PORTLAND PUBLIC ART COMMITTEE

Wednesday, May 15, 2013
4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Room 3, Portland Public Library

Attendance:
Lin Lisberger, Kate Cox, James Cradock, Terry DeWan, Peggy Greenhut Golden, Alison Hildreth, Pandora LaCasse, Jessica Lipton, Tony Muench, Alex Jaegerman (Staff: Caitlin Cameron)

Also in attendance: Bruce Wennerstrom and Canal 5 Studio (Lodrys Gomez, James Gauthier), a member of the press (Carol McCracken from the Munjoy Hill News)
Not in attendance: Councilor Marshall, Jere DeWaters, Edwidge Charlot

Call to Order: 4:08pm
Approve Minutes from April 17, 2013
Copies of minutes were not provided – no action taken.

PROJECT REPORTS

- **Rockbridge Presentation & Discussion – Wennerstrom, Gomez, and Gauthier**

Mr. Wennerstrom gave an update on the hotel progress. The renovation is $40 million of work and ahead of schedule, intending to open in December, 2013. Most of the work is internal at this time and tours can be provided upon request.

Mr. Gomez and Mr. Gauthier, representing Canal 5 Studio presented the revised proposal for a portion of the parcel at Congress Square Plaza. The presentation included changes since the public presentation on April 24, 2013. The presentation included background and history of the site prior to and including its existence as an urban open space. Mr. DeWan asked who designed the plaza and whether there was a public process as part of that design. No one present knew the answer to those two questions. Mr. Wennerstrom pointed out that the feedback they had received led them to revise the proposal, primarily in pushing the building back to 48’ from property line. Mr. Muench asked who owns the clock on the plaza. Mr. Jaegerman replied that he believed the City owns the clock. Mr. Gauthier continued with the presentation of the design proposal pointing out key elements including two egress doors that must be maintained, the new area of the plaza would be 4,800 square feet. Ms. Lisberger asked for the dimension from the sidewalk to the building. Mr. Gauthier answered that the new dimension is 48’ to the building wall. Ms. LaCasse asked whether that dimension includes the overhang to which Mr. Gauthier replied that it does however, the canopy had been reduced in size. Mr. DeWan asked how many parking spaces are proposed to remove, the answer to which is three parking spaces. Mr. Gauthier also added that the 4,000 square feet of sidewalk does not include the capture of those three spaces. Mr. Jaegerman clarified that the design of the plaza and the intersection would be part of a separate process including a public process.

It was noted by the Canal 5 Studio team that the overall design of Congress Square and the Congress Square Plaza are not part of their purview and that what is depicted is a suggestion of what might happen there to give scale to the model.

Mr. Gauthier went on to present the intentions of the proposal. The proposed building seeks to create an edge along Congress Street which is currently lacking. Analysis using the New York City Design Guidelines shows the proposal meets the appropriate dimensional requirements for public space. Mr. DeWan asked for examples of New York City parks that use those guidelines but Mr. Gauthier did not have any specific examples. The current plaza fails to meet the NYC standards. Canal 5 Studio feels the proposal could be a catalyst for what will happen at Congress Square. Specifically, the changes that have been made to the proposal include moving the restrooms downstairs, changing the angle of the face of the building to be parallel with the property line, the operability of the glass façade, and the reduction in bench length to allow for operable wall. Mr. Gauthier noted that the perceived depth of the plaza will actually be 100 feet from sidewalk to interior solid wall.

The committee proceeded to ask questions. Ms. Hildreth asked how often the building would be open. Mr. Gauthier replied that it was hard to say but guests will be using this entrance to the hotel from the Congress Street side. Mr. DeWan asked how tall the glass wall would be (18 feet). Ms. LaCasse wished to clarify whether the gallery function would still be there. Mr. Wennerstrom answered that they would work with partners to include art work which will be visible from the plaza. Ms. LaCasse further asked whether gallery space would be open to the plaza and vice versa (yes, depending on function). Mr. DeWan asked for the dimension of the gallery (10 to 18 feet).

Mr. Gauthier went on to show the new elevations of the proposal noting that the roof line has been raised to meet the line of the existing building with a clerestory. Mr. Wennerstrom added that the neighboring restaurant is applying for a sidewalk café permit.

Ms. Hildreth asked why, if the event space can be open, why not eliminate the side pre-function space. Mr. Gauthier answered that the change in elevation necessitates a ramp to navigate from one end of the building. The proposal has both a ramp and stairs. Ms. LaCasse then asked whether one could move between indoor and outdoor spaces. Mr. Gauthier answered that the plaza and gallery are at the same elevation. Ms. LaCasse wanted to know what the material on the wall on High Street was going to be (materials will match hotel). Mr. Jaegerman added that the proposal would have to go through review with National Parks and the Historic Preservation Board.

Mr. Wennerstrom stated that they envision a public art piece marking the corner of the plaza. Mr. DeWan asked if the glass itself could be interactive or have art installations on it making the whole plaza interactive.

Ms. Lipton asked what the material of the interior box will be (wood or another warm finish). Ms. Lipton elaborated that the plaza is currently a bleak spot and the building has a potential to add warmth and contrast the bleakness and darkness of the wintertime aesthetic in the plaza. Mr. Gomez asked the committee to also consider the building at night which will be lit up. The overhang has been reduced to 5'4" so more natural light will fill the interior of the gallery without hot spots. Mr. Cradock asked if the walls on the interior box are sufficient or will there be art inside on wall (yes, on the gallery space). Mr. DeWan asked the hotel team how they envision the plaza being activated. Mr. Gauthier answered that it would be a place to pause, somewhere to eat lunch. Mr. Jaegerman again expressed that the plaza will be part of a separate design process. Mr. Dewan asked who would maintain the plaza. Mr. Jaegerman suggested that from the glass wall to the sidewalk would be public space but the maintenance would be a negotiation. Ms. Lisberger asked for the model to be shown without anything in the plaza. Ms. LaCasse asked whether the benches shown as part of the proposal would be public or private (built as part of the building but ownership and maintenance would be negotiated; counted as part of public space).

Mr. DeWan then asked what happens next in this process. Mr. Jaegerman replied that the City has $50,000 CIP to redesign which the City would use for design only in either option. The square in its entirety also needs to be reconsidered. The City is in talks with Rockbridge on their contribution and collaboration on building and plaza interface but the City controls the process and public space. Mr. DeWan went on to ask how the design gets implemented. Mr. Jaegerman clarified that the sale of land could help fund implementation. Otherwise, the City would need to go to the Capital funds to try to get funds. Ms. LaCasse then asked what the value of the property is. Mr. Jaegerman replied that he could not speak to that and that Greg Mitchell would be the appropriate person to ask.

Ms. Golden commented that the plaza seems to become a public/private partnership and asked what the process would be for using the space for the hotel. Mr. Jaegerman replied that there is an existing permit process for using public space. Ms. Lipton asked whether there will be communication between the public and the hotel in terms of marketing and collaboration for events. Mr. Wennerstrom answered that someone from the sales department within the hotel management staff would be assigned to that and would keep a calendar of events. Ms. LaCasse then asked if this proposal doesn't go forward how Rockbridge would participate in the process. Mr. Wennerstrom answered that he is not sure however, the hotel and Rockbridge certainly would be involved and that any improvement to the space would be a good thing.

Wennerstrom, Gomez, and Gauthier left the meeting at approximately 5:00pm.

Discussion of the proposal took place amongst committee members. Ms. Lisberger clarified that Ms. LaCasse is meant to represent the opinion of the whole committee when she sits on the Congress Square Redesign Study Group. Ms. LaCasse proceeded to give some background of previous Congress Square Redesign Study Group meetings and subsequent decisions where she voted against the Rockbridge proposal because of the presentation, size of the public space. Previously Ms. LaCasse was not able to discuss the proposal with the committee before the vote. She also noted that the proposal has been tweaked throughout the process. Ms. LaCasse then distributed and read a draft statement as a starting point for discussion. Ms. Lisberger proposed that committee members particularly focus on the last paragraph.

Mr. Muench began the discussion by commenting that he has no problem with building on the site but a problem with the process. He also suggested that the remaining plaza space is not the right size and the building should not take up more than half the site. Mr. DeWan was undecided about the size and scale but felt the design of the plaza was dull. He envisions dancing, light shows, etc. occurring there and wants to make something special there. The size is probably okay. Mr. DeWan continued to comment that it is not really the right application for a shared intersection. This site is a tremendous opportunity but he has some concern about the budget. Ms. LaCasse stated that the committee needs to know what it wants the space to be.

Ms. Lisberger reminded the committee that the Westin has an easement through the plaza. Mr. Jaegerman clarified that the easement is 30% of the plaza for easement to access hotel entrance.

Ms. Hildreth asked whether it is legal to accept Federal money. Mr. Jaegerman replied that yes, the City's been in contact with HUD for that purpose. Mr. Dewan commented that 40 feet is the length of two parking spaces, which is not very large.

Dewan, Muench, and Cox leave meeting at approximately 5:15pm.

Ms. Lipton supports the project going forward with concrete agreement with the hotel of facilitation of programming within the public space. She supported the opinion of Creative Portland and pointed out that the proposal follows the New York City guidelines. The redesign of the entire square would be long-coming and might not be successful. Ms. Golden asked whether the contract for the sale of the land could give money to the arts community for arts programming and public work of art. If we don't ask for it, we won't get it. Ms. Lipton commented that she thought access to the space, the programming, and the marketing potential of the hotel would be more valuable than money. Ms. Lisberger added that her read from the City Council is that they are not going to go forward with the proposal. She then asked what the committee really wants. Should the committee rally around Rockbridge or not? Ms. LaCasse responded that there might be other proposals out there and there could be other opportunities for negotiation. Ms. Lisberger asked whether the committee should take a stance considering there is no money to redevelop the square. Ms. LaCasse replied that she did not feel the committee should have to consider that. Ms. Hildreth added that she does not have any objection to Rockbridge but didn't think the space is large enough and that the committee should not cave, yet on the design of the proposal.

Ms. Lisberger then asked whether they should make a motion or give guidance. Ms. Golden stated that she was with Ms. LaCasse and Ms. Hildreth that the plaza could be bigger. Mr. Cradock added that he was in favor of the proposal with the building and plaza redevelopment. He liked the Canal 5 Studio proposal which is outward looking and could work with the intersection redesign. He would support the proposal with a public/private partnership. Ms. Lisberger then commented that it seemed the majority of the committee members felt that Ms. LaCasse's text reflected the committee's position. She then asked whether the committee wanted to send Ms. LaCasse to the meeting with the opinion that the plaza should be at least 60 feet. Ms. Lipton added that she would not be okay with getting rid of the glass wall in the proposal. Mr. Jaegerman commented that the committee could send both messages with both opinions. Ms. Lisberger stated that the committee would have to draft a statement that says this committee has a majority opinion demanding greater public space but has a minority opinion of embracing the proposal with an active public/private partnership. Ms. LaCasse commented that her biggest fear was the length of commitment by the hotel – 20 years is not very long and asked what would happen after that time. Mr. Jaegerman added that one would want the hotel to be more successful than previous owners from an economic perspective. This space will be able to do things that the other spaces won't be able to do. Ms. Lisberger added that the Portland Museum of Art is on board with the event center proposal.

Mr. Jaegerman proposed that he, Ms. Cameron, Ms. Lisberger, and Ms. LaCasse could work together to craft and circulate language. Ms. Lisberger confirmed whether that proposal works for everyone and asked Ms. Cameron to draft and send text for approval. Ms. Cameron confirmed. Ms. LaCasse further clarified that her statement was meant to state the position of the committee and why those positions are held.

It was accepted that three (3) members were in favor of the proposal, four (4) members were opposed, and Ms. Lisberger abstained.

- **LANGLAIS – Lisberger**

Ms. Lisberger reported the results of the subcommittee visit to the Langlais Estate which took place on April 30, 2013. The group in attendance asked for a lot of pieces but are waiting to hear back from the Kohler Foundation on what the PPAC can have. The subcommittee has spoken to many of the possible locations including Thompsons Point, East End School, Ocean Gateway Terminal, the Public Library, Cumberland County Civic Center, and the Jetport. Ms. LaCasse commented that if the Rockbridge proposal for Congress Square Plaza moves forward the PPAC should consider that as another location. Ms. Lisberger continued with the observation that it appears the PPAC will received an offer of many pieces but that the City will need to provide indoor spaces to house them. The Kohler Foundation was going to get back in touch later this week.

- **WEB SITE UPDATE -- Lisberger**

Ms. Lisberger announced that the website beta was updated that day. The launch party will be June 26th from 7:30 to 9:30pm on the East End Beach during low tide with the hope of having a bonfire. Ms. Lipton is working with Mensk to provide AV equipment. Ted Musgrave and Mr. Jaegerman are working on the fees and permit components. Ms. McCracken asked if the public will be invited to the launch party. Ms. Lisberger confirmed that it is a public event and the rain date will be in August.

- **Temporary Art Guidelines -- Lipton**

Ms. Lipton confirmed that the Temporary Art Guidelines are almost done and will be presented at the Launch Party.

Lipton leaves meeting at approximately 5:45pm

Subcommittee Reports

- **COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT – Lisberger**
  - Schedule Art in Our Front yard
    - May 3rd, Muench Fireman Statue
    - June 7th, Lipton Our Lady of Victories – Ms. Lipton asked if anyone else could take this date or else she would have to do it after 6pm.

Ms. LaCasse asked for outlines from past Art in Our Front Yard scripts be shared.

- **GOVERNANCE/BOARD DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE – Lisberger**
  - **New Members** – Kate Cox was in attendance earlier in the meeting.

- **SITES SUBCOMMITTEE – Hildreth & Muench**

Mr. Jaegerman asked for an Airport Site Subcommittee to be formed to review the siting of a sculpture on loan. Ms. Lisberger added that the applicants will be presenting at the June meeting. Mr. Jaegerman further clarified that the sculpture is an open-ended loan and therefore the PPAC has some purview over its placement. Ms. Lisberger added the observation that the applicants are not convinced they have selected the right site and might want help with that process. Mr. Jaegerman asked for two people to go to the site, contact the applicants, and pre-screen the locations. Ms. Lisberger commented that she would like the Site Committee to go. Mr. Cradock volunteered. Mr. Jaegerman asked that Mr. Cradock keep Ms. Cameron informed so that the City staff could also attend the site visit.

Other Business

- NEFA conference – TABLED
- Architalx Tower - TABLED

Lisberger calls for Executive Session.

LaCasse moves, Cradock seconds.

The committee enters Executive Session – McCracken leaves at 6:00pm

Meeting adjourned 6:15pm

Next meeting is Wednesday June 19, 2013