

Minutes

Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting

Wednesday, August 23, 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

City Staff: BCA, Zach Williamson – BCA, Cindi Wight – BPRW, Holli Bushnell – BPRW

Public Present: Ryon Fink – Oddfellows, Abbey Duke – Dog Task Force

Meeting called to order at 5:04 pm by Chair Joe Magee

Approval of Agenda

Mark Barlow moved to approve the agenda, Ali Dieng seconded, all were in favor.

Approval of Draft Minutes from 9/27/2023

Dieng moved to approve the minutes, Barlow seconded, all were in favor

Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 5:05pm. As no one present wished to speak public forum was closed at 5:06pm.

Oddfellows Final Report –

Ryon Fink began by showing the committee images of the completed mural (see attachment). The end result of the project is very bright and colorful, and has already inspired visitors to stop by and check it out (both locals and tourists). Fink continued by sharing that, since the completion of the mural, the Oddfellows have been very active. They held punk rock flea market, had 3 bands perform last weekend (which they are hoping to turn into an all-ages, substance-free series), and of course held their grand re-opening which WCAX did a story on. The Oddfellows hall was previously used for events like these when rented by other community groups, and lots of community members have positive memories there. Their goal is to make it a safe and welcoming space for all members of our community.

Fink went on to encourage the city to work with mural artist Ant Hill Collective in the future. He feels the collaborative nature of their work is overwhelmingly positive. For example, there was some concern about the mural being graffiti'd, but Ant Hill actually is graffiti artists. Fink feels that working with Ant Hill Collective is a good way to deescalate the ongoing battle between public art and graffiti. Ant Hill

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doesn't expect graffiti on the Oddfellows mural, but they will handle any repairs if graffiti or other issues come up.

Magee remarked on how bright and colorful the mural is, stating that it looks great. Magee asked the capacity of the space and Fink confirmed that BFD gave them a capacity of 99. Barlow echoed Magee's sentiment sharing that the mural looks awesome and improves the neighborhood. The building used to look like it had been abandoned, but now it's a really inviting space. Barlow shared that Fink showed him around the space during the unveiling, and the inside has been cleaned up as well. Barlow feels the Oddfellows Hall is a great space to program smaller events/gatherings, and might be an appropriate space to host city meeting.

Fink agreed that NPA meetings are definitely a possibility for the kind of things that could happen in the hall. Now that the hall has re-opened the Oddfellows are reaching out to people and community groups to offer them possible use of the space. They haven't fully set their fee structure yet, but they plan to use a sliding scale. The largest remaining issue in terms of community usage is that there is still a half flight of stairs at the entrance keeping it from being fully accessible. In the next year the Oddfellows will be looking for grants to continue work on the space to make it accessible. They have already started the search process and may be coming back to PACC as the next phase of the project develops.

Dieng praised Fink's leadership throughout the project. He feels that PACC and other committees can learn from the process the Oddfellows went through using it as a potential template or at least valuable information for future projects. Dieng congratulated Fink on his accomplishments. He would love to look for more opportunities in the New North End for further public art and beautification. Ultimately, Dieng feels that the Oddfellows mural brings life, color, and vibration into the neighborhood.

Fink shared his appreciation for the ease of working with PACC. The whole project started because he reached out for support and having that support enabled them to complete the project with much greater ease.

Solar Eclipse Update –

Zach Williamson reports that the Solar Eclipse team went before the City Council on Monday and received their support to fund the public safety aspect of the Solar Eclipse, and the resolution came through to BCA earlier in the day. This means the team can now put down deposits and make real offers to vendors. The eclipse team has reached out to DPW, BPD, and BFD and will be meeting monthly between now and 4/8 to discuss emergency preparedness, traffic control, etc...with the goal of developing a team to handle that aspect of the event. There is a great event team within the city already planning for the eclipse, but they better at the events/entertainment side of production than the safety side. These meetings will hopefully get those wheels in motion. The city is actively fundraising for the event half of the budget, and that fundraising is in administrations hands, so BCA is

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will not be working on that. Currently the administration has raised around \$40,000. They are hoping for more soon to develop a more elevated event.

As Williamson had recently provided the full council an update on Solar Eclipse planning, there wasn't much more to provide PACC. He asked if he could provide a brief update on Highlight and the committee agreed.

Williamson shared that Highlight is in its 6th year, even running through the pandemic. Tickets will go on sale 11/1 and the events for this year look fantastic. Events will start on New Year's Eve at 11am at Vermont Comedy Club. Circus Smirkus will be in Contois Auditorium again for 3 shows. BCA has engaged an LGBTQ+ circus to perform as well. They will be holding a Taylor Swift Dance Party in addition to other BCA events with DJs and concerts. Cirque du Feugo will be burning giant Champ at the waterfront and the Fluffy Bus is coming. Events will be programmed at Echo, the Unitarian Universalist Church, Foam Brewers, and Skinny Pancake. BCA will be making their first round of official announcements 11/1 to tease a few events, the making a larger announcement of all planned programming on 11/30. Buttons are \$12 in November, \$15 in December.

Williamson shared that funding has been an issue this year. Pricing has significantly increased for staging, bathroom, lights, labor, transit – overall everything is costing much more. As the producer Williamson wants to make things as quality as possible, so he has been making some changes, but there are some things that just aren't in the budget this year. They are doing their best, but it has tricky trying to do the same with less.

Dieng asked how much was spent on Highlight last year and Williamson confirmed it was right around the \$200,000 mark. BCA spent \$100,000 on performers and the other half of the budget went to infrastructure. The sale of the buttons brings in around \$50,000 and sponsors make up other part of the budget. Last year they were actually able to raise money.

Williamson added that they made 5000 buttons last year and ran out of physical buttons, ultimately selling or giving out closer to 7000 buttons last year. He added that if anyone can't afford the buttons BCA does give some out for free. The goal is to sell the buttons, but BCA also wants everyone to have a good time. They also do promotions through BED and other organizations to encourage positive goals.

Magee asked to get a full update in November and Williamson agreed.

Dog Taskforce Report –

Cindi Wight shared that Dog Task Force Chair Maria Karunungan was unable to attend the meeting due to illness, but she will be sharing how the final dog task force report is laid out and Abbey Duke was also present as another member of the task force. Wight asked that PACC review the draft report and provide recommendations.

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Wight then proceeded to share the rough draft of the final dog task force report sharing the structure with minimal information on the content. The report begins with an Introduction of who the task force is, how it was formed, and a point by point breakdown of resolution (the actual resolution is included in Appendix A). The introduction is followed by a list of staff and committee members, a summary of current city programs, and summary of prior task-force work. The next section goes over what committee has been working on (survey, education, activities, compliance and enforcement review), then shares the task force's recommendations. The report splits the recommendations into ordinance updates (removal/ language update and reasons why are included in the appendix), enforcement, licensing recommendations, and off leash recommendations. The report concludes with appendices that share the original resolution, details of the ordinance modernization, outdoor cat research, quarterly reports, off-leash survey data, a draft of off-leash dog policy (to be approved by parks commission), and an education campaign calendar.

Barlow asked if the draft document was in the packet and Wight explained that it wasn't ready to share in advance of meeting. Wight would be happy to provide it following the meeting for longer review time, it just wasn't prepared in time to share ahead of meeting. She reiterated that the task force is not looking for recommendations on substance but more on how it's being presented.

Magee recommended presenting things from the council's perspective with the most important information roughly shared on the top sheet. He felt that it would be appropriate for PACC to discuss the report when it was finalized in November and then forward it to full council for their meeting the first week in December.

Barlow felt that a short summary of the task force and members at the beginning would be appropriate short summary, but that greater detail should go in the appendix. He feels the report should be focused on recommendations, where there are significant departures from current policy, and how the task force came to those recommendations. The council is seeking to understand why it is prudent to make these changes.

Duke suggested starting the report with a bullet list of changes and providing greater detail on the reason for the changes in appendix A. Barlow reiterated that action items should be on the top sheet. Duke confirmed that they would provide the primary recommendations at the top of the report, then go into further detail later.

Magee suggested checking with the city attorney to see if each action item needs to be referred to specific committees. He hopes to get clear on the process before the November PACC meeting. Wight confirmed that she will ask the attorney's for their recommendations as to the appropriate committees (ordinance, parks, public safety). Magee confirmed that this was what he would like to see so that PACC can give better recommendations to council. He also felt that the work of past task forces could be included in the appendix as well.

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Wight expressed her gratitude to the committee as their comments were the exact kind of recommendations they were looking for. Dieng added that he was looking forward to final report. He asked if some of the recommendations have already been implemented. Duke shared that activities and education programs have been implemented, however most of the recommendations need council action in order to be implemented. She added that the report does list out what taskforce has done already (education, social media, signs, FFP).

Dieng asked about the inclusion of cats in the report. Wight shared that the original resolution talks a little bit about cats, but only as far as licensing. When taskforce looked at that, it brought up a larger discussion of outdoor/at large cats. A summary of that discussion in appendix talks about that. At large cats may be something for the council to think about in the future, and the report does have a recommendation on that. Dieng thanked the task force for their hard work. Duke said she would pass his appreciation along to the "Dogforce."

November Meeting date –

As the pre-scheduled meeting date for November will be the day before Thanksgiving, moving the November meeting date need to be considered. Barlow suggested pushing the meeting to 11/29 so that everyone has more time. Both Dieng and Magee agreed. The next PACC meeting will be 11/29 at 5pm.

Adjournment –

The meeting was adjourned to 6:04pm. The next meeting will be held on 11/29 at 5pm at 645 Pine St in the front conference room and via zoom. A cemetery operations report, the final dog task force report, the standing solar eclipse item, and an update on Highlight will be on the agenda. Data collection for recreation programs (information on what data can be collected to be shared in November), and an update from the Urban Park Ranger will be on the agenda for December. Barlow asked to add Winooski Valley Parks District/how different communities fit into that/operating budget for a future meeting. The bathrooms at the Waterfront Bathroom will also be discussed at a future date.