



CITY COUNCIL MCINTYRE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 6, 2020 MEETING

The October 6, 2020 meeting of the McIntyre Subcommittee was held via Zoom.

Chair Peter Whelan opened the meeting at 10:05 a.m. with a roll call.

Present via Zoom were Chair Peter Whelan and Councilors Deaglan McEachern, John Tabor and Paige Trace.

Also present via Zoom were City Manager Karen Conard, City Attorney Robert Sullivan, Legal Secretary Marian Steimke, Gerald Duffy, member of the public, and Liz Dinan, Portsmouth Herald.

Councilor John Tabor made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2020 and the September 24, 2020 meetings. Councilor McEachern seconded that motion.

On a roll call vote, 4-0, the Subcommittee voted to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2020 and the September 24, 2020 meetings.

Public comment: Gerry Duffy said the Subcommittee has done a good job at being transparent and helping to get the public involved. He asked that they stay interested in doing their due diligence. He spoke about balance of power, survey results and creating a clear road map where the rationale is laid out for all to see.

City Manager Conard summarized and shared onscreen her draft letter to John Kelly of the GSA. The Subcommittee discussed sending the formal letter indicating the City's interest in taking possession of the building in early 2021.

City Attorney Sullivan said that either the letter must reflect Council approval will be sought, or they must obtain Council approval before the letter went out.

Councilor McEachern asked if they would have an opportunity to inspect the building before acquisition to be able to address points that might need immediate attention – especially if HVAC related. He understands this is an “as-is” transfer but would like to have as much information as possible, he said. The City Manager said the GSA would convey that maintenance was up-to-date, but she could ask them to get an answer to the question.

Councilor Trace said it was a great question, but didn’t think the Government would fix an issue with surplus property from GSA if one existed. Councilor McEachern said it would be more of a protection of interest even if it was just to identify the problems in advance.

Chair Whelan said the last tenant may move out in March. He would like to get the proposed letter in front of the Council to get approval at the next Council meeting.

The Chair next discussed the earmark that Sen. Gregg had 10 years earlier which was still out there in the range of \$5.2 million. He added that GSA wanted to redirect those funds somewhere else so as not to spend money on surplus buildings. Chair Whelan said they had a conference call with Sarah Holmes of Sen. Shaheen’s office, and they are looking to try to get other funds from the Senator’s office to help with the planning or transition. That is the other wrinkle going on. That earmark was really for constructing another building at Pease which is not going to happen.

City Manager Conard said she was working to set up some conference calls with the Senator and Sarah Holmes. She discussed setting up a meeting with Sen. Shaheen’s office and Alan Brigham of the Economic Development Administration, and said there may be grant money to help with the planning and design or development. She stated the EDA does not have access to construction money.

Councilor Tabor recalled the Phase 1 Environmental Study when they leased the Foster’s printing plant. It clarified the situation and costs, he said, and it might make sense to do in this case. He then asked if they wanted to broach the post office conversation or to wait.

Chair Whelan agreed with starting that discussion. City Manager Conard emailed the Postmaster General but has not heard back. She will follow up.

Chair Whelan asked for a motion on sending the letter to the Council.

Councilor McEachern moved to change the letter to reflect wanting to take possession of the building once the last tenant moves out; and to send the letter to City Council for their approval. Councilor Tabor seconded the motion.

Discussion: The Subcommittee decided on January 31, 2021 as the date by which they would finalize the open tasks they needed to complete: a redesigned project; some public process and renegotiating a ground lease. The letter to John Kelly of GSA will

reflect this date, and will reflect that the City will take possession once the last tenant moves out.

On a roll call vote, the motion passed 4-0.

City Manager Conard will mention in the letter that the City Council has approved sending this letter.

Chair Whelan said we should start thinking about public process in order to get closure on the redesign moving forward and try to get some firm dates to do a massive zoom input. He said he was not sure when Redgate could turn around some drawings to us.

Councilor Tabor said he'd research, and suggested having a one-half hour presentation of drawings followed by breakout groups and report-backs from them. He said they could talk to Everyday Democracy. Or they could go the expensive route with Weston & Sampson.

Councilor McEachern suggested working with Portsmouth Design Alliance before getting the professionals involved. He would like to envision a quick turnaround without an enormous cost. If there was a way to use citizens to help craft competing priorities, it would be a huge value, he said. They could potentially receive a large amount of input via Zoom. Having an interactive process based on feedback before bringing the concepts to our partners to work out parking and other details would be helpful.

Chair Whelan suggested using some combination in order to get the broadest opinion. The Subcommittee discussed the logistics of using the groups mentioned.

Councilor Trace expressed concerns regarding the impact to the timeline that would result in seeking new ideas at this late time in the process. She said that while public involvement is great, she predicted delays of six to eight months.

Councilor McEachern said his concern is you go fast by going slow. He clarified his purpose in seeking input from the Design Alliance was to give the public some choice in alternatives.

Councilors Trace and McEachern then discussed an agreeable amount of time for this process. Councilor Tabor discussed the ways that the Design Alliance can help to propose concepts for the space. Councilor Trace has no issue with Design Alliance, but she wants to be transparent and wants to stay within the parameters.

Chair Whelan said they are just seeking some creative ideas. They are committed to get a submission to the National Park Service by the end of January, so they need to have this done by the end of November.

Councilor Trace said we have to have a project that works within the financial parameters of the partners. What if, she said, the Design Alliance produced a great idea that did not work financially with the City's partners.

City Manager Conard suggested that an owner's project rep could help them get what they want. The question – is there a set of professionals to shape the project, get public input and help us advance this.

Councilor McEachern expressed the concern of not wanting to rely solely on the developers to come up with all the ideas – and, he noted, the developers agree with that concern. He would like to employ help in crafting what a building could look like without burning a lot of money and time with the developer – who already has proposed what the best building would be. If it happened that a new concept would exceed financial parameters, the two options are that we ask residents for more money, or we scale down the concept.

Chair Whelan asked City Manager Conard to propose recommendations on implementing her advice and suggest some names.

City Attorney Sullivan said the Subcommittee should think about more money. Redgate/Kane said \$150,000 would be the amount to pay their architects and their designers. If the Subcommittee was going to hire a designer beyond that, they would need a source of funds to pay them.

City Manager Conard said the Design Alliance has done pro bono work in the past.

Councilor Trace said there needs to be a clear cut path forward if they use Design Alliance with a report back to the City Council.

Councilor McEachern understood her concern. He said in working with the Design Alliance, it would be the Subcommittee reaching out to citizens of Portsmouth using their skills. It would not be a politicized process. He views this as very distinct from what has happened with the Citizens Response Task Force.

Councilor Tabor said he shared Councilor Trace's time and cost concerns. He suggested asking the Design Alliance for a workbook of new ideas for the new open space and a timeline. Chair Whelan agreed and said we need to give ideas to Redgate/Kane.

City Manager Conard said she can work on a staff recommendation for the next Subcommittee meeting on Tuesday. She said she could speak to internal staff and to Design Alliance to make a recommendation to the Subcommittee about a potential way to move forward. Chair Whelan said the next meeting with Redgate/Kane would be on the 20th. He suggested Design Alliance could be on that call.

Councilor Trace offered an idea given to her which was to invite City architects to participate. City Manager Conard said would Design Alliance be able to incorporate local architects and landscapers.

Councilor Trace said using the Design Alliance who work well together may not always enable an independent architect to easily submit a design.

City Manager Conard said the Design Alliance has over 50 people that found each other via networks, and did not necessarily know each other before that. She will speak with them to get more information.

**Councilor Tabor moved to go into nonpublic session at 10:58 a.m.
Councilor McEachern seconded the motion.**

On a roll call 4-0 vote, the motion to enter nonpublic session passed.

The meeting adjourned at 11:17 a.m.

Minutes taken by
Marian Steimke, Legal Secretary
October 6, 2020
