



CITY COUNCIL MCINTYRE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES OF MARCH 16, 2021 MEETING

The McIntyre Subcommittee held the March 16, 2021 meeting via Zoom.

Chair Peter Whelan opened the meeting at 4:05 with a roll call.

Subcommittee Members Present via Zoom: Chair Peter Whelan and Councilors Councilor 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, Stephanie Seacord and Legal Secretary Marian Steimke.

Also Present via Zoom: Russell Preston and Mandy Reynolds of Principle Group (PG); Bill Downey; Ron Ulrich – *using Bill Downey's access*, Andrew Bagley, Gerald Duffy, Jeffrey McMenemy of Portsmouth Herald, John Pratt, Richard Gamester, Councilor Cliff Lazenby, Sen. Martha Fuller Clark.

Public comment:

Bill Downey of 67 Bow Street asked Councilor Tabor the source for his data that Market Sq. had highest in state evaluations, i.e., value per acre assessment. He next asked if the Thursday meeting was open to the public or just the Portsmouth Listens (PL) participants. Ms. Reynolds answered the event is open to everyone; 177 people were registered; it is a webinar format and they would be able to take questions and feedback. Portsmouth Smart Growth was Councilor Tabor's source. He mentioned Joe Minicozzi from Urban3.

Ron Ulrich 46 Baycliff Road (using Bill Downey's account) asked questions regarding the building being public versus private; how to link drawings to survey comments; and how the three final drawings were selected. Councilor Tabor answered that the City is in a development agreement with Redgate/Kane, so "ownership" would go to them, but they lease the land from the City. The Subcommittee is trying to get the rest of the site to have enough public benefit. Chair Whelan spoke next and said they were relying on PG to distill down to three or four designs. Mr. Ulrich asked what the point of asking for input on the entire lot was. Councilor McEachern said we know the federal building cannot be dismantled, and it becomes a taxable asset for the City. He does not think it runs afoul of earlier conversations. Councilor Trace said the building and property is "the monument".

The City becomes the Lessor and the developer becomes the Lessee. If you are suggesting the development partner will end up owning it, then no. Mr. Ulrich mentioned what is being litigated and when we see “private portion” we can do a better job of explaining. The overwhelming majority want to maximize public benefit. Councilor Tabor added that there is input on what can be on the roof and 1st floor. Mr. Preston said the process is an iterative one and suggested others get involved, as there was still time to offer input.

Seeing no one else wished to speak, Chair Whelan closed public comment at 4:24 p.m.

The Chair mentioned the letter to the editor in the paper that day. He said they have been working diligently since this time last year through a public process, through COVID, and it has not been easy. He would appreciate some patience from everyone, but this Subcommittee and Council have been negotiating in good faith. We understand we have an agreement with Redgate/Kane, and we will live up to that, he added.

Mr. Preston shared his screen to preview the draft designs and next steps. He explained the process that PG has gone through. Today he is showing what their current thinking is. Normally before COVID we would have set up a physical studio space, so we are trying to replicate that here by leaving up the white board. He showed a picture of the old State House model in City Hall. Mr. Preston discussed details of multiple design options.

Option A: the Square Scheme. This showed an image of the old State House as a nice complement to the church. He talked about all the comments this design received. He talked about layering and bringing the square to a human scale, as it is large. He showed multiple views of this scheme and discussed the features and benefits. The “Square Scheme”. Included 15 minute parking on Daniel Street.

Option D: Plaza Scheme. Featured a series of well scaled public spaces. There could be a public connection from one side of McIntyre to the public area. Featured an emphasis on prioritizing people. He talked about scales and density of site. The frames the church well; it is an engaging open piazza with a new front door to the McIntyre.

Option F: The Market Scheme. Included a covered outdoor space that has peaked a lot of interest. This is a market type – a hybrid civic and mixed use building could check a lot of the boxes that people are looking for. The idea is that as you come up from the water from Penhallow, you can now see down to the river with this modified design. He discussed the perceptions as you approach from different directions. He discussed potential for connection to Chapel Court related to usage versus other options if the stairway to Chapel were not needed. He highlighted the series of terraces and being able to look down to the water.

Option I: The Gardens Scheme. is a series of garden spaces and is a modification to Option F. It oriented buildings, opens Commercial Alley, provides a better view of the church; has a courtyard and market shed space. This one resolves a lot of issues that folks had with other options. It features a series of urban rooms that pull people through the space. As you walk, the church will present itself. It opens Commercial Alley into a very human scale space.

Option G: the Park Scheme. What if this were all park with an entry to the waterfront and a grand lawn. He discussed the features. It needs to be a destination to be an active and safe park there is a missed opportunity with this scheme, so he talked about tying together other options and if there was a way to utilize some of the volume of the site by adding on to the monument building. He said there are incredible ideas offered by the public that they tried to weave together.

Councilor McEachern thanked Mr. Preston and mentioned the Oxcart Man book that talks about south Portsmouth Market, and he said the designs are reminiscent of that. He liked the old state house to remind folks that Portsmouth used to be the state capitol. It includes a lot of what makes Portsmouth unique.

Mr. Preston said there is a lot of mixing and matching that could happen. He discussed a potential location for the Post Office.

Councilor Tabor talked about the different options and how they all have great elements. It will be a hard choice.

There will be the roundtable meeting on Thursday night. Chair Whelan said. Mr. Preston will post the mural board to the website. Mr. Preston will put out a survey comparing the schemes and ranking how the schemes do. The survey will be open until March 31st at 5:00. Miro board comments will be open and the specific survey. Then PG will be back to the Subcommittee with another round of sketches.

Councilor McEachern made a motion to go into nonpublic session to discuss a letter the Subcommittee received from their development partners. This was seconded by Councilor Tabor. On a roll call vote 4-0, the motion passed. The Subcommittee entered nonpublic session at 5:25 p.m.

There were no motions and no votes in nonpublic session.

Councilor McEachern made a motion to leave nonpublic session, seal the minutes and adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Councilor Tabor. On a roll call vote 3-0, the motion passed at 6:04 p.m.

Date Signed: _____

Peter Whelan, Chair,
McIntyre Subcommittee

Minutes taken by
Marian Steimke, Legal Secretary