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Minutes

Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting

Wednesday, January 24, 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: Cindi Wight – BPRW, Samantha Dunn – CEDO, Erin Moreau – BPRW, Rob Peterson – BPRW, Megan Moir – DPW – Water Resources, Sophie Sauve – BPRW, Doreen Kraft – BCA, Zach Williamson – BCA, Holli Bushnell – BPRW

Meeting called to order at 4:58 pm by Mark Barlow at the request of Chair Joe Magee

Approval of Agenda

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

Approval of Draft Minutes from 12/13/2023

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

Public Forum

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

Waterfront –

Cindi Wight began the presentation by thanking the team of city staff for their hard work on this presentation. She assured the committee that the presentation was extremely thorough and with that turned things over to Samantha Dunn from CEDO to discuss FRAME and public spaces with city leases on the Waterfront.

Samantha began by sharing a brief update as part of the original presentation request. She added that CEDO will have more info coming out very soon and that will be presented to the full city council in February.

Dunn shared that the organization Friends of FRAME organized a pilot program in 2023 to facilitate the inclusive use of FRAME. The FoF provided bench swings, free Wi-Fi, and seasonal restrooms through the company Wasted. Additionally, summer 2023 saw site specific art installations through BCA funding, movie nights (unfortunately the evenings were rained out 6 times, but the movie nights that were able to happen were very well received), pop ups with Heartsong Aerial Joy Riders and Vermont Skate Society Meetups, and the presence of Betty's Bikes on site for events.

Dunn continued by sharing the plans for the next phase of design. The goals of this phase is to improve accessibility, create opportunities for year round programming activation, strengthen connectivity of the FRAME to rest of Waterfront Park, build on what people are already doing in the space, and introduce

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new public amenities. CEDO undertook a robust public engagement survey distributed on postcards throughout the city which included a QR code for those who prefer to take the survey online. They held a large public meeting at the Sailing Center, met with the UVM design class and BHS City and Lake Semester as well. All told they have currently received 68 postcards and 502 online responses, and collection of information is still ongoing.

The most desired additional aspects and uses for the space include programming concerts and performances, allowing access to the views from up high, making the space fun and usable in all seasons, making space for vendors, adding seating on the waterfront side, and continued use for public art. The team took time to look into responses to identify where in the community responses were coming from and discovered that most respondents were from the Downtown, Old North End, and Waterfront areas.

Dunn then showed graphic site plan the next steps in development. She added that CEDO will be having public open house at BCA on the second floor where the design team will unveil the vision for phase 2 of the design.

The next steps include phase 1b of construction, continuing to work with Friends of FRAME on programming and activation, and beginning a capital campaign spearheaded by FoF. Phase 1B is a near-term construction phase that is planned for summer 2024. This phase will enhance the site's ability to hold public events/performances as well as enhance vendor infrastructure. There are still funds available for this from ARPA and from the original contingency funds.

The Friends of FRAME intend to continue with their current offerings such as movie nights, live performances, public art/placemaking, and providing public restrooms on the site. CEDO will work with FoF while they look towards the feasibility of capital campaign – mainly looking towards grants and some fundraising. The FoF will continue to collaborate with CEDO and other departments in developing and shaping the future of FRAME.

Dieng asked if the site is expected to generate any revenue for the FoF or the city and Dunn confirmed that there is no expectation of that this summer – all programming and events will be free to the public. Dunn added that the FoF has committed to begin raising funds for programming through sponsorship and partnerships. Dieng asked about the addition of food vendors for this year and Dunn confirmed that food vendors would be returning during movie nights, however funds from food sales do not generate revenue for the FRAME. Betty's Bikes does have a lease which requires 5% of revenue to be paid to the city. Dunn shared that CEDO will be moving forward with deliberate care as activity builds on the site, especially in terms of vendors in the space. There will be more opportunities moving forward to provide some sort of revenue. She added that once phase 2 is implemented that will help provide more opportunities for revenue generation.

Dieng asked how the public has responded to the space and Dunn confirmed that the response has been overall positive. There is a great core group of early users who love FRAME just the way it is, and they have shared concerns about being pushed out as the space changes. FRAME as it is already resonates

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with some people, but there are others in the community who just don't get it. CEDO is trying to maintain the uniqueness of the current space as well as give it an opportunity to evolve and change and make it accessible and enjoyable to larger section of the population.

Dieng asked what negative responses people have had at the space. Dunn shared that, with no cameras at the site, there have been some graffiti issues (though not as much as they expected). There have also been some reports of people climbing the structure, however a great deal of signage has been placed to discourage that. While Dunn sees the wisdom of investing in further climbing discouragement, it is something that will likely be ongoing and need to be managed.

Barlow shared that he is one of the individuals in the city who thinks FRAME is awesome, but he can see that it could be a bit polarizing. He asked Dunn to breakdown the remaining funding for phase 1b. Dunn explained that about a year ago \$2 million was set aside for ARPA infrastructure that supports community engagement and activity. These funds went to a series of BPRW projects and a large chunk of phase 1b funding came from those ARPA funds. The remaining funds are left over from phase 1A, as due to the function of certain grants and rebates the project got some money back right at the end. CEDO has also applied for a CDBG grant for \$100,000. The ARPA money has been fluid, but needs to be spent down.

Barlow asked about ongoing upkeep costs. Dunn explained that the funds for the infrastructure that was installed last summer came from grant and that CEDO and FoF will continue to work for grant money. That said, FRAME is part of BPRW and is part of BPRW operating budget. As this becomes a higher use space they will have to work towards sustainable operations and create a maintenance plan that goes in hand with construction.

Joe Magee (who joined the meeting in person late) shared that he is looking forward to a time when the utilities and amenities are there and FRAME can be a producible space.

Dunn continued her presentation by sharing information regarding the privately leased city owned properties on the waterfront. There have been many questions and comments about these leases from public. Dunn explained that the city owns lands along lake that has been redeveloped over time by private entities – specifically ECHO, the Burlington Harbor Marina, and the Lake Champlain Sailing Center.

ECHO has public access is built into their lease – it requires that the public have access to the facility at all times and that amenities can be accessed without any payment required. ECHO has a 99 year ground lease started in 1995. The Community Sailing Center (on the north end of waterfront) has been working hard to welcome the public in. Their lease includes language that requires the restroom facilities be available to general public when facility is open, and, as of 2024, requires that the sloped boat launch be available to general public when facility is open. Initially the Sailing Center was nervous about restroom access and management, but they began allowing access in summer 2023 before it was required and there were no serious issues. The Sailing Center has a 30 year ground lease beginning in 2016. Burlington Harbor Marina has public restrooms, a store and chandlery, and water taxi all opened to the

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public during business hours, and their perimeter dock is open 7am to 10pm for all to access. The space is subject to occupancy limits and priority access given to slip holders during marina events. There have been reports of BHM not allowing public access to their restroom facilities, and that needs to be documented so the city can address it. BHM also has a 30 year ground lease, but there are opportunities to renegotiate.

Barlow shared that he wasn't aware that there was public access at BHM. He has visited the facility but didn't realize there was actually public access. Dunn shared that this is a common misunderstanding and added that CEDO and BPRW are working on this by adding increased signage to that area. It's understandable that folks don't feel invited into that space as there are gates and it can appear closed to the public, so Dunn and her team are hoping to counteract that with signage. Barlow asked if there had been reports of members of the public being denied access and Dunn confirmed that that was the case. Magee shared that he has experienced the space feeling uninviting when gate is closed, and that the gate feels like it's intended to restrict access. Dunn continued to encourage documentation of these issues.

Magee shared that, at some point he would like to hear about the flying A and the urban reserve; how they play into waterfront and what's coming in those area. Wight reminded the committee that the urban reserve requires significant community input to do any development. She feels it will be up to next mayor if development of that area becomes a high priority. For the time being that space is protected, and development is on the planning schedule for the near future, but it does have to be prioritized with dollars as well as time.

Erin Moreau and Rob Peterson provided a deeper dive on the city's marinas (no pun intended). Essentially the outer harbor is considered the section of lake that stretches from Oakledge park in the south to Leddy park in the north. The inner harbor, on the other hand, stretches from lighthouse to lighthouse. The harbor has a total of 573 seasonal use slips and the city own two marinas, one at Perkins Pier and the other at the bottom of College St. The city operates 178 slips, Lake Champlain Transit has 265 slips, and BHM has 130 slips. Since 2019 both LCT and BHM have added slips. All 4 spaces cater to both transient and seasonal boaters. As a side note, around 75% of the transient boating visitors are French Canadian.

Moreau shared that 2018 was one of the best summers the waterfront has ever had in Burlington in terms of revenue. Weather is one of the largest determining factors in terms of revenue, but recent years have seen a loss of funds with Cyanobacteria blooms as well.

The expansion of LCT and BHM has been extremely helpful as BPRW were turning away boaters every summer previous to their addition. The waterfront had an 8-10 year long waitlists for moorings and slips, and they were turning transient boaters away. With the additional spaces at LCT and BHM staff the city can welcome more people into our harbor even if the dollars get spread out between different institutions.

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Moreau informed the committee that the waterfront just passed a rate change for 2024. That said, they are aware that they have an ageing facility at both the Community Boathouse and Perkins Pier, with limited amenities which begs the question of how much the city can raise rates with the oldest facilities in the harbor and fewer amenities than the counterparts. Data shows that the primary seasonal users of the city owned marinas are Burlingtonians, so reinvestment in marinas is a reinvestment in the community. Unfortunately, the perception remains that the marinas are not open to the public, so BPRW has more work to do in terms of making sure those spaces are accessible to all.

BPRW is in the middle of creating a dredging design for both Perkins and the Boathouse which they expected to be completed this year. They have an open RFP out and are looking for bids for project with a completion date in the fall. They will also be placing major focus on a Community Boathouse Marina Feasibility study, exploring the future options available for the boathouse marina as the facility nears the end of its engineered lifespan. Essentially, that space is running on borrowed time; it's rusting from the inside out and needs to be addressed. As the waterfront team moves forward their focus will be on the public, providing greater accessibility and recreational opportunities, and furthering tourism. They will be working on implementing the VT state system for cyanobacteria tracking which will update directly from smartphones to the city website for instant information for example.

Barlow shared that he found the presentation helpful for understanding the issues, especially around boat slips. He remarked on the expanded capacity and asked if there is an agreement between the city and the other facilities on the waterfront that BPRW can't charge higher rates. Moreau confirmed that the agreement is with BHM and was at the request of BPRW staff. BHM has to set their rates 15% higher than BPRW. Staff was aware that BHM is a brand new facility and they didn't want to have to compete with that. That said BPRW does not have the same agreement with LCT. Moreau explained that BPRW sets their rates where they are comfortable and the BHM adjusts their fees accordingly. This caused a 25% increase in the rates for transient boaters and a 5-6% increase for seasonal boaters. Moreau added that BPRW charges more for the seasonal slip users that aren't Burlington residents. She confirmed that our marina rates are competitive with LCT, and BHM will adjust once rates are issued. BHM has never asked the city to alter rates.

Dieng was very impressed by the work in marina and would like to see the presentation go before the full council at some point. He thanked the team for their great work and encouraged them to keep up their efforts.

Magee also thanked the waterfront team. He asked for a brief history on the Community Boathouse. Moreau shared that the barge the space is built on floated up to Burlington in 1987 and the boathouse was built and opened in 1988. It is a wood frame building on top of metal barge and it's weathering and need of repair or possibly replacement. Magee also asked if the additional slips helped reduce the waitlist and Moreau confirmed that, while there are still people sitting on all the waitlists it has gotten shorter. The waterfront team no longer has to turn away transient boaters, and they are able to work with LCT and BHM on busy days to accommodate what slips fill up at what rate. All slips are different lengths so sometimes things need to move around.

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Megan Moir shared plans for the expansion of the Waste Water Treatment Facility. The current plant is old, technically past its useful life. Most facilities are upgraded around 20 year mark and ours was last upgraded 1992-1994. Essentially, the upgrade is needed to maintain the water quality in the city. It would improve the city's ability to treat wastewater, something the city has had issues with due to rip aging infrastructure and issues with flooding and natural disasters. The upgrade will help insure that that sort of thing doesn't continue to happen. Additionally, the city is starting to approach capacity on organic treatment side of things, and with push for more housing we will also need to upgrade our capacity. Finally the existing work space isn't safe for everyone and it has an unpleasant aroma. This project will help to resolve all these issues.

The WWTF upgrade is a huge project split into 4 phases. Phase 0 is where we are now with current bond money. Phase 1 and 2 are planned, and ideas are in the works for phase 3. It is clear that the upgrade will require a price increase for Burlingtonians, and the team is working on programs to help assist those who might not be able to afford increase.

Moir continued by explaining that BPRW has occupied Perkins Pier since the 1980s, and that the WWTF was included in the original purchase of the space by the city. A joint use resolution passed for wastewater to have first rights for expansion. The city has been in talks concerning the expansion over the years, but it looks like this is going to have to happen sooner rather than later. The planned additional aeration tanks (to add in increased capacity) will have the largest impact on Perkins Pier.

The proposed expansion will renew the aging infrastructure at the end of its life, increased the city's capacity for growth, meet or exceed lake phosphorus reduction obligations, and ensure regulatory compliance. While they don't have an MOU that shows they have rights to northern waterfront, BHM was installed there instead and consequently WWTF can't use that.

Moir continued by explain that the water treatment plant was last upgraded in 1984 and things are starting to fall apart/not functioning the way they need to. There is a need for a modernization study. Unfortunately, the water treatment facility must have have endless backups to ensure UVMCM always has water as the city provides all water for the only level 1 trauma center in area. A modernization study is needed to make sure that when Burlington grows (and as climate change continues) that we are able to produce all necessary water without straining the plant. The water treatment facility may also need expansion space, so that's something to keep in mind when planning what's installed in the area to the north.

Magee shared that he was somewhat aware of wastewater facility issues, but wasn't aware of space constraints. Barlow asked if, in terms of footprint for water treatment, it would be possible to build up. Moir felt that could be looked at, but that it may not be logical. Building up would require a tremendous amount of pumping power.

Sophie Sauve concluded the waterfront presentation by touching on the plans for a Perkins Pier upgrade. The final plan does take WWTF expansion into consideration. BPRW completed a siting study in 2021-2022. They held 4 stakeholder meetings and 3 public meetings in addition to public surveys, and

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a winter onsite pop-up to get an idea of what's missing and what the public wants. The study also considers what other amenities are nearby. Of the 4.1 acres that comprise Perkin's Pier, 47% is parking, 28% is greenspace, 23% hard surface, 1% building. What the survey made clear is that many people go to Perkins to watch the sunset. The site flooded in 2011 with a high water mark at 103.27' (the lake is currently at 99.96'). The site elevation needs to be above 104' and that is included in the planned upgrade.

Sauve shared a map of the proposed site that would provide many of the amenities the public is interested in (views, promenade area, sunset law, boardwalk, integrated play area, benches, non-motorized craft launch) as well as necessary upgrades to the BPRW staff space. In addition to the parking space being used for the WWTF upgrade and other changes, the public boat launch would be removed and visitors would be directed to the coast guard ramp. The proposed changes have not started yet.

Magee was extremely impressed by the design as was Barlow. Barlow asked if redirecting boaters to the coast guard ramp will be too much traffic for them. Sauve shared that, currently only small boats can launch from the Pier because the ramp is short and steep and requires boaters to make quick turns. It's limited to crafts 25' and under. Unfortunately, Sauve did not have raw data on usage.

Magee asked about the potential cost for the project and Sauve shared that as of 2022 the cost would be around \$25 million. That said, the work can be done in phases and there are opportunities for grants for the floating wetlands and boardwalk expansion.

Solar Eclipse 2024 Update –

Zach Williamson shared that plans for the eclipse are moving right along. It is going to be a massive event and no one really knows exactly what to expect. It's also a once in a life-time event, happening all over Vermont (and the world), and more of an unknown in that more and more people are realizing how big a deal this really is.

The Burlington event has been branded Obscura BTV. Plans are moving along really well and details are starting to come into focus. There is an RFP out for a Waterfront park production (sound system for live narration, music, and communication). A meeting with GMT to discuss parking and shuttling is in the works and the use of Battery Park and Street will be incorporated into waterfront events. They are planning to use hardscape as well as grass. The team is working on getting flaggers to move people from the interstate to RT-127 for parking and the plan is to close half of Battery St so people can stand on the western half of the street the day of. The Hilton Lake Champlain and Hotel Vermont will be holding events as well. The team is also looking at closing College St from the Waterfront to Church St. They are planning entertainment for Battery and City Hall Parks and are working with legal to look into one weekend pass of food truck ordinance restriction that weekend. Over the weekend ahead of the eclipse the team is looking at doing an Obscura market at the Hilton (offered partnership), an indoor artist market on Sat/Sun, and unique events at Contois Auditorium and the UU Church. Unfortunately the Flynn is not available during this time.

**CITY OF BURLINGTON
PARKS, ARTS & CULTURE COMMITTEE**

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

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In an effort to reduce waste and limit the challenge of logistics needed for thousands of t-shirts, the city will be offering t-shirts printed on demand to be ordered in advance and on the BCA website. The team has ordered 50,000 glasses that should arrive on time, sponsored by the Airport and to be sold at the Airport and the former location of Sox Market on Church St. There will also be stickers, posters, pins, yoyos, and a few other things. The team is looking to hire merch manager. The day of the eclipse, the store will go city wide with sales at parks all over the city.

The team has been leaning in to Oakledge's accessibility. They will not be programming a DJ, just taking advantage of infrastructure. KJ Doyle is working on using Roosevelt Park for family events and the team is about to reach out to NPAs to offer eclipse materials for neighborhood events.

Doreen Kraft shared that the event gets bigger every day. Fundraising is ongoing but it's very difficult in the present moment. Hotels have all committed to giving \$10 a room for each night as a contribution towards event – but that doesn't quite make the financial goals and they are still looking for underwriters. The team will need to take advantage of every great asset we have and package it to those 100,000 visitors. This is a red carpet moment for us, and we're going to do our best to make it great for our community and visitors.

Wight asked if the contractor beginning work on Main Street has been informed that they need to open the roads for the event and Williamson confirmed that no work will be happening on that Monday or the weekend previous per the contract with the city.

Kraft continued by saying that communication with public is critical. They need to make sure citizens know what's going on. Consequently, the eclipse team is working with the public safety team to make sure understanding is coordinated. They will be going into emergency management mode, everything coordinated from the center.

Williamson added that the team is working on creating a resident focus FAQ page, a visitor focused FAQ page, and postcards mailed to residents. The current administration has stated that remote work for staff is possible on the day of the eclipse and BSD has decided to do a half day. City team is always thinking and at the table together, coordinated.

Magee asked to that the team make sure that any materials are translated so that non-english speakers can find the information. Williamson confirmed that they are making all efforts to make that happen. Magee also asked for a fundraising update and Kraft promised one at the next meeting. Magee suggested an update on the eclipse go before the full council in February or March.

Adjournment –

Meeting was adjourned at 720pm.