



## CITY COUNCIL MCINTYRE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES MAY 12, 2021 MEETING

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The McIntyre Subcommittee held the May 12, 2021 meeting via Zoom.

**Chair Peter Whelan opened the meeting at 3:03 with a roll call.**

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

City representatives present via Zoom: City Manager Karen Conard, City Attorney Robert Sullivan, Principal Planner Nick Cracknell, Moderator Synthia Ravell and Legal Secretary Marian Steimke.

Also present via Zoom: Russell Preston and Mandy Reynolds, both of Principle Group (PG).

Public comment:

Sen. Martha Fuller Clark thanked the Subcommittee for the good work in hiring PG and for the work they have done. She is hopeful the City can move ahead with the proposal. She said while it is a work in process, we need to bring something to the NPS to get a response. She is happy to help any way she can, and it is time to move forward. Any concerns brought up can be addressed. She reminded all there is lots of opportunity for modifications that can still be made.

Bill Hamilton of 108 Penhallow Street has owned a business there for 42 years. He does not see a clear mandate. He quoted statistics of the "UNH" survey and did not believe that Plan I represented the wish of the people, which would have included more open and public space. He projected that 103 people made this plan by being directed this way. He wanted the Subcommittee and Council to review the other four options and to conduct another survey. He said he would be directly affected as a business neighbor. He is not part of Revisit McIntyre. He declared the proposal has gone off track just like the last one. He requested they not go ahead with this proposal, saying there is no rush, still plenty of time to get it right and he does not think this is anywhere close to getting it right. Thank you.

Bill Downey agreed with Bill Hamilton. He said going forward we must have broad public support. We have no verifications of names and conflicts of interest on the recent survey. Until we see that data and results we cannot have confidence in it. We have not received acknowledgment of our request and cannot see how any vote can go forward until we see that data. There is a lot of frustration on every side, he said, and he hoped the next round will be more professional. To have only three hours to look at an 86 page plan was insensitive. If we cannot receive that data, then tell us why not, he said.

Bill Hamilton spoke again, saying, the last time he attended this meeting the Subcommittee went into nonpublic session. He thought this was going to be a transparent process.

Chair Whelan indicated the Subcommittee would not be going into nonpublic that day and closed public comment at 3:16 p.m.

Mr. Preston said they received two sets of questions from Councilors Lazenby and Huda. He also received more motions and a list of demands from Councilor Kennedy. Chair Whelan said he did not know how to respond to those. Mr. Preston said Councilor Lazenby's questions were mostly regarding square footage, and that these questions would be in the packet.

Chair Whelan said the NPS did not look kindly on the prior Redgate/Kane proposal with the two five foot story buildings and building on top of the post office.

Mr. Preston said the dialogue has been an iterative process with the community. In response to Councilor Lazenby's questions from the other evening, the square footage would change. Mr. Preston displayed a screen: "Proposed Plans Additional Gross Floor Area" which showed square footage per building and per floor. Mr. Preston said this information also answered Councilor Lazenby's question on square footage. There was a table entitled: "Volume Comparison of Redgate/Kane Plan from Community Plan (GSA), and those present noted the reduction in square footage. Councilor McEachern noted that the reduction was more than 50%, which he said was a large reduction in the back lot.

Mr. Preston expressed confidence that they have addressed the "less density" requirement of the public. Councilor McEachern said including this in the proposal in the Community Plan would be worthwhile in terms of the conversation.

Next, Mr. Preston addressed Councilor Huda's questions. First, he discussed why streets were included in the design schemes, saying the public right-of-ways are often an overlooked part of projects. With this truly being a public/private partnership, it was essential to not overlook this as an added value to the community. This is best practice to show how streets can respond. This is consistent with other plans PG has done with other cities. Great places are not created in isolation.

The Chair agreed, adding they were paying PG to think outside of the box.

Councilor Tabor said some study circles did talk about reducing traffic on the streets. Some people were surprised when they saw the plan proposed modifying the streets, but we are

not talking about eliminating traffic. He emphasized that none of these streets will be closed to vehicle traffic and summarized some points that would answer Councilor Huda's question.

Councilor Trace wanted to make it clear that both Bow and Penhallow will continue to be open to traffic. She anticipates it would come before different boards at some point, but right now this is an overall concept. There has been confusion on the parts of people that they might lose their commerce or their parking. The people that voted followed the process. She added that we have to get past point A to get to point D and to not just get stuck on one point.

Mr. Preston wants to add a street diagram for clarification.

Second, Councilor Huda's comments suggested combining two schemes (G and I). The Chair said he never endorsed any one scheme and added that the last thing they would want to do is change what the people have chosen. Chair Whelan said that is not why we are here. PG got us here after 14,000 hours and 22 different study circles meeting.

Councilor Tabor agreed. He went back to the study circles of Portsmouth Listens (PL), and Scheme I was the most citizen driven. He shared a screen which illustrated and summarized the process and end outcome. One of the highlights of that screen documented that

"In the initial survey, residents said park space was highest on their favorite places... However after the groups deliberated over several nights, active open space with social experiences, dining.... and other draws became a more dominant theme. [Page 26: visions for McIntyre – cultural + activity 33.7%; square 21%, park 19%, and neighborhood 13.7%]. The design selected by residents in the end reflects this – they rejected the pure park option and scored the Scheme I much higher."

Councilor Tabor said there was a spectrum between who wanted green and functional space. He understands where Councilor Huda comes from, but when you read the study circles, you see that while the green space was a strong point of view, it was not the majority. He is impressed with how PG captured so many of the ideas.

Mr. Preston said there is an aspect to this project that people need to remember. This is really is the community's plan. Great places require lots of people to be involved. The PL process was able to do that in a short time using the technology we had. We try as designers to bring together these aspects that you don't see until you do bring it all together.

Those present discussed some fine points regarding the post office size and parking in the alley. This is all detail that will be worked out moving forward. It is not optimal to get into the weeds at this time. They continued to discuss the many processes and boards still to come and involvement with Council. Chair Whelan agreed there were still many steps to go, including negotiating a ground lease, and going before the NPSs.

Councilor McEachern said they still needed further studies, and this will not be the vote of submitting an application to the NPS at this time.

Chair Whelan said this also has to be economically viable, and they must make sure this will all work with the developer.

Those present discussed the motion being proposed and the updated timeline. Chair Whelan said the motion will be in the packet.

Councilor McEachern said the community asked for less density. This plan has done that, as we have reduced the square footage on the back lot by 55%.

Regarding Councilor Kennedy's questions, Councilor McEachern said it would be hard to put in a large amendment. He suggested including in the proposal as an addendum. He said the project does not include adjacent property or public streets. He addressed the "no net loss of parking on Penhallow" and her list of demands. It is important to acknowledge the parking conversations require much more input from the City, as all of this does.

Mr. Preston said that would be easy to include streets and alley ways as an addendum, as it involved compiling information that is already in the report.

Councilor McEachern reiterated he does not want to be changing the plan that the community has asked us to build. Councilor Trace agreed and added we have no right to massage the project that PG has presented because the community chose it. We cannot change the setback to suit someone that is unhappy. Sen. Clark has faith in the system that there will be many opportunities later on to address these concerns. This is a community project. We promised the community a fair and open process, and that is what they got, she said and added she was not allowed to choose, not allowed to have an opinion and was sorry if people were unhappy.

Councilor Tabor said we don't want to start carving the project up like a Thanksgiving turkey, but we also have to deal with some people that are upset about the parking and meet them where they are. He shared a proposed motion that might address all the issues voiced and asked for feedback. He said this would acknowledge the parking issue, make it clear they were not changing streets and point out the things already in the plan.

Councilor Trace said we have put in hundreds of hours, hired the PG and have done everything possible to facilitate. She said she does not want to be held hostage to the demands of one councilor attempting to manipulate the project. We had the process. The people voted. She apologized if she offended anyone, but she stands by the PG.

Councilor McEachern stands by the PG as well. He would like to avoid clashes. He suggested highlighting some things to the community that we can include as a way to give relief and get people onboard. He agreed with the sentiment of Councilor Trace and said we are acting as stewards of the community. We carry out the will of the people. We make few decisions. Let's ensure the residents know they have been listened to.

Chair Whelan agreed with Councilor Trace. He said we have come a long way, and 90% of what Councilor Kennedy wanted is already in the existing project. He suggested adding her

comments to the addendum. We have not even presented to the NPS yet. I would like to present to Redgate/Kane and get their feedback. This is premature right now. He hopes Councilors Huda and Kennedy will trust the process. It still must go to HDC and the Planning Board. We owe it to the residents to move forward as we have it. We can add their comments and address at a later time.

Councilor McEachern said the strength of this project comes from process. He would love to have the Councilor's support, but it would erode the faith to make changes at this time.

**Councilor McEachern moved that the Subcommittee acknowledge all questions from the City Council and work to incorporate answers into the presentation where possible with help from Principle Group. The motion was seconded by Councilor Trace.**

Discussion: Chair Whelan said we will acknowledge Councilors Lazenby, Huda and Kennedy's questions. He also clarified that the survey was a City survey – not UNH. Ms. Reynolds has been writing answers to the questions and they will be in Monday's packet.

Chair Whelan asked if PG looked at shadows on Bow Street. Mr. Preston said they can do winter and summer morning, mid-day and evening shadow studies.

Councilor Tabor suggested using Councilor McEachern's motion, and the Chair said it would be published in the packet.

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

Attorney Sullivan said there were no developments in the litigation part of this case.

**Councilor McEachern moved to adjourn. Councilor Tabor seconded. On a roll call vote of 4-0 the motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 4:33 p.m.**

Date Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

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Peter Whelan, Chair  
McIntyre Subcommittee

Minutes taken by  
Marian Steimke, Legal Secretary