: Let us talk dates
 - We have looked at September 15th, 2020 for the Kick-Off proposing as the first virtual meeting, how does that look for y'all
 - It is fine with everyone, it is planned for the 15th then at the time of 6-7:30 or 6:30 to 8pm, we generally want to leave time for Q&A
 - 6:30 to 8pm has been preferred
 - RLM: What is the extent of participation from the committee during this public meeting?
 - CR: We certainly may have a time where the public might have questions to the blue-ribbon committee and it would be great for y'all to attend and be available to answer those questions, and just have a conversation
 - TW: Is it possible to have the materials that is going to be discussed a week before the meeting?
 - NCP: We were looking to have another meeting for this group on September 4th to present the materials
 - TW: Will those include the engineering studies?
 - CR: Yes exactly, there may be placeholder slides, but all the information is already there, and we would just need to gather, organize, and finalize it
 - TW: what is everyone's availability for next Friday (September 4th) – (Petra is committing now and will adjust accordingly)
 - Everyone agrees on the date – next meeting will be Friday, September 4th at 9am

- CR: As for the 2nd virtual public meeting we are looking at Thursday October 29th for the same time frame
 - everyone is available and agrees
- TW: should we decide the drop-in time as well?
- CR: Let's have us make the presentation for Friday first and then later decide a roll out schedule - one in the morning, the mid-day, and the evening
- TW: This meeting has been discussing the information for Phase 1 – how do people feel about this concept that has been discussed out this morning, breaking Phase 1 into parts dependent of financial resources, the removal of the structures and the relocation of the Shaw and the stage, and the reorientation of the seating bowl – those seem like the major changes for the master plan, I don't believe we have to make the decision for the temporary/permanent stage change – thoughts and comments on that?
 - BM: I would like to go to the public with everything in phase 1, I think it is important to go to the public with all of the information and have them weigh in all of it – we can endorse this as a broad outline instead of picking and choosing what to present
 - TW: Are you including the regrading of the lawn?
 - BM: Yes, everything in the priority box and everything underneath
 - TW: Do you think we should also have a concept of what the stage will look like and what the buildings may look like?
 - BM: The stage maybe but the buildings are important since we are proposing it to be built on a historic site
 - GA: I thought for this part we are going with a temporary stage; I did not believe the stage decision was part of the discussion of this phase
 - TW: If we are looking at the entire Phase 1 that would include the stage, redoing water street, removing buildings, etc. What I am trying to flush out from Beth's thought is that we should flush out how we present it to the public
 - GA: My understanding about the stage is that we do not need to decide just yet
 - CR: Within these parcels there are subsets that need to break out based on available funding because we may not have all the money at once – it is true that all these components are part of Phase 1
 - BM: Technically we only need to bring the information that is an adjustment to the masterplan (raising and relocating the Shaw and removing the garage and the lean to) out for the public to weigh in on, because the masterplan has been vetted
 - TW: Relocating the seating area is also a new part of the masterplan
 - BM: For efficiency we could just bring the new information about the master plan
 - TW: To the entire committee, should we address all of Phase 1?
 - PH: I agree with addressing all of it, because the stage needs to be available for use for the next summer. I especially like the explaining of the mitigation, everything that we saw to be brought out to the public. I would like to encourage us to talk about the entire phase
 - RLM: We were not going to close the park for a whole year, or anything correct?
 - CR: If we are working on the sea walls then that could be done without changing the location of the stage and wait until the end of the season to dip into the other moves of the site and try to get as much done before the following season
 - RLM: And that was presented to the public already
 - AG: I think we should present the biggest picture so that everyone is grounded in information, and then zoom into the phase

- GA: I absolutely agree, and I think it is just semantics - and maybe within phase 1 there are 6 steps and we are focusing on steps 1 – 4 as an example
- TW: Let's develop an entire committee consensus - stabilize seawalls, storm water improvements on water street, improvements electrical, raising and relocating Shaw closer to Marcy Street, the two additions to Shaw, renovation of the Sheafe, regrading of the lawn area and the stage area for extra storm water resiliency (reorienting the seating bowl from diagonally to parallel to the water) if that is the overall picture I would like to get the committees' approval. I am concerned about going down into the rabbit hole of the stage issue, how do people feel about this summary?
 - CR: I will add the maintenance facility, stage rental, and surface restoration (there are parts and pieces to this that may distill out such as the chain link fence along the seawall) to the cost summary
 - PH: I agree, and I like that the dollar amounts are there, and any aesthetics you can put in there for the public would be great too. Are we going to have to work on the phase 4 sea wall area?
 - CR: Our plan is to have built things that can be built upon and that there is nothing that will have to be pulled up and out to update the following phases
 - PH: If we put out Phase 1 and we are good, and we show Phase 2, 3, and 4, how do we react if the public wants the sequence to be different?
 - CR: We can walk through why we sequenced them this way for the best resiliency preservation strategy
 - AG: Some of those issues like the stage can be figured out later and we should make that statement clearly. To seek approval and input on anything bigger than the priorities may make the meeting much longer
- TW: I do not see that there is any dissent on the phase 1 summary. Our proposal is that Phase 1 Step 1 is the listed items in the Priorities Box
 - NCP: Cheri is going to add all the surface level work involved as well
 - GA: What of this money is acquired and what has been raised, etc. I am not asking it now, but we may have the public ask that question
 - NCP: We will have that available for the meeting
 - PH: It is in the CIP but we may need to go out and request a bond is that correct?
 - NCP: Correct
 - BM: Of the CIP how much of it can be allocated for Phase 1?
 - RLM: Good news is if we bond some of this the interest rates are low right now
- TW: The steps outside of the box can be broken into other steps – Renovating the Shaw could be step 2 and the following are also big-ticket items so they should be their own steps as well
 - CR: We will outline them as Phase 1 A and Phase 1 B, etc.
 - TW: I do not want our graphics to show that the phases are predetermined – an example is the public seating bowl
 - CR: We will adjust this and amend the phase 1 limits so that they fit better in the movements
- TW: One of the things we discussed in the master plan is that the pathway, would create a natural definition of the seating area and if the arts fest people need to have a fence to keep people in then it could be within the inner circle of the park
 - CR: Yes, that is correct, we will update the rendering and you will see it next Friday
- PH: Could we show the previous capacity of the people in the existing space and the capacity of the proposed?

- CR: Yes we could do that but it is tricky to define clearly since previously the people would just fill in the nook and cranny of the park, and the proposed performance lawn is just in the center lawn area, the pathway we are proposing is the limit. We will diagram it, so it is a clearer communication
- TW: I think we have a consensus – do I need to summarize or are we okay – thumbs up, do we need a formal vote on this?
 - NCP: We can wait until next Friday to endorse the information to the public
- TW: Do we have any new business, if not we can go into the public comment period

Open Public Comment Period

- Stephanie Seacourt – Cheri we can work together on getting the information out to the city. Quick technical details, in the 3D drawings the buildings look out of proportion
 - CR: We will adjust that
- SS: I think it is important to define what has already been approved in the master plan and then define the amendments to bring forth to the city
- Courtney Perkins – I would just like to appreciate the commentary around the stage and the phasing, but I would like to bring back the information on the material impact on cost for the temporary or permanent cost, would this be brought to the public?
 - TW: I believe it would come into the later phase and as Cheri suggested a temporary performing stage for the first year, until we do the regrading and complete the Phase 1 (regrading) and add the additional buildings, we are not in a place to decide on the seasonal or permanent stage, so that would be a conversation for another day

End of Public Comment Period

Motion to Adjourn, seconded, approved

End of notes: SK