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Minutes

Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting

Wednesday, October 23, 2019, 5:30 pm

City Hall, Room 12, 149 Church Street

Attendance:

Committee Members: Chair Joan Shannon, Councilor Ali Dieng, Councilor Karen Paul

Cindi Wight - BPRW, Doreen Kraft – BCA, Zach Williamson – BCA, Jesse Freedman – CEDO, Grace Ciffo – CEDO, Jeffrey Glassberg – Independent Contractor, Holli Bushnell – BPRW/Clerk’s Office

Before the meeting was called to order, Councilor Paul informed the Chair that, due to an unexpected family commitment, she would not be able to stay for the entirety of the meeting.

Meeting called to order at 5:37pm by Councilor Shannon

1. Approval of agenda

Councilor Paul moved to approve the agenda with the codicil that the minutes would be approved upon Councilor Dieng’s arrival. Shannon seconded, all were in favor.

2. Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 5:37pm.

Robert Kiernan mentioned that the mural is back up, restored, with new interpretive panels, and that there is an article in Seven Days about the accused vandal. He stated that he is happy that the mural has been restored, and, as resident of Church Street, he feels this issue directly affects him.

Norm Fischer reiterated his previous comments concerning the free speech aspect of the mural debate. He provided some of his own background (as a philosophy professor with a specific focus on political and artistic philosophy) to give context to his comments. He believes the removal of the mural is a “disaster.” He hopes that, now that the mural has been restored, the city can begin a conversation about the impact of censorship on free speech once again.

As no one else wished to speak, the public forum was closed at 5:42pm

3. Agenda Items

a. BPRW – Off-Leash Dog Area Ordinance/Off-Leash Dog Policy

Cindi Wight provided a power point presentation showing the history of work completed on the off-leash dog ordinance and policy. The process began in 1998 with a 12-month pilot in the ordinances. Though that pilot is still on the books the pilot expired after 18 months.

In 2011, an off-leash task force was formed by order of the city council. The task force included members from each ward and had set tasks. The committee provided a final report in 2013, but it is unclear if the city council received the final report.

The recommendation from the task force in 2013 was to separate policy from ordinance. Wight provided the committee with drafts of the suggested ordinances and policies showing edits from the 1998 ordinance as well as a simple mark-up version. She added that there are several additional changes she suggests should be made before the respective documents move to the Ordinance Committee and Parks Commission respectively. The changes include: 1) removal of language describing specific areas of the city in reference to off leash areas; 2). removing named parks for “no off leash” to stating that parks may be designated on leash only; 3) removing the rule that states no food or drink in off leash areas; and 4) removing the rule that children under 12 are not allowed in off leash areas. Wight noted the last two changes are reflective of the rules being specific to all off leash areas and not just off leash dog parks.

Wight asked for the support of PACC members to move the ordinance to City Council.

Paul stated that the approval process by the Ordinance Committee is extensive and that any details that still need to be worked out can be honed during that process.

Shannon asked for clarification on suggested removal of the language concerning specific areas of the city. Wight stated that the current language is too specific, listing exact boundaries of the different areas of the city. Dog parks will still be distributed throughout the city, but that the specific language indicating exact boundaries is too limiting, especially as the city is constantly growing and changing. Shannon thanked Wight for the explanation.

Shannon called for a motion to move the proposed ordinances to the City Council. Paul moved, Dieng seconded the movement, and all were in favor.

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Wight next provided a brief update on the work BPRW has done to improve the ongoing issues at the Starr Farm Dog Park. They had a productive meeting on 9/17 attended by both community members and patrons of the dog park alike. While they are still waiting for the final results of the online survey, it has become clear that the largest issue is the small dog area. Residents seem to have the most issue with small dogs – the main issue being that the area specifically set aside for small dogs is the closest to Curtis Ave, where the largest number of residents are having issues with noise disruption. BPRW is hoping to shift the small dog area slightly to the north. This area will still have accessible parking for elderly patrons.. .

Shannon suggested that, whatever happens with the small dog area, screening be used to prevent the visual excitement that ultimately leads to barking. Wight confirmed that, though the city is hoping to reduce the use of plastic overall, plastic panels may be used in the wire fence to prevent visual contact between incoming animals.

Dieng thanked Wight and BPRW for taking the time to meet with the residents. Wight was pleased by all the feedback they received and hopes to hold more meetings like the one at Starr Farm when similar issues arise in the future.

b. BCA – Everyone Loves a Parade Update and Timeline

Doreen Kraft reported that as of Monday October 21 at 4pm, the restored panels of the ELAP mural were reinstalled. The interpretive plaques have been reinstalled as well, and everything has been restored and varnished. The restoration phase of the project, apart from a few bills and a report to the City Attorney's Office, is complete. The next step is responding to the other pieces of the city council resolution.

Kraft provided the committee with an outline of the fundraising goals for BCA in the upcoming year as well as the specific goals for ELAP. BCA has applied for a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts for \$50,000. This grant is a 1 to 1 match, and some matching funds have already been identified from CSMP (\$5,000) and DPW (\$20,000). As previously mentioned, the replacement for ELAP is being produced in conjunction with DPW and the installation will extend into the Cherry St/Marketplace Garage.

In terms of future sites for the relocation of ELAP, the Airport Roof Deck is still the preferable location. That said, Kraft has reached out to the Maritime Museum to see if they might be interested in the mural in light of the fact that it was created in conjunction with the quadricentennial of Samuel De Champlain exploring the lake. The Maritime Museum would be able to provide context to the mural that is

impossible in its current location. As BCA works toward the ultimate goal of relocation of the mural, they will make recommendations to PACC for the full council to decide on. Kraft also reported that the cost just to remove and replace the damaged panels (4 of the 24 or 32 total panels) was \$3,500. The cost to move all the panels could be upwards of \$20,000 to \$25,000.

Kraft stated that, though the new guidelines for public art are not complete, best practices are constantly being updated. Concerns expressed in the resolution are already an active part of BCA policy.

Shannon asked if the possibility of a private owner is being explored. Kraft would need to speak to the city attorney before she could confidently answer that question. It is unclear what legal options are available for the mural after the 10 year display commitment is finished.

4. Approval of Draft Minutes from September 11, 2019

To insure that all councilors were available to approve the minutes Shannon requested a motion be put forward. Dieng moved to approve the minutes, Paul seconded, all were in favor.

b. CONTINUED

Returning to the ELAP discussion, Dieng asked to see a picture of the new plaques, and Kraft provided one. Though it is a lot of text and a little difficult to read the text is well balanced and presents a full picture of the history of the mural and its current issues (per Kiernan). Paul asked if there was any written agreement about the timeframe for the display of the mural. Kraft returned that she is not aware of any official agreement, however in testimony concerning the mural the 10-year timeframe was mentioned several times. That said, there is no official contract that she knows of.

c. CEDO – Highlight

Zach Williamson provided the committee with an update on the process that has gone into developing Highlight, the various events and locations, and change from a wrist band back to a button. What makes Highlight special is that it's community driven ideas. 75% of the programming was developed through the Bright Ideas Project (ideas for programming from the community). BPRW and FFL are supporting BCA in developing and producing the various events. Events will be happening all over the city and buttons will be available for purchase at multiple locations throughout the region. BCA will be holding a press conference on Tuesday, October 29th to announce the first round of Highlight events. Highlights of Highlight will include the traditional parade which will start at 5:30pm and a pet paw-rade on Church Street at 2pm.

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Dieng asked if BCA would be seeking funding assistance from the City Council. Williamson confirmed that, though they have many sponsorship partners, they do have a proposal they are readying for a future council meeting.

Shannon asked if the pet parade will be salt free or at least that CSMP use animal safe salt. Williamson will check into this.

Councilor Paul departed at this time.

d. CEDO – Memorial Auditorium Update

Grace Ciffo, new assistant director of the community works team at CEDO, introduced herself to the committee. She shared some of her personal history, including the fact that her musician parent performed at Memorial, and assured the group that she is motivated to find an operating partner to execute the vision presented in the RFP.

Jesse Freedman stated that the RFP was released on October 7th. It is available on the CEDO website for the public to view. The RFP required a site visit in order to bid, and 3 local companies attended the scheduled site visit, two of whom (Higher Ground and the Flynn) are expected to bid. The RFP was sent to 8 national organizations, but none showed for the required visit. CEDO has received some feedback from the national bidders and hopes receive more before the December 2 RFP deadline. If an acceptable proposal is not received, CEDO will use the information gathered during this first RFP offering to refine and improve the RFP.

Shannon asked for the rough finances for which the city would be responsible, wondering if it still entails the \$15 million general obligation bond and an additional \$15 million from other sources. Jeffrey Glassberg confirmed that there are 2 components of public support, the \$15 million GO bond and a TIF component associated with the development of the “YMCA” hotel . Though development of the “Super Block” was initially considered (and may be considered to assist in funding in the future), the new hotel is already planned and therefore a more logical choice to tie into the Memorial project.

Shannon asked about parking. Freedman replied that it is his understanding that there were limited issues with parking before and, though CEDO is considering possible issues, it is not their main focus. That said, even if the municipal lot was developed into a multi-level parking structure, it would not accommodate the amount of parking required for Memorial. Ciffo confirmed that part of the RFP mentions “nearby, well-lit parking.” Shannon asked if the lack of parking was a deterrent for national bidders. Freedman did not believe that was the case. Ciffo

returned that the idea is for individuals visiting Memorial will park somewhere downtown, enjoy the shopping and restaurants downtown has to offer, and go enjoy their event.

Shannon asked for a reminder of the timeline going forward. Freedman reports that the bids for the RFP are due by December 2. It will take between 2 weeks to 1 month to review the bids. They will report back to PACC once bids have been reviewed and they know the options that are available. If all goes well they hope to have the bond question on the November 2020 ballot. Shannon next asked if the fact that bond approval is not certain left national bidders hesitant. Freedman stated that that was not one of the concerns mentioned. Most of the national bidders said they would be interested after the renovation is complete. Shannon asked about the commitment of the bidders. Freedman confirmed that an MOU would be part of the bidder selection process. Ciffo continued that it's wise to include some sort of financial language.

Currently, there is not an official "Plan B," but should the RFP not produce a viable bid, CEDO will do a full post-mortem on the RFP. They will find ways to make it better/more engaging (may include a change of terms or financing) and possibly put it out to re-bid. The goal will remain to find a way to redevelop the building into the space the community has requested.

5. Councilor Items

There were no councilor items at this time.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:07pm. The next meeting will be scheduled at a future date to accommodate all councilor schedules.