

Foundry Garage Rooftop Proposal

Portsmouth Citizen Response Task Force subcommittee

Notes from June 11, 2020 Foundry Garage site visit

Present:

Russ Grazier, subcommittee chair and task force member

Deb Anthony, subcommittee member and task force member

James Petersen, task force co-chair

Peter Rice, Director of Public Works

Patrick Howe, Deputy Fire Chief

Ben Fletcher, Parking Director

Mike Casad, General Foreman for Parking Division

Kathleen Cavalaro, Seacoast Rep, independent working group

Brian Kelly, Seacoast Rep, independent working group

Nancy Pearson, independent working group

Andrew Cameron, Seacoast Rep (Sound Engineer)

Evan Mallett, Black Trumpet, independent working group

Andrew Bagley, citizen at large

Attached: Rough notes on site visit by Director of Public Works Peter Rice

Attached: Rooftop plan diagram provided by the independent workgroup

Notes:

A proposal to utilize the top level of the Foundry Parking Garage as a multi-purpose, open air, community space for people to safely gather was brought to the city by an independent working group made up of Portsmouth arts leaders, business owners, and citizens. The project is being dubbed a “Pop Up Rooftop” – providing opportunities for socially distanced performance, music, and culinary arts. The goal is to create a shared space for arts & cultural events, restaurant vendors, and potentially other organizations including businesses and nonprofits. It addresses the need for a safe space for community cultural events and can provide revenue generating opportunities for restaurants, arts organizations, and other businesses at time when indoor capacity is significantly reduced. It also takes into consideration the general public’s desire to be active outdoors during the summer.

The task force subcommittee did a site visit of the rooftop of Foundry Parking Garage with members of the independent working group and city staff. City staff gave a cautiously optimistic view of the potential use of this space for this purpose. This project would provide much needed, revenue-driving opportunities for arts organizations and local businesses that face potential closure due to the economic stresses of the pandemic.

Kathleen Cavalaro and Brian Kelly stated that Seacoast Rep is prepared to act as the anchor organization for this project, providing insurance coverage and fiduciary oversight. The performance space would be shared by local arts organizations on a rotating calendar. Local artists would have access to the venue and be vetted by a yet-to-be-determined arts organization or committee which could act as one of the presenters.

Vendor space could be utilized by local restaurants and other artisans and businesses. A process for determining vendors has not yet been presented. A quick discussion with city staff led to optimism that the space could work for this use during summer 2020.

Members of the independent work group cited other successful examples of this type of use of parking garage space in other communities and are working to put together documentation to support the use of this space in this manner.

Attached is a rough outline of considerations and concerns that were discussed and documented by Peter Rice, Director of Public Works. Consensus was that while some compromises would likely need to be made, an effective plan to utilize this space to help save our local arts organizations and restaurants is possible. It was determined that the rooftop space made the most sense for this project. Moving it to lower levels causes a variety of significant issues for vendors and performance.

Next steps would be:

- Ask city staff to take a closer look at what is possible from the perspective of power, water, sewer, and other infrastructure needs.
- Ask city staff look at what is realistic regarding safety and staffing needs, including involving the health, fire, and police departments.
- Get an understanding from the Department of Public Works of what the associated costs would be.
- Get an understanding from the independent workgroup about the funding specifics, including revenue generation. (It was suggested at one point that a portion of the revenues brought in by this “venue” could go back to the city to offset costs incurred.)
- Request that the city council fast-track this proposal, since lead time will be needed to organize all parties and schedule performances/vendors.

Notes prepared and submitted by Russ Grazier, 6/11/2020

Site Visit to Foundry Place Garage Notes

[Added by Russ Grazier: These notes were taken by Director of Public Works, Peter Rice]

6/11/20

These notes are general in nature and are intended to document topics discussed and are not minutes.

Topics Discussed –

- Power Requirements – It was expressed that two 200 amp panels would be needed to provide power. One for the stage sound system and one for the food area. The City indicated that the current electrical service did not have adequate capacity to provide this power and that it would likely require an upgrade to the electrical service or use of generators. Concern was expressed over the noise associated with the generators and it was suggested that they be located at ground level with conductors being run up to new panels on the roof.
- The Garage has a height of 8'-3"
- Access to sanitary plumbing for discharge of water related to food operations was not known. The City indicated they would investigate and report back.
- Egress concerns were discussed. Fire indicated that they would have to review and approve the allowable number of people and that it would likely require the stairway doors to be either removed or locked open to ensure egress.
- Bathroom facilities are limited and porta-potties would be required. The number and location needs to be confirmed with the Health Department.
- Noise Concerns would be addressed similar to how Prescott Park Arts Festival has handled it in the past. It was acknowledged that acoustics may contribute to neighborhood concerns.
- Time of operations would limit to 10:00 pm closing.
- Schedule is yet to be determined but it was stated that the desire was to be open 6 days a week. Fire expressed concerns about being able to provide coverage if required to ensure compliance with safety.
- Trash removal was a concern, carry in carry out was suggested. Prohibiting glass containers was suggested. This detail will need to be worked out.
- Storage was requested on the fifth floor under cover. This would need to be coordinated with parking garage staff and details as to how it would be secure need to be worked out.
- Pedestrian flow was discussed. The thought was to have one stairway the entrance the other the exit. However, it was acknowledged that access to the elevators would need to be maintained.
- It was acknowledged that the Health Department should be included in the near future to better understand their requirements and potential adjustments to the proposed approach.
- A brief discuss of costs was had. City staff stated that they were receiving multiple asks and that there may be limitations to their budgets. It was suggested that the group look to volunteers and pro-bono professional assistance to help offset the cost impacts.
- Emergency lights may need to be tied to the garage emergency generator.
- Police details will be required for beer garden

