

DRAFT
MINUTES
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE
ON THE
PRESCOTT PARK MASTER PLAN
7:30 A.M. – WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2017
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; Dana Levenson, Trustee of Trust Funds (via tele-conference); Thomas Watson, Trustee of Trust Funds; Stefany Shaheen, Citizen Representative

Staff Present: David Moore, Assistant City Manager

2. Consideration of Minutes – December 5, 2016 and December 12, 2016

Chair Dwyer stated that she has a minor amendment to both sets of minutes to change the word “site” to “sight”.

Mr. Watson moved to approve the minutes of December 5, 2016, as amended. Seconded by Councilor Pearson and voted.

Ms. Eldridge moved to approve the minutes of December 12, 2016, as amended. Seconded by Mayor Blalock and voted.

Chair Dwyer stated that this will be the final meeting of this version of the Prescott Park Master Plan Blue Ribbon Committee and thanked everyone for their involvement and hard work over the past year.

3. Discussion of Draft Report and Final Recommendation to City Council

Mr. Bolinger stated that they were pleased with the turnout at the recent public input session held on January 11, 2017 at which time they broke out into discussion groups with facilitators. He stated his particular group was focused on design. He stated there were parents with children in the group who would like to see more formalized play areas created. Discussion also ensued regarding the treatment of the Marcy Street edge and a stronger connectivity to Strawberry Banke and be as porous as possible as well as keeping the views of the river as visible as possible. Another issue discussed was having the main entrance of the park celebrate Prescott Park. Finally, Mr. Bolinger stated that people felt it was important to have the ribbon of boardwalk between the Park and the waterfront with a variety of treatments.

Ms. Eldridge state there was discussion in her group regarding a porous edge on Marcy Street but also have to keep safety in mind as it is a busy street.

Ms. Ruane stated her group had a spirited discussion regarding the stage and feels it was evenly divided between permanent stage and moveable/seasonal stage and feels it was helpful to hear both sides.

Mayor Blalock stated there are 2 sides to the stage issue and that people want a permanent stage because they think there may be an issue with putting the stage back up for the next season because of funding issues or some other reason and also they equate “permanent” with safety. He continued that the stage would only be moved during the off-season so that it wouldn’t be in the way of other activities.

Discussion ensued regarding the importance of the governance structure and licensing agreements addressing these issues and ensuring that the City will be responsible for the safety so that people are aware and help alleviate the concerns.

Chair Dwyer stated that it needs to be conveyed that there will be Arts in the Park but not the physical structure at all times.

Mayor Blalock stated that the City Council will have a robust discussion of the stage and will want expert testimony before deciding on what type of stage they are willing to fund.

Councilor Pearson stated that we still haven’t found a moveable stage that can accommodate all of the different uses and feels that we need to be flexible going forward.

Ms. Ruane stated that is correct that they haven’t found an exact replica but they can be designed to meet their needs.

Mr. Moore asked how much of the design plan is based on the concept of a moveable stage. Ms. Ruane stage a lot of it. She stated they had no preconceived notions coming into the process and have observed all of the seasons of the park and have concluded that a moveable stage is needed for this park and having it disappear when not in use. She stated that if they decide to do a permanent stage then it should be relocated out of Prescott Park entirely as this would conflict with the “Park First” approach.

Ms. Shaheen stated that to be clear, the stage that is there now is not permanent, but the concerns are for the safety of the performers and that what they replace it with will be better and ensure safety.

Mr. Moore stated that his group discussed governance and was the largest of the discussion groups. He stated that concerns regarded commercialization, lease terms for licenses and the make-up of the Advisory committee. They also want to make sure there is a city staff person who be involved on an ongoing basis to address concerns.

Discussion ensued regarding the make-up of the Advisory Committee and especially during the transition period. Chair Dwyer stated there has been discussion regarding the formation of a Parks and Recreation Department and that it may ultimately fall under that purview.

Ms. Shaheen feels that during the transition period it makes sense to have a larger group with more opinions to help the City Manager make the initial decisions.

Councilor Pearson stated that there was also discussion regarding having quarterly reports by the user groups.

Mr. Watson stated that another request of the group was for clarification of “commercialization” and that opinions ran the gamut of users being able to do whatever to having absolutely nothing exchanged for money including blankets, chairs, etc. so he feels that there needs to be more direction given on this issue. He then discussed the issue of signage stating he is concerned that it will look like the Little League field with signs lining the fence. Mr. Moore stated there will be more uniformity and will be limited.

Mayor Blalock stated he would rather see a modest sign with a listing of the sponsors and would advocate for no signs.

Chair Dwyer stated that there will still be issues for the Advisory Committee to work out and it will be a long process but it needs to be a public park for everyone and a respite from over-commercialization; being able to enjoy the play and performances without having to buy merchandise.

4. Discussion of Draft Report and Final Recommendations to City Council

The committee members reviewed the draft report and made several suggestions for changes to the final recommendations. Mr. Moore stated they could continue to make changes up until Tuesday, January 31st at noon so they changes could be incorporated into the final document and prepared for publication for the City Council meeting on February 6, 2017.

Mayor Blalock moved to recommend the Final Report with amendments to the City council. Seconded by Ms. Shaheen and passed unanimously.

Chair Dwyer stated that there does not need to be a formal presentation of the report to the Council as this has already been done at a work session.

The Committee members concluded by thanking each other and the consultants for their work on the Prescott Park Master Plan.

Mayor Blalock thanked the “Breakfast Club” members of the public who have attended the early morning meetings and been involved throughout the process.

5. Public Comment

Jeff Cooper – stated he was a facilitator of the Governance group. He stated that people in the room wanted to make sure that the Advisory group in whatever form, will have meaningful impact on what happens in the park and that their ideas will be brought forward. He requested that the language regarding the Committee be clarified and strengthen the Committee and not be an advisory capacity.

Beth Margeson – stated she feels this Committee was a model for dealing with a difficult issue and feels that there is a lot of meat on the bones of the final document, but it is not micro-managing. She stated that there is a 2009 code which governs places of assembly that needs to be followed. She stated that it will be important for future generations to see the process that was followed and it is important to keep in mind what Mary and Josie Prescott wanted the park to be. She stated that they watched the Hovey Fountain being built and was designed by them as well. She presented a picture to David Moore of the fountain which was conveyed to the City in 1940.

Ben Anderson, Prescott Park Arts Festival Director – thanked the Committee for their work and the process and asked that the plan be open to changes in the future especially regarding the stage. He stated they still have not found a comparable stage anywhere, but everyone wants a safer and better solution.

Rick Becksted – thanked the committee for the process and insights. He discussed the stage stating that we already have a temporary stage as there are no permanent concrete footings, although there had been a proposal for that at one time but wasn't done due to liability concerns. He then discussed users having to pay percentage of their proceeds in exchange for the storage, office space etc. that they utilize within the park and he suggests 10%.

Paul Mannle – thanked the committee and consultants stating it has been a great process and feels that the plan should be implemented as presented. He stated he would like to see 2 additions to the proposed Advisory Committee; one more Trustee of the Trust Fund and a member of the Recreation Board which he feels would allow for more institutional knowledge and help the transition if it becomes a Parks and Recreation committee. He continued that the stage has become symbolic, but has been temporary for 40 years and unless you are attending an event in an actual theater, all stages are temporary. He stated it could become a community event to put it up and take it down every season.

Brian Murphy – stated he understands that each individual enhancement going forward will go through its own process with engineers, etc. so there will be more to decide, but feels that the stage conversation needs to continue.

6. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m.