



## CITY COUNCIL MCINTYRE SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 20, 2020 MEETING

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The McIntyre Subcommittee held the November 20, 2020 meeting via Zoom.

**Chair Peter Whelan opened the meeting at 10:33 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, Arian Rutt and Logan Capone of Principal Group and Jim Noucas of Portsmouth Listens.

**Councilor Tabor moved to approve the McIntyre Subcommittee meeting minutes of the October 20, 2020, October 27, 2020 and October 27, 2020 nonpublic session. Seconded by Councilor McEachern. On a roll call 4-0, the motion passed.**

Chair Whelan gave background on interviewing five architectural firms. He announced the Subcommittee chose Principal Group (PG) and has signed a contract to move forward with them. This was a milestone and the Subcommittee appreciated PG's quick turnaround. Chair Whelan offered congratulations to Russell Preston, President of PG and thanks to City Manager Karen Conard and Principal Planner Nick Cracknell for facilitating this agreement.

Chair Whelan summarized the process going forward with Portsmouth Listens (PL) and PG. He summarized the significance of the property for the present and future and was looking forward to working with PG. He discussed the next steps and severe timelines.

Councilor Tabor described the PL process including engaging the public so the project reflects what they want, outlining the next steps and engaging the design community. He spoke of a "McIntyre 101" presentation; two deliberative sessions to discuss values and

visions, and a process where the City can give that information to PG. He gave a brief history of PL projects over the years.

Councilor McEachern thanked PG for their commitment to Portsmouth and said PG understood the challenges of this project. The Councilor said out of this we would find middle ground of working with the developer and added the Subcommittee was thrilled to have PG on board and were excited to get started.

Councilor Trace thanked PG for working with the City. She very much appreciated their presentation, their understanding of the project and the City wanting to work in good faith with the developer. She added that after a thorough search, the Subcommittee agreed PG was the right fit for Portsmouth with no question.

City Manager Conard said she would echo the sentiments of the Subcommittee. When you know something is right, it is right and this is a good fit, she said.

Chair Whelan asked PG if they had questions or had anything to add.

Mr. Preston said getting the schedule aligned was a top priority. He said they have pulled together all the base materials for the site, and he talked about his immediate plans which included walking the property. There were two questions he always starts with: (1) What are the big ideas; and (2) from the plan that comes out of this what are the essential items that need to be addressed.

Councilor Tabor said there was an original project design which was not satisfactory. Redgate/Kane has opened the opportunity to use public input. Most important was additional contiguous public space of some kind and the place-making opportunity for a gathering space. More Market Square versus Portwalk which, he said, would be a place to meet people, have a cup of coffee or enjoy the beautiful and historic street space and scale. The space takes in the beauty of the North Church, he said.

Councilor McEachern described Portwalk as a number of buildings (The Hilton, apartments, and restaurants). When he thinks of it, it is dense. It replaced a supermarket/parking lot. What was built there creates a lot of shadows, and it is very cold and unforgiving in a winter setting. The McIntyre site is in the middle of Penhallow, Bow and Ceres Streets which is in the heart of the City. The Councilor would like to see more outdoor/indoor and atrium space, which was something missing from Portsmouth. He described the history of the project and how the Subcommittee is willing to look at costs alongside the developer. He would like the finished project to provide a benefit to the public. This is an opportunity to make smart investments versus the previous "this is what we can get for paying nothing."

Councilor McEachern left the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Mr. Preston said the indoor/outdoor concept has come up a lot, especially during COVID. He asked what other open spaces were in the network downtown.

Councilor Trace said Building A sits on the corner of Penhallow and Bow. That seemed like a logical building to eliminate. She would maximize outside open green space. She would suggest an open indoor public space like for a farmers market and a place to come in to get out of the cold. Councilor Trace said the loading bays were important to the NPS.

Mr. Preston asked to see the list of findings regarding the historic preservation requirements of the McIntyre building.

Chair Whelan said people came to Portsmouth for history so honoring the history was important. They did not want to have what was built at Portwalk. The Subcommittee will work with the development partner and find common ground. The developer must be able to make a fair profit, the Chair said.

Jim Noucas of PL joined the meeting at 11:12 a.m.

Mr. Preston referred to the site as a “superblock” and asked about the connectivity of walking downtown, specifically what would good connections be to other destinations be, he asked.

Chair Whelan said people actually walk on the other side of the street now because the sidewalk is so narrow. Redgate/Kane was trying to get more pedestrian access through the lot. The Chair thinks they did a pretty good job of that.

Councilor Trace said the view from the top of the building was spectacular. This was a good vantage point to see where Commercial Alley came in and the importance of creating more connection between Bow, Daniel, State, and Penhallow Streets, she said.

Mr. Preston and Mr. Cracknell discussed a site tour for early the following week.

Chair Whelan talked about the dramatic slope on the Daniel Street side.

Councilor Trace said it would be good for PG to have a copy for the plans for Mr. McNabb’s project. Mr. Cracknell agreed and said that will be a brand new massive building which will change the character of the corner. It will be an interesting modern architecture that will go in there. Mr. Preston agreed and said he would treat it as an existing condition and make sure it got into PG’s model.

Councilor Trace was hopeful Mr. McNabb’s project would be an interesting addition to the street. It may even solve some of the problems of McIntyre looking like a sore thumb in the middle of the historic architecture, she said. Chair Whelan agreed that Mr. McNabb’s building would be pretty spectacular and would energize the corner.

Mr. Preston asked what goes into the structure. Chair Whelan answered the McIntyre will be an office building. The original plan called for hotel space. Portsmouth has hotels

everywhere with a couple more in the plans. There was also going to be apartments and retail space. The City is committed to trying to get the post office back.

Councilor Trace summarized the survey results as being striking and most important was public space and the return of the post office.

City Manager Conard and the Mayor have met with the Post Master. The Post Office would support a move that the City would facilitate. The City Manager said she was trying to determine the best point person to work with in Congress.

Councilor Trace said the City would hold onto some parcel to lease to the Post Office, and that would not go through the development partner. Attorney Sullivan said that is one option and is the primary option.

Those present discussed another meeting, a walkthrough for Monday and looking at some plans. Attorney Sullivan reminded the group if a quorum attends the site walk, it must be noticed as a public meeting. Chair Whelan said no more than two would go.

Councilor Tabor said a joint statement with the developer would be a good thing to keep in motion, and Chair Whelan agreed it would help the PL process.

Mr. Noucas said PL would meet after this meeting and said the purpose of public space was to build community. He asked what would make people want to come downtown to use that space and said it was important to get the public there to see it and think about changes.

Mr. Preston referenced a framework used – Life Space Buildings. He said to look at the limitations of Market Square to see if the new space can complement that, and it might inform what kind of space it may need to be. It is something we should dig into quickly, he stated.

Chair Whelan said ½ block away were the tugboats. The street there was one of the biggest gathering spaces, and people enjoy walking along the water, he said.

Chair Whelan thanked Mr. Preston again and said he was looking forward to a great process moving forward.

**Councilor Tabor made a motion to adjourn, and it was seconded by Councilor Trace. On a roll call vote 3-0 the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.**

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

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Peter Whelan, Chair  
McIntyre Subcommittee

Minutes taken by  
Marian Steimke, Legal Secretary