

Staff: Holli Bushnell, Office Assistant  
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## **Minutes**

### **Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting**

Thursday, September 26, 12:00pm

**MEETING CONDUCTED IN PERSON AT 645 PINE ST, FRONT CONFERENCE ROOM, AND VIA ZOOM**

#### **Attendance:**

Committee Members: Chair Becca Brown-McKnight, Councilor Mark Barlow, Councilor Carter Neubieser

City Staff: Sophie Sauve – BPRW, Dan Cahill – BPRW, Mary Danko – Fletcher Free Library, Sara Katz - BCA, Holli Bushnell – BPRW

Meeting called to order at 5:06 pm by Chair Becca Brown-McKnight

#### **Approval of Agenda**

Mark Barlow moved to approve the agenda, Carter Neubieser seconded, and all were in favor.

#### **Approval of Draft Minutes from 06/26/2024**

Approval of the minutes were postponed until the next meeting.

#### **Public Forum**

Public forum was opened at 12:08pm. As no one present wished to speak public forum was closed at 12:08pm.

#### **Pomeroy Park Update –**

Sophie Sauve was present to speak on Pomeroy Park. Pomeroy currently has no tot lot in the playground area. The playground was up for renovation and BPRW decided to completely re-do it. The surrounding neighborhood asked about removing the large hedge in the park as they feel it encourages drug use and general misuse of the park (as a dog walk area). The NPA and neighborhood were trying to understand what exactly was desired in terms of the hedge and the playground. The decisions are still coming. There is a 6” drop going into the playground, so it’s not accessible to all; BPRW will be looking at park as a whole in order to improve accessibility in all areas. The work is in its early days – they completed an aerial survey of the park, but BPRW is looking for more information from PACC to inform design. They will be doing public outreach as well.

Brown-McKnight stated that this item was on PACCs agenda because she used to live there and still receives see-click-fix updates. Brown-McKnight has noticed a lot of camping updates on see-click-fix and wants to see it treated a little differently as it’s the only playground/green space in the area. She also feels that if there are predictable issues BPRW can get ahead of things. Councilman Bergman has asked for CSLs to come by Pomeroy Park to deal with camping issues, but has not had a response.

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Also, people have been parking on the grass in the evening. When basketball takes place on Tuesdays there are cars driving over sidewalk and just parking wherever. No cars are supposed to be driving in those areas. Overall it's great to get the neighborhood involved in what needs to be fixed is great.

Sauve noted that she can't address camping directly as it's not part of her job. She does planning, designing, and construction, and is only aware of issues happening when they're out doing the work. Brown-McKnight explained that Urban Park Ranger Neil Preston provided some info; the hedge appears to be an issue according to him. Sauve explained that she would remove the hedge, but a community discussion is needed first. When there's a fence around a playground it's to protect kids from getting into danger, but that's not the case with the hedge. Is there a better way to set up the playground so that it's safe but less secluded? Driving where they shouldn't be is happening everywhere, but BPRW can add signage and blockages to those spots where there are big problems when we know about them.

Barlow shared that he had also heard about hedge controversy and wondered if the decision on the hedge could be made separately from other park design ideas. Sauve explained that BPRW wants to know why people want to keep it. If it's a desire for more vegetation that's easy to address, whereas containment would be something to look at from a design perspective. Ultimately, the shrubs need to be moved as they are past their prime and are too high to see into space.

Barlow shared that he noticed people parking all over the place at Leddy, in locations where they never parked before. This causes issues for emergency vehicles as well as regular users others. A couple years ago BPRW started using parking services to manage parking lots. Is this a function of parking services to enforce? Or is this an urban park ranger job? Who is responsible for managing this new bad behavior. Sauve shared that this behavior would fall under the auspicious of parking services. The Urban Park Rangers are pretty stretched with unhoused issues. Sauve did not that signage helps reinforce rules. During comprehensive plan study for Leddy, they found they needed more signage for arena parking. There's tons of parking there and no reason for visitors to have to park on the street.

Neubieser thanked staff for their hard work. He just downloaded see-click-fix recently and found the volume of reports to be overwhelming. He's really appreciative of the BPRW staff's hard work and is surprised we don't have more trouble than we do addressing these issues.

#### **Kieslich Park open house and update –**

Dan Cahill shared that next Thursday from 4 to 6:30pm BPRW is holding a neighborhood park open house at the Redstone Cottage and Kieslich Park. This will be the first look for general public. Cahill is really excited to provide community with opportunity to find out what we're doing in this super dynamic park. The open house will provide a chance for folks to learn about multiuse path and memorial installation for voices of St. Joseph's Orphanage. Information about forest ecology and land management (happening throughout Burlington) will also be available. There will be a deep dive on the Redstone Cottage history and renovation and info on the community garden expansion. Wildways will present to talk about multiuse trail. There will be food grown from the community garden, music, and kids activities. This has been a long time coming with all the enhancements staff has made to the space.

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It's very exciting! Cahill asked councilors to attend the event on 10/3 from 4-6 pm. Cahill will send more info on the event once he gets the OK. Brown-McKnight shared her excitement for the event. She feels that PACC meetings are often all about the problems, it's nice that there's a happy thing going on there too. Celebration of the important work that people can appreciate. Cahill feels like they're making lemonade from lemons with the previously removed trees. People can sign up for planting days to help with restoration as well.

### **Fletcher Free Library Capital Campaign –**

Mary Danko shared that Fletcher Free Library is moving along on transformational remodeling work. The Friends of Fletcher Free Library (a 501c3) is taking on the majority of work. They have hired a capital campaign manager for this project (Ashana Trombley) and are also working on adding extra programming at FFL. Robert Putnam coming as well as Barbara McQuaid (10/29) to talk about disinformation for example. They are also looking at additional grant opportunities to fund the renovation. FFL is working on an EPA grant for 20mil on climate resiliency, serving folks who have been harmed by pollution or taken on a disproportionate struggle in climate crisis. They are looking at existing needs as well as what might be needed in the future in terms of climate disasters. FFL is very focused on sustainability, but being a climate resilience hub means they need to step up a bit more to help educate folks before a disaster, provide respite during a disaster, and help people recover post-disaster. Library serves the community a lot in these ways (cooling and warming shelter, safe air quality spaces) in addition to lending books. This grant will help them provide more of these extra services. Dank is very optimistic about moving forward.

The proposal for a social worker, whose position was added as part of funding for library, just sent packet to mayors/attorney's and CAO office. It explains FFLs plan to partner with Howard center to embed someone at the library. The Howard Center would manage hiring, onboarding, and supervising this individual, but will be at the Library. This will be coming before the city council shortly.

FFL is also hoping to add in-house security. With security staff as part of team they can ensure cultural competencies, less turn over, access to city services, and provide staff with id badges for access. This might actually be a cost saving project, however the program is only in it's pilot stage. It is, however, supported by AFSCME and may be a pilot for other departments as well.

Brown-McKnight shared that City Council hears about the library a lot. There's lots of concern and love for FFL. She would like to get job descriptions/responsibilities/expectations for the new in-house security and wondered if they'll be handling the outdoor space as well. Danko confirmed that the in-house team will be handling the exterior spaces at FFL as well. She thinks staff do a really good job when we're open, but they're the second largest building in the city, and they are a hot spot for unhoused activity. What she's been hearing is that when they're not open it's hard to get to the bookdrop. FFL is working with BPD to do more drivebys in the off hours. They are also working with CSLs to stop by more often and engage with folks in off hours. Unfortunately, staff has very little control over what goes on in the off hours, and negative behaviors are a struggle to combat.

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Barlow shared that he has also noticed issues after closing. BPD should be clearing people off property in off hours. He then questioned whether FFL should be a space for congregation in off hours or if the city should we trespass these folks. Danko shared that some have already been trespassed and just come when they're closed. FFL staff is working with BPD to identify trespassed folks, and they have had some arrests of trespassed folks. It is a heightened atmosphere, and, unfortunately, BPD is understaffed too.

Neubieser shared that he agrees with concerns around security, but that it's good to hear what they're doing to combat issues. He feels the staff goes above and beyond what a library traditionally is or should be. FFL is a social service hub and it's very hard work that staff is being asked to do. He's excited about the grant to help us hold on to public assets without burdening property taxes.

Danko wanted to add that, in relation to trespasses, the library has specific ordinance. People who have been trespassed there can appeal and go through restorative justice. They are not trying to be putative or harsh, but FFL needs to maintain a welcoming atmosphere as well as be a substance free space. There are paths for people to come back to the library if they are trespassed.

Brown-McKnight thanked Danko for the updated and asked if there is anything FFL needs via city council.

#### **BCA Update –**

Sara Katz shared that it's currently a challenging funding environment for BCA. There are challenges with City Hall Park programing both with funding and budget cuts. BCA added significant programs to their 2020 budget/roster when CHP opened as renovated venue. Now BCA produces over 100 events in CHP throughout the year. For the first couple of years there were additional sponsors filling in for long term funding. The city was going to create an expanded VID district that would be funded by additional fees, but that didn't happen, so they pivoted and found needed funding.

As behavioral issues have evolved BCA has lost sponsors for CHP programing. They still have a few sponsors who really love the work they're doing, but this year they did have to cut back as they were unable to replace lost funding. In addition, they've been absorbing new costs, such as security, that was never part of the budget before. Now it's part of their budget which takes away from funding for programs. Security costs are also coming in higher than originally anticipated and BCA will have to cut from Highlight to maintain budget.

In order to maintain sponsors, they aimed to cut back on components of programs rather than cut them entirely. Half the number of Splashdances and 2 fewer evening concerts were planned for this season. BCA cut June programing out of the 2025 budget entirely. If they manage to underspend they'll add things back in. Over all they've cut about 20 events total from lineup.

That said, Katz feels CHP has felt markedly improved this summer. Lots of behaviors coming back to park that were absent over summer. Programs play a big role in making the park welcoming for everyone.

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Barlow asked if events had already been reduced by 20 or if there are more to come. Katz explained that each summer, from June to Sept, CHP has had about 120 events for the past few years. This summer they only had 100. The total number will be reduced further for next summer but cancelations will be peppered throughout series so it's less noticeable. The BCA center also sits right on the park and has many exhibitions right there. BCA makes a pretty significant contribution to downtown vibrancies. Engagement has been down a little bit over the summer (like most Church St vendors), but the bright spot is that BCA has been able to focus on youth programing at the gallery. They are developing pilot program with BHS – creating residency programs in schools where artists in residence go into schools and then take students to tour exhibitions. Working with teens and youth is huge priority and these programs have been overwhelmingly positive. In fact they are opening an exhibition tomorrow – Passages – which is a mix of local and national artists, some of whom have been working with high school students to prompt them to make new work. They will curate the student work at the BCA gallery in January.

Brown-McKnight felt that if there's student art being displayed City Council should really push to support it. Barlow asked when the event is taking place and Katz confirmed that the opening for Passages is kid friendly and will take place at 5pm.

Neubieser shared that he appreciates the staff's creativity on the budget front.

Brown-McKnight felt that the Splashpad could be part of the climate story as well – it's a back-up water area for community to enjoy when the lake is unavailable. She was hoping for more splashpads throughout the city and wondered if EPA or other climate grants might be an avenue to explore for more splashpads. She also was interested in the interplay between events and overall perception of community safety at park.

Danko interjected that she might reach out to Sauve to see about getting a mini-splash pad in front of FFL. She definitely has had equity for water come up in the EPA grant for FFL. Sometimes the lake isn't available. Sauve shared that there is a correlation between activating a park and safety. A lot of people feel like there's no one ever using the park and that feels unsafe. When parks feel busier they feel safer.

Katz added that BCA is also getting ready for holiday market season starting Nov 15 and continuing through Dec 22. Brown-McKnight asked if there is a formal process for winter activities in CHP. Sauve shared that there are smaller interdepartmental group looking at winter placemaking. They are in the piloting and funding.

**Adjournement** – Barlow moved, Neubieser seconded, all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 1:04pm. The next meeting will be held on 10/26 at 12pm at 645 Pine St and via zoom.