CITY OF BURLINGTON
PARKS, ARTS & CULTURE COMMITTEE

Councilor Joe Magee, Chair, Ward 3
Councilor Ali Dieng, Ward 7
Councilor Mark Barlow, North District

Staff: Holli Bushnell, Office Assistant
Lakeview Cemetery
hbushnell@burlingtonvt.gov

AGENDA
Parks, Arts and Culture Committee Meeting
City Hall, 149 Church Street, Sharon Bushor Conference Room
Wednesday, July 26, 2023 5:00pm – 7:00pm

MEETING CONDUCTED IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM
When: Jul 6, 2023 05:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)
Topic: PACC

Please click the link below to join the webinar:
https://zoom.us/j/94560932039
Or One tap mobile :
+13052241968,,94560932039# US
+13092053325,,94560932039# US
Or Telephone:
Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):
+1 305 224 1968 US

Approval of the Agenda

Approval of the draft minutes from July 6, 2023

Public Forum

Agenda Items –

- Total Solar Eclipse, April 8, 2024 – Doreen Kraft, BCA

Schedule Next Meeting

Adjournment

Non-Discrimination: The City of Burlington will not tolerate unlawful harassment or discrimination on the basis of political or religious affiliation, race, color, national origin, place of birth, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, veteran status, disability, HIV positive status or genetic information. The City is also committed to providing proper access to services, facilities, and employment opportunities. For accessibility information or alternative formats, please contact Human Resources Department at 865-7145

CITY OF BURLINGTON
PARKS, ARTS & CULTURE COMMITTEE

Councilor Joe Magee, Chair, Ward 3
Councilor Ali Dieng, Ward 7
Councilor Mark Barlow, North District

Staff: Holli Bushnell, Office Assistant
Lakeview Cemetery
hbushnell@burlingtonvt.gov

Minutes
Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting

Thursday, July 6, 2023, 5:00pm
MEETING CONDUCTED IN PERSON AT 645 PINE ST, FRONT CONFERENCE ROOM AND VIA ZOOM

Attendance:
Committee Members: Chair Joe Magee, Councilor Ali Dieng
Councilor Mark Barlow was absent

City Staff: Colin Storrs – BCA, Scott Gustin – Permitting & Inspection, Cindi Wight – BPRW Director, Dan Cahill – BPRW, Alec Kaeding – BPRW, Holli Bushnell – BPRW

Public Present: Carmen George, Ryon Fink, Zoe Richards

Meeting called to order at 5:02 pm by Chair Joe Magee

Approval of Agenda
Councilor Ali Dieng moved to approve the agenda, Magee seconded, all were in favor.

Approval of Draft Minutes from 5/24/2023
Dieng moved to approve the minutes, Magee seconded, all were in favor

Public Forum
Public forum was opened at 5:02pm. As no one present wished to speak public forum was closed at 5:02pm.

Oddfellows Lodge Mural Update

Ryon Fink of the Oddfellows began his presentation by telling the committee that he intended on picking up the funds designated by the city and putting the payment in the mail to the selected artist that very evening.

Fink continued by providing the history of the project. After coming to PACC with the idea and securing $10,000 in funding, the Oddfellows put out open call for submissions. They received 12 applications which they spent a good amount of time reviewing. Ultimately, the Oddfellows selected 5 artists to continue on to the next phase of development. One artist in particular stood out, Anthill Collective. Anthill Collective intends to paint a mural on the entire building and work in oddfellows symbols themes (they borrowed historical documents to come up with designs) as well as aspects of what makes the New North End special. What really convinced the Oddfellows that Anthill Collective was the right group

DRAFT

for the project was their desire to paint the whole building and their work in large-scale art. Additionally, the materials they intend to use will last longer than those of the other proposals (10-15 years without protective coating, and a protective coating which will increase the longevity of the work). Finally, Anthill Collected requested that they be included as a first call for any damage that happens. The Oddfellows have set aside $1000 in their budget for future repairs. Fink then indicated that the next steps include finalizing the contract and providing Anthill Collective with payment. The Oddfellows have arranged a Community Paint Day on 7/30 where volunteers will be putting up the base layer of acrylic rainbow colored paint. All are welcome to attend the paint day, and the Oddfellows are hoping including a cook-out/music/community fun as part of the work day. Colin Storrs of BCA will continue to assist in publicizing the project. Following the paint day, Anthill collective will be finishing mural in August. Fink will be returning to PACC with any updates in either September or October and the project is on schedule to be completed in October. Finally, the Oddfellows are planning to document as much as possible to give presentation to PACC/the public.

Dieng was congratulatory of the work the Oddfellows have completed thus far and commented that it will be nice to give the New North End some color.

Storrs reiterated that the city granted the Oddfellows the funds for the project, allowing the Oddfellows to own both the paint and the building. The city does not own this project, they just helped support the creation of it.

Magee felt this is an exciting project and was laudatory of the public paint day.

Grant Program use of the Conservation Fund

Scott Gustin, a member of the Permitting and Inspections team, came before PACC to discuss an initiative for the conservation board which he staffs. He informed the committed that he was hoping for PACCS support on an item the conservation board intends to bring before both Board of Finance and the full City Council later in July. The conservation board is asking to reallocate existing monies from conservation legacy fund. Historically, the fund was split between acquisition and stewardship. What the conservation board would like to do is add a third category which would fund a local grant program for nature based climate solutions.

City adopted open space protection plan 2001-2002 and established conservation legacy fund as part of that plan. That plan only included funds for acquisition and stewardship. In 2022 the City Council adopted nature based climate solutions as part of open space protection plan. At some point in this timeframe, it became clear that the legacy fund was not being fully funded. This was corrected and, going forward, even with the new category there will be more funds available for acquisition than in previous years.

DRAFT

The grant program would be an annual cycle available to anyone. There would be a list of required criteria and a review process for these small scale, community engaging projects. The conservation board is asking residents get their hands dirty working to prevent climate change, but they will be providing the funds to do so. The board has a plan, strategy, and funding; all they need is the City Council to take action to add third category.

Magee expressed his happiness at hearing from the conservation board. He asked land steward Dan Cahill to provide some feedback from his perspective as to what this would allow the city to do. Cahill was able to provide an example that was emerging in line with the timeframe of the meeting: The first recorded case of non-native invasive plants has been discovered on Ledge Rd here in Burlington. This is a critical time to act before the plants go to seed so that we can try to control the infestation. Unfortunately, the invasive species have been sited both on public and private property which makes removal difficult. BPRW has been working with contractors to figure out how to address the problem and it's clear that the participation of private land owners is critical. BPRW will do the removal, but that often leave a blank slate of land. For the removal project to be effective we need to install regenerative plants in the bare space. There's not currently a clear funding source for this kind of project, but the new category would give BPRW a way to fund the planting of regenerative species. This project also provides the opportunity to build on community involvement with removing plant by making investment in ecosystem resiliency within the climate action plan. This is one of the things this program is designed to do.

Zoe Richards, chair of the Conservation Board, added that both Scott and Dan have done a great job with the practical side of things. She went on to explain that all carbon is mitigated through natural systems, and that, while you can stop putting carbon into the air, only plants and trees put that carbon back into the earth. We need to maintain these natural functional systems and these funds will help with that as well as think about what's going to make Burlington livable and resilient. It's going to take work, but this new category will put a bit of money towards that.

Magee felt this was an exciting opportunity and an important step to take. He asked what happens if a private property owner applies for something to do with their land that's adjacent to work we're doing; if there is a can we catch that and Direct them to the grant program. Gustin felt this was possible. If the city knows of something being implemented, having it within the shop would make sense to reach out to owner about collaboration.

Richardson added that the conservation board supports the Grow Wild Initiative which encourages people to plant native species in their yards. Things such as plant giveaways and other things that facilitate community engagement could be funded with the grant program. The grant program will support initiatives that could make a big impact with just a little help from the city.

Cahill added that the grant program can also be a community building tool. We don't know all the ways we'll be able to use these funds yet. More and more solutions will emerge as we go forward. The

DRAFT

important thing is that the conservation board has really well-written parameters. There are a lot of things that are low-hanging fruit from a cost perspective. Richardson added that nature based climate solutions are the most effective and least expensive way to combat climate change. Network of cities working on this and Burlington is on the front end of doing this work/modeling this idea.

Dieng was very encouraging of the initiative and asked about the size of the fund. Cahill stated that there is $168,000 that they are hoping to allocate to the grant program. This amounts to 30% of full fund. 30% goes stewardship and 40% goes to acquisition. Allocation will be designed through a review committee, and staff would not be making funding decisions, but rather providing technical assistance to applicants and assistance in implementation. There is a matrix that connects back to the climate action plan to ensure that proposals are in line with it.

Dieng asked if the grant program will look into the relationship between wildlife and climate change. Richardson confirmed that a biodiversity crisis is part of climate crisis. The more balanced our ecosystem the healthier our wildlife. To our benefit, because of Burlington's location we have amazing native wildlife and lots of beautiful function. The grant program could help fund a lot of initiatives that would have positive impact on wildlife populations. For example, what would it mean to manage deer in Burlington? They've been talking about it a lot at the interval center, but it's a complicated issue.

Both Magee and Dieng expressed their support of the proposal. PACC will be supportive of proposal before City Council. Both the Conservation Board and Parks Commission will also support the proposal.

Cahill asked the committee to formally support the change to the original climate action resolution that governs the legacy fund to acknowledge the new category of small scale grants for nature based climate solutions. Dieng moved to support, Magee seconded, and all were in favor.

Celebration and Protection of the Forever Young Treehouse

Carmen George reitereated the history of this particular item, explaining that the Forever Young Treehouse is the first universally accessible public treehouse in US, it cost $100,000 and was built by community. Over past several years George has performed around 50 wedding ceremonies in the treehouse. She has seen it vandalized and graffiti's, the bark of the tree lit on fire, a bench lit on fire and damaged so severely that it had to be replaced. All this misuse has led to a less welcoming space which is really sad. George stated that the treehouse will be turning 20 next year. She would like to request that PACC support video recording system/camera/some type of surveillance as well as ask BED to do a real estimate of cost to install system so she could do fundraising or invite community to contribute. George would also like to ask BPRW to hold 20th anniversary celebration. There is currently no signage explaining history of space or its importance and she would like to see that too. George suggested unveiling new historical signage at 20th anniversary celebration.

DRAFT

Magee asked if BPRW maintains the treehouse and Cindi Wight confirmed that they do. As of 2022 seasonal staff at Oakledge inspect the daily. They make sure we have regular eyes on it and alert park facilities to any issues that need to be dealt with. Wight feels that BPRW has a pretty good handle on the ongoing issues at the treehouse and made it clear that BPRW is not prioritizing putting a camera there due to issues adding power to space. BPRW is looking at putting cameras in places where there are regular, known vandalism issues. Wight also added that she was unaware of the upcoming 20th anniversary next year but was happy to know BPRW has another reason to throw a party out at Oakledge.

George stated that she would like to be involved with any 20th anniversary planning, and Wight commented that she would connect George to KJ Doyle, who handles events for BPRW.

George reiterated her commitment to getting cameras and protections for the treehouse, stating that there are many upsetting things that happen there that would necessitate a camera. When Wight stated that there are higher priority areas that are dealing with the same issues George added that there are a lot of compelling reasons to put adding a camera to the Forever Young Treehouse higher on the list of priorities.

Magee asked if Innovation Chief Scot Barker had been involved in any of these discussions, and Wight confirmed that he had attended meetings in the past. George stated that Barker had provided a ballpark estimate for the installing cameras (gauging interest), but that she would really appreciate it if PACC conveyed to Barker that her inquire was real and she would like to raise fund to make it happen.

Magee felt that this is something PACC should continue to discuss but that he was not prepared to take action that evening. He wants to find a way to mitigate concerns and asked if things have improved over the last year while seasonal staff has been checking the space. George stated that the patrols are making a difference. She felt staff has been doing a good job, but there's more room for improvement/protection.

Dieng stated that he didn't know the full history of the project and wants to understand how much money has been allocated to treehouse by the city over the years. He asked what has been done in terms of care/refurbishment as well as cost to add an informational plaque. He also felt that a formal estimate from Barker would be helpful.

George expressed her frustration at the city's seeming lack of desire to provide a camera for the treehouse. Wight stated that for city to take on this project they would also need to take into account running power and wifi systems to treehouse which would require them to run those systems throughout the park. A camera just at treehouse doesn't benefit park as a whole, and, unfortunately, the actual completion of projects is a lot more complicated than just fundraising or writing a check – initiatives need to fit into the city's overall plan. Wight did add that if George is willing to fundraise for the cost of getting cameras throughout Oakledge, including treehouse, the city would be much more

DRAFT

interested. George stated that she might be interested in that kind of fundraising, but would have to think about it.

Magee stated that getting further information from Barker would be the next step. George asked if Barker could break the project down into phases for funding purposes. Magee confirmed he will ask Barker to break down the project into as granular steps as possible. In terms of a 20th anniversary celebration, a committee will be involved in conversations about that and can potentially look at plaque funding.

Urban Park Ranger Update

Lead Urban Park Ranger Neil Preston detailed his experience training with urban park rangers in Denver, CO and provided the committee with an update as to the state of unhoused camping in the city.

Preston's experience in Denver was phenomenal and provided him with much professional growth. Denver has used urban rangers since the 1980s, and their program has grown tremendously in the last 40 years because of homelessness and the ongoing drug crisis in Denver. The urban ranger's engagement with those things grew along with their program.

Preston and his colleague, Andrew, had 2 full weeks in Denver with their entry class of urban park ranger trainees. They began by onboarding a class of 24, but several trainees left after 1st day of training when a body was found during in the field training. Over the course of 4 days working in the field 4 additional trainees left the program. Denver has found that many people who sign up to do this work do not know what they were getting into. There are tremendous hazards to both one's physical person and mental health as urban park rangers are working with people under extreme duress. After several years of losing trainees at the end of their training due to these hazards, Denver learned to switch their training to have trainees shadow existing rangers first so that people learn immediately if they're cut out for this kind of job. Preston added that Burlington see this in our own applications. He provided the statistic that urban park rangers are 10x more likely to be assaulted than an FBI agent.

Preston went on to explain his hope of building in training for physical self-defense, technical processes, and mental health support in Burlington's own training. He feels these are very important after coming back from his experience in Denver. He also added that, at the end of training in Denver, an acting troupe came in to act out multiple scenarios over the course of 6 to 8 hours. This training was incredibly valuable in the broad picture and should inform how BPRW trains our seasonal rangers.

Preston stated that one of the things he was able to immediately implement from his Denver experience was adding Signage in CHP. If we don't tell people what we want how do we expect them to do what we want? Clear communication about expections in public spaces has made a large impact already and that came from directly from Denver.

DRAFT

Preston further detailed some of the differences in the way Denver handles issues. One clear example is how they handle site cleaning. Cleaning up encampments is very dangerous, very painful work that must be done very carefully. Denver has chosen to use of outside contractors for their site mitigation. This protects staff in a way that our practices don't, but Preston does have concerns that 3rd party contractors are not trained well enough. The benefit to using a 3rd party contractor is that it allows someone to sign on specifically to do the mitigation work. This protects employees and prevents them from having to deal with moral and safety issues related to the mitigation. Denver is also working on a site cleaning model that would tap members of unhoused community to assist with site mitigation based on a program started in Portland, OR.

Another aspect of the Denver training that was tremendously impactful was the pepper spray training. Preston now feels that if he has to use it, he's so glad to have had the training because it's a terrible thing and there's a lot of pain associated with it. All trainees were sprayed with pepper spray and everyone had to do a series of tasks. Now that Preston has had that experience it will inform his use in the field. Preston was also laudatory of the Crav Maga training that Denver provided. He felt it was effective in building confidence in getting compliance (though he never wants to have to use physical force).

Preston continued by explaining that the kind of enforcement Denver does is different from our focus here in Burlington, but both are practical and empathic. Denver's rangers present much more like law enforcement officers that our urban rangers do. This may not be the best fit for us as Preston has often heard that the soft look of our rangers is appreciated by community. All rangers in Denver wear ballistic armor, but that's more than we need here and could end up escalating situations. Denver is a much larger city with a much larger unhoused community, but they also they have space in their shelters while we have none. We are not able to be as cut and dry with our unhoused population as Denver is because of that. Preston feels that, unless there is a safety related issue, it's better to back off from an argument. He would much rather let an infraction that's not a safety violation turn into a learning opportunity than aggressively enforce the rules. Ultimately, Preston would love to go back and do more training as well as put together something valuable to bring to Denver for training.

Dieng thanked Preston for all he does and his passion for the work. He asked for further details about the uniforms in Denver. Preston explained that they look like officers with full tactical belts, radios, and a baton. Preston commented that the connection the Denver rangers has to dispatch is really relevant in how they do their work and how we're learning to do our work. He felt that radios and connecting to BPD dispatch would be helpful in improving working conditions.

Wight commented that the word "Ranger" has been added across back of uniform shirts and that stab vests are optional based on duty.

Dieng felt that Preston's experience should be shared with both the city council and community so they can better understand what rangers go through, what their needs are, and what other municipalities do.

DRAFT

He requested that Preston present to the full council. Wight was in support of this and added that BPRW has been tracking campsites, so Preston would be able to include that data in his presentation. She suggested waiting until fall to give staff time to put together a solid presentation. Dieng agreed and Magee stated he would coordinate with Council President Paul to determine the best meeting. Dieng added that the presentation could be insightful for the council when it comes to to allocate further resources to the program.

Preston provided a brief update as to the state of unhoused camping in the city. The highest concentration of unhoused individuals are residing on the Old Dump Road below Kieslich Park. Thankfully, the June 1st release from the motel voucher program wasn't the huge wave that we expected, but 15 more sites were added in town and they have seen lots of car camping. That said, the transient community (which is not the same as unhoused community) is much heavier than last year. There are substantially more people in flying A and old dump road spaces than last year. Preston made it clear that he does not attempt to access the barge canal site as it is not a park, but he is aware of lots of unhoused individuals residing there. Preston feels the unhoused population will likely continue to grow for another month or two before it starts to decrease and that the work is going to get more challenging before it gets better.

On the plus side, the removal process has become more streamlined and easy to implement. Preston feels he needs to pick his battles and be practical in how and when and where folks are moved. He doesn't want to traumatize people or make them hazardous/dangerous by moving them. There are folks that he's moved 3-5 times that he has great relationships with. It's hard work, but they are doing a good job for a crisis they were unprepared for. What is really needed is two more full time union staff.

Magee thanked Preston for spending time and giving PACC an update after his first year. He made it clear that understood the need for more full time staff and. Magee felt that the urban rangers are an example of Burlington doing things differently and it going pretty well. He appreciated Preston's approach to the work and feels that the more we can expand approach/program, the better.

Adjournment – Meeting was adjourned at 6:42pm. The next meeting will be held on 7/26/2023 in the Sharon Bushor Conference Room at City Hall, 149 Church St, Burlington, VT 05401.

DRAFT