



In Attendance: Commission Members: Chair Cynthia Loebenstein, V. Chair Michael Mertaugh, Dory Waxman, Colette Bouchard, Zack Anchors, Ana Lagunez, Jon Kachmar, and Craig Lapine. City Staff: Ethan Hipple, Alex Marshall, Deb Andrews and Alli Carroll. Historic Preservation Board Members. Matthew Hyde of Friends of Western Promenade. KZLA Representative Danielle Desilets. Members of the public.

City of Portland Parks Commission Minutes

January 22, 2020, 5:00 PM

Merrill Auditorium Rehearsal Hall

20 Myrtle Street, Portland, Maine 04101

I. Agenda Items

a. New Business

i. Welcome

Ethan Hipple, Deputy Director of the Parks, Recreation & Facilities Department, welcomed the groups and public to the meeting. Ethan described Western Promenade and how it is currently used by the community. The goal of creating this master plan is to create a vision for the space. The City held prior public meetings regarding the plan. Tonight's meeting is to review the draft. Ethan introduced Deb Andrews, staff of Historic Preservation, and Matthew Hyde of the Friends of Western Promenade.

ii. Friends of Western Promenade Introductions

Matthew Hyde of the Friends of Western Promenade shared the history of the friends group and how they came together in 2018. He described the two-year process of this master plan. He shared that this park is a diverse park of both landscape and interfaces with the community of Portland.

iii. Western Promenade Draft Master Plan Review

Danielle Desilets of Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture went through the PowerPoint presentation projected. She described the process that began February 2019. The first public meeting was in April and following that, they put out a survey for a month for more public input. They then developed some early concepts and presented them during a public forum in June. They have been adjusting the draft since then.

The purpose of the master plan is to create a vision for the park. Out of the five districts, this is the only historic park that does not have one. She briefly went over the history of the park as she went over it in great detail during the April meeting.

The survey brought in 243 responses and the public meetings have been consistent with the survey results. The park is very much used for picnicking, cross country skiing, trail running, and as open green space. More information regarding the park's history was wanted. Other things that are wanted include: unique play structures, more flowers, community gathering space, more trails, more seating areas, and to bring the stairs back. Generally, the majority of the

public wants the park to be not just a neighborhood park but a destination for all and to keep it simple, quiet and to not take away the character it has now.

She broke down the master plan draft for the crowd. Some changes proposed include: new crosswalks made of granite and stones, food truck parking closer to Maine Med, new sidewalk areas, reintroducing a pavilion, horticulture plantings and moving the memorial. There will not be a change to the community garden but they are proposing a more formal parking area adjacent to the garden. Also adding a natural play area in between the garden and basketball court. Multi use trails would be added to connect all spaces. There is a two tier priority list being proposed.

iv. Question and Answer Period for Board and Commission

The Historic Preservation Board began. They asked for clarification on the following items:

- The material of the sidewalks and walkways: Brick will be used for sidewalks adjacent to the roadways. Exposed aggregate will be used for walkways.
- The type of trails: They will be multi use trails about ten feet wide to accommodate bikes, pedestrians, cross country skis, etc. Continued conversations will be had with Portland Trails to understand what is needed and how the uses are compatible.
- The design of the view sheds: They will be clearly defined in the field and will progress overtime as well as depend on the vegetation. They will be removing invasive Norway Maples to help open up the view sheds.
- Lighting and power lines: Would like to replace the contemporary lighting and bury the power lines.
- The pavilion: It will be twenty-five feet in diameter. It will be kept well lit for safety. It will also be ADA accessible, fairly open and have a stage with seating area.
- Signage and educational tools regarding the process were requested to educate the public during the extended time it will take for the master plan to be phased in.
- Toboggan Run: The historic toboggan run is now limited due to the installation of Valley Street. It may be possible to create a new toboggan run with a substantial runout that ends towards the level area near the Valley Street dog park, but additional grading studies will need to be completed.
- Cost of the two tier priority lists: Tier one equals \$3.5million. Tier two equals \$2.755million.

v. Public Comment Period

Kate and Hardy Marshall of Danforth Street shared their concern for the southern end of the park. They are concerned with the safety of those who go down the trail towards Danforth Street; especially children if a natural playscape is placed at the top of the slope. They suggested a fence before the sidewalk of Danforth. They also had concern if trail lighting considering their home is so close to the area. Ethan assured them trail lighting will not be considered.

Anne Pringle suggested to consider the placement of the view sheds in regards to the new Maine Med parking garage. Also, lighting fixtures in historic parks are very specific but she would suggest having the same fixtures on all pathways.

She also asked for clarification regarding the width of the roadways. Danielle said that the streets would be narrowed to about 9-10 feet. It will not be the same width everywhere as they are not proposing removing parking.

Jane Bario of Western Promenade showed additional concern of the safety of putting a playscape near the roadway by the memorial. It is an area where cars drive fast. A play area moved to another area may be safer for children.

A member of the public suggested removing the horseshoe parking lot area and widen the street that runs in front of the houses. That way the park is more open green space.

Jaime Parker of Portland Trails is excited for some natural play spaces. He is also very excited about the path down to Danforth street. Portland Trails has a lot of experience with steep trails and some that are tiered. They will work with the City and advise on the safest way to create it. Also, the West Commercial Street Trail will be built in the next few years and he suggested a crosswalk at the end of the trail to Danforth Street so it could connect with the new West Commercial Street Trail.

Ken Thomas of Danforth Street expressed past experiences of the City and Portland Trails exploring the opportunity of creating this trail to Danforth Street. He does not believe there to be neighbors that would support this decision and a crosswalk at this space would be dangerous.

George Rheault of West Bayside asked if the meeting was recorded. The Maine Publicity Bureau Building was part of the park at some point. In the 1930s it was deeded to the State of Maine and now it is in private ownership. That is a precedent. He suggests flexibility through this process, especially with what should be done with the space along Valley Street. Finally, he wishes that the whole city was deciding on what to do with this space. The Planning Committee should have had at least an at large member as part of the process for a wider vision. This draft has been created by everyone who is close to the park system and it should be everyone if this is supposed to be a destination for all. Especially when the price tag is so large.

vi. Feedback and suggestions from Historic Preservation and Parks Commission -- *no formal vote at this time*

The Historic Preservation Board has a large agenda still to get to. Unfortunately, this meeting has run longer than expected. The Historic Preservation Board and Parks Commission will give their guidance and recommendations in separate, at their own meetings in the future. No guidance or recommendation was made this evening.