



CITY COUNCIL MCINTYRE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 1, 2020 MEETING

The McIntyre Subcommittee held the December 1, 2020 meeting via Zoom.

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, Arian Rutt and Logan Capone all of Principal Group (PG).

Chair Peter Whelan opened the meeting at 2:05 with a roll call and indicated Councilor McEachern would be 15 minutes late.

Those present noted problems with the internet connection.

Public comment:

Bill Downey of 67 Bow Street in Portsmouth thanked the Subcommittee all for their good work. He asked Councilor Tabor how the process would be managed if the 120 participants limit was exceeded and how non tech savvy participants could participate. Councilor Tabor answered that Portsmouth Listens (PL) will get as many facilitators as possible. In addition, he said PL will develop a survey which will be similar to study circle questions. It would be like a “study circles in a box” kit that can be done at home.

Byron Matto of 17 Fields Road was looking for the questions from the GSA that had the original concerns and was not able to find them on the website. He also stated a concern: Mr. Matto said the Subcommittee members seemed to be adding their preferences for green space – like putting a thumb on the scale. He suggested not having undue voice come from the Subcommittee members before it gets to the point of public input. Chair Whelan thanked him and said the Subcommittee will be as transparent as possible. The Chair anticipated a lot of participants in the study circles and that would provide a good sample from the public.

The Chair closed public comment at 2:13 p.m. and reopened it at 2:17 p.m.

Russell Preston joined at this time, along with Logan Capone, Mandy Reynolds and Ariane Rutt, all of PG.

Chair Whelan asked if PG had questions and anticipated talking about PL. Mr. Preston hoped to understand the PL process schedule and how it will affect the PG work plan. He also wanted to discuss the survey and its use, and essentially anything the Subcommittee wanted PG to know regarding opportunities and constraints.

Chair Whelan reopened public comment at 2:17 p.m., as Ron Ulrich had wanted to speak.

Ron Ulrich said it is crucial to make sure that all sides are heard and documented very carefully. He voiced a concern regarding an online signup. Why re-invent the recording of the public sentiment process, he asked. The sign up process should have a paper trail for every person that wants to participate, similar to the survey process. He discussed information and format to include, and he thanked the Subcommittee.

The Chair closed public comment at 2:20 p.m.

Mr. Preston introduced new PG team member Mandy Reynolds.

Councilor Tabor displayed and discussed the PL process schedule. He said Michael Kane would be joining a PL meeting. The Councilor discussed postcards to be mailed out and explained that a tear-off return on the post card would take three weeks plus all the manual data entry, delaying our timetable. To maintain transparency, a public log will be maintained (via survey monkey) of those who sign up. A hard copy each day with a time stamp will ensure accurate records. He emphasized speed of execution versus transparency. The PL kickoff meeting was scheduled for 12/16/2020, he added.

Councilor Trace asked for clarification on hard copies. Councilor Tabor described the format of the postcard that will be mailable on the return. Councilor Trace expressed concerns about process oversight and lack of transparency. She wanted to ensure this was going to be done properly and discussed the postcards causing potential trust issues. Councilor Tabor said he was open to any process that provided transparency.

City Manager Conard said the burden of the paper survey was great. She would look to PG to give their take on transparency, security and safety of online surveys, given the current time constraints. The City Manager would like to understand where the distrust comes in, as an online survey is completely transparent and any component can be shared. She asked for thoughts from PG.

Mr. Preston said it is a time constraint as we go from an analog to digital process. He mentioned digital platforms that can publish raw input easily and feels confident transparency would be maintained. Access to the digital platform for the non-tech savvy during a pandemic, he said, should be talked through if there is some flexibility on the schedule.

Chair Whelan presented an option for people that don't want to go online – they could register via a phone number. Mr. Preston suggested text message as well.

Councilor McEachern joined the meeting at this time (2:36 p.m.)

Those present discussed the kickoff and the need to get the survey done quickly. They discussed a phone number to register and requiring a verified name and address. Councilor McEachern was concerned that a paper system would impact the timetable. They discussed the deadline to return postcards, which would be for sign-up purposes.

Mr. Preston suggested allowing for as wide a participation as possible via self-organizing, like a workshop in a box.

Councilor Trace said the question is how many people can participate, and how do you choose. She discussed the implications and issues if participation was determined by timestamp. She wants all to have a fair and equitable chance to participate.

Those present discussed how to determine who gets to participate if responses exceed number of slots – first come, first served or names out of a hat; and implications of each. Councilor McEachern suggested a randomizer.

Chair Whelan asked City Manager Conard if the City could provide a phone number people could call in or text to for sign-up.

City Manager Conard suggested determining the actual number of participants then assessing the resourcing to accommodate that number.

Chair Whelan summarized next steps. Postcards will go out specifying sign-up options being via survey monkey or a phone number. A City employee would transcribe names, addresses and phone numbers received. The City Manager said she would make that happen. Councilor McEachern said a random method is the best way to choose participants.

Councilor Trace discussed implications of using sponsors and donations and instead potentially using City funds. Councilor Tabor estimated \$3,600 for the mailing and another \$3,600 for facilitator stipends.

Councilor Trace moved that the Subcommittee allot approximately \$7,200.00 as needed for Portsmouth Listens to facilitate the survey in support of Portsmouth Listens and that the money come from the \$150,000. Seconded by Councilor McEachern. On a Roll call vote, the motion passed 4—0.

Councilor Tabor stated PG will host the kickoff on 12/16 at 7:00 p.m. and described the format of the kickoff meeting. He indicated the kickoff presentation would be recorded. Chair Whelan summarized that the initial survey resulted in 3,600 responses, so he expects a big audience. Mr. Preston indicated getting some community input would be helpful, and PG could utilize a methodology for bringing in some input.

Chair Whelan suggested limiting the public input to three – four minutes. Councilor Tabor said the purpose of the kickoff is to give the participants what they need to work in the smaller groups – so it will be mostly presentation; but he would like to discuss with Mr. Preston the methodology for getting public input.

Attorney Sullivan left the meeting at this time.

Mr. Preston said PG received the data from the City and is checking that information, so they were in good shape there. He indicated that since the second deliberations come through to January 13th, PG would not be able to turn around renderings by January 15th. There is a struggle to see how to compress the schedule any more.

Councilor Tabor acknowledged the original schedule, which had an earlier kickoff date, was modified in order to interview architecture firms, and he said it was time well spent. Mr. Preston is sure it will all work.

Mr. Cracknell recommended that PG get in touch with him if they need any GIS-related work. He hopes to follow up on the survey tool, and is working to get up to speed on the PL schedule as well, he said.

Mr. Preston asked for any questions on the draft survey sent to the Subcommittee the night before and asked if it was a good tool. Councilor Trace it was fine once she got the hang of it. She was looking at it on a phone and was frustrated because the photographs did not always have a bearing on what could happen with the McIntyre parcel. She said it was a very good questionnaire and commented on the age ask.

Mr. Preston said age, but not email, was required – so a person could remain anonymous. Mr. Preston said the set of questions are really about the quality of space residents are looking for. People experience public space very differently depending on their demographic, and it will be interesting to look at once the data starts coming in, he added.

Councilor Tabor said it was a great survey and would provide useful information.

Councilor McEachern commented on the intent of the pictures and words and said it was an easy survey to take.

Councilor Trace said she answered the survey as a resident rather than analyzing the intent of the survey. So it was a great survey. Thank you, she said.

Chair Whelan liked the survey and said the questions were appropriate. He did the survey on his phone. The pictures on the phone don't do it justice, he said. Mr. Preston will check the photo formats for use on mobile platforms.

Mr. Preston said they covered the schedule and survey; and he will work with Councilor Tabor regarding PL. Lastly, PG will work with Mr. Cracknell on the designer roundtable. He asked the Subcommittee for guidance on how that fits into the schedule and when.

Councilor Trace said it would be nice to allow anyone to sign up to be an observer. She asked if the kickoff meeting on 12/16 will be open to any and all observers. Councilor Tabor agreed and said they need to figure out how to do that for both the designer workshop and/or the first evening kickoff.

Chair Whelan asked how to determine which designers come to the workshop. City Manager Conard answered it would be a combination of folks the PG might suggest, including both local and not local firms, and they would ask Brunner/Cott if they would like to sit in.

Councilor Tabor suggested a press release announcing a designer round table on the open space at McIntyre with contact information for interested participants. Mr. Cracknell asked how to facilitate that, knowing there could be 30-50 responses.

Mr. Preston answered breaking up into teams, and it will depend on number participating. Mr. Cracknell suggested landscape architects would be needed. Councilor Tabor said this is a chance for local architects to look at the opportunities and be part of the process.

Mr. Preston said it might be interesting to put the designer workshop a little later once we have something to put up and show. Then allow for a design critique to maximize the input from those stakeholders and open up the dialogue.

Councilor Trace said Mr. Preston was correct. This is about listening to the residents first, interpreting those baseline ideas, then bringing in designers to get their comments and suggestions. Chair Whelan agreed and added the Subcommittee was looking to PG to interpret what the residents want.

Mr. Preston said it would be a better process that way, and we should think about that when we publish a final schedule. That would add the most value to the process.

Chair Whelan sees the designer workshop as a peer review – what will and will not work.

Councilor Tabor asked Mr. Preston if he was available Wednesday, 12/2 at 4:00 p.m.

Motion to adjourn made by Councilor McEachern. Seconded by Councilor Trace. On a roll call vote 4-0, the meeting adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

Date Approved: _____

Peter Whelan, Chair
McIntyre Subcommittee

Minutes taken by
Marian Steimke, Legal Secretary