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Public Services Department
Michael J. Bobinsky

Brentwood Cemetery Master Plan /Community Garden Meeting
Monday, May 2, 2011, 4pm-5pm
Department of Public Services - Administrative Conference Rm. 55 Portland Street

Meeting Notes

The following serve as meeting notes from the May 2, 2011 Meeting:

Mike Bobinsky, Director of Public Services opened the meeting by welcoming all of the participants and expressed appreciation for their willingness to participate in these partnering discussions. Mike further discussed the meeting logistics, the focused time frame for today's meeting and the purpose of the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves and described their relationship to the projects and/or activities. Those attending included: Mike Bobinsky, Director of Public Services, City Councilor Dory Waxman, Troy Moon, Environmental Services and Open Space Manager, Naomi Mermin, Amy Segal, Elizabeth Tarasevich, Kathy Freund, Cynthia Loebenstein and Anne Callender. Jaime Parker, Chair of the Parks Commission was invited but was unable to attend.

Mike described that the meeting had a few key purposes:

- Discuss points raised by members of the Health and Recreation Committee during their March meeting including background information about how the Community Garden is addressed in the Brentwood Master Plan and the future needs of the Cemetery.
- Provide an opportunity for the Friends of Evergreen and the DCNA to work toward a unified voice in preparation for the May 17 meeting with the Health and Recreation Committee.
- To showcase the fact that both groups have done something quite remarkable in improving the Brentwood site, both in short and long run use.

Staff was asked if participants would agree to sign an agreement not to release meeting notes or discussions of the meeting to the media; this generated discussion over methods of being transparent, informing organization members and the public. It was agreed to that staff would prepare meeting notes as draft, circulate those to the participants for comment and once finalized, those meeting notes become public.

Mike described the role Department of Public Services plays maintaining open spaces throughout the City. Amongst other duties, the Department manages the operations and maintenance of Evergreen and Forest City Cemetery, the active cemeteries of the City of Portland. The Department also manages four (4) community gardens with a part time staff member, who tracks garden use, reservations and ensures the community locations are maintained to program standards. Troy Moon serves as the manager overseeing these functions.

The meeting then turned to brief summaries on the proposed master plan, reviewing the process to date, the process going forward and an update on the Community Garden's current operations and work plan.

Cynthia Loebenstein gave an overview of the Brentwood Master Plan. She highlighted the three phases of development, described how the phases I and II incorporate the Community Garden into and stated that each phase would require site plan review with the Planning Board and with the Historic Preservation Board before implementation. Cynthia stated that representatives of the DCNA were invited to the various master plan development meetings that the Friends organized over the past year and that representatives attended some of the meetings early on. Cynthia stated that Phase I and II of the proposed master plan focus on the site landscape, storm drainage issues and the establishment of a tree farm for City use. She added that these phases begin the establishment of a defined cemetery entrance with a double alley of trees, the installation of a gate and posts and the creation of a stone dust sidewalk/path along Brentwood Street. Phase III would establish columbarium niche walls to hold cremation urns.

Naomi Mermin gave an overview of the Community Garden and the role of DCNA in its development. In addition, Naomi briefed the group about the preparation of the lease agreement with the City, the development review process and the involvement of community volunteers.

Elizabeth Tarasevich provided the group with a summary of the garden activities. She stated that the garden is in its 2nd year of operation and indicated that there are 75 families participating on 60 individual plots and 4 shared lots. There is a charge of \$35 per garden space for individual plots. Space was available on a first come first serve basis. The garden is at capacity and has a waiting list. All interested callers are now being referred back to Joan Perkins for other possible garden lots. Elizabeth manages the accounts and records of who is using garden space and is the contact for persons interested in signing up for Brentwood garden space.

DCNA has raised funds for a fence which will replace the orange fencing that was removed around the garden. A four (4) foot high cedar fence will be constructed this weekend in accordance with the site plan, and as approved by Deb Andrews. There is an Eagle Scout who is raising funds as part of his Eagle Scout project, to purchase materials and construct a tool shed on site for garden tools and hoses. In addition, Amy Segal indicated that DCNA volunteers are working with Jeff Tarling, City Arborist, to install a vegetative buffer along Hamblet Street as required by the conditions of approval from the Planning Dept. There was discussion about the street trees to be planted along Brentwood Avenue and when they would be planted and it was clarified that the City would be planting and maintaining those street trees. A question was raised about the fruit trees that were planted in the Brentwood Parcel. Naomi advised that these are dwarf fruit trees that were chosen because of their small size, low maintenance and fast growth. She added that these reflect historic use and to are compatible with the overall concept of the community garden per the advice from the City Arborist. Naomi indicated that the community gardeners were not tied to the fruit trees and that if they are causing concern that they could be removed.

The group agreed that going forward the Friends of Evergreen and DCNA should communicate with each other more effectively. It was suggested that a member from each organization be appointed as a representative to provide regular updates and communication about activities. Naomi advised that DCNA does not agree with the Brentwood Cemetery Master Plan as proposed and requested that any references by the Friends to this effect should be removed from any websites, newsletters or other published material. She further stated that DCNA was not

involved in the planning or development of the Master Plan to the extent indicated by the Friends. Naomi also reported she was not aware of the Historic Preservation Commission meetings or hearings by the Planning Department about the Brentwood Master Plan. Had she been aware she would have attended these meetings and described opposition on behalf of DCNA. Cynthia responded that Naomi was invited to participate in the Brentwood Master Plan but she declined and two (2) members of the DCNA, Amy and Elizabeth participated in the Brentwood Master Plan while it was occurring. The Friends now understand that Naomi and some members of DCNA do not support the Master Plan. Mike Bobinsky said that the Brentwood Master Plan went through a more thorough public process than the staff review for the garden site review. Naomi commented that the five year lease was made so that the DCNA would not need to go through a City Council review process. Naomi commented that it is not usual to do a master plan for one part of a landscape. Katherine pointed out that since the 1855 Howe Plan; all of Evergreen has been developed in parcels, in part, as the City aggregated land to expand Evergreen. So, historically, the Brentwood Master Plan is entirely consistent with established city practice.

The attendees began discussing the elements of the Brentwood Master Plan that the DCNA does not support. This topic will need to be discussed in more detail at the next meeting and it will be important for DCNA representatives to be prepared to discuss the specific elements of the plan they disagree with. The group indicated that it would be helpful to discuss Public Services current and future operational plans, an estimate for when the Brentwood Parcel would need to be put into active cemetery use and why approval of the Brentwood Master Plan is needed now. Both the Friends and the DCNA acknowledged that the Brentwood Parcel is part of Evergreen Cemetery and would ultimately be used for cemetery purposes.

The meeting exceeded the allotted time before participants were able to discuss the final items on the agenda (Community Garden Program and Future Cemetery Property Use and Preparation for the May 17 Health and Recreation Committee meeting). The group agreed to meet again on Monday, May 9 at 4:30 pm in the Portland Public Services Offices on 55 Portland Street. The Department of Public Services will send out a meeting agenda prior to May 9.

