

City of South Portland
Arts & Historic Preservation Committee
August 2nd, 2018
Planning and Development Department

Members in attendance:

Hannah Holmes, Chairperson
Jessica Kessler, Secretary
Mary DeRose
Alessa Wylie, Greater Portland Landmarks
Lynn Duryea
Jon Godin

Members Absent:

Doreen Gay, Vice Chairperson
Kathy DiPhilippo, South Portland Historical Society

Staff in attendance:

Charles "Tex" Haeuser, Planning & Development Director
Bill Mann, Economic Development Director
Justin Barker, Community Planner

Chairperson Hannah Holmes called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m., seconded by Jessie.

Minutes: A motion to accept the minutes from the July 12th meeting was made by Mary, seconded by Hannah. The motion passed with all members in favor.

Staff introductions: Tex introduced Bill Mann (Economic Development Developer), and Justin Barker (Community Planner). Tex explained that these staff members were in attendance to participate in the Knightville design standard conversation.

Membership update: Lynn announced that she will be resigning from the committee, but will try to stay on board until October. Lynn asked to be kept on the mailing list, and stated she might be willing to participate in a future Percent for Public Art committee.

Art subcommittee report: Jessie explained that members did not meet over the month of July, due to scheduling conflicts. The subcommittee plans to resume meetings in September.

Redbank kiosk discussion: Mary reported that she has the support and approval of Councilor Adrian Dowling to move forward with signage at the Redbank site. It was suggested that Mary make a formal request to Kevin Adams of the Parks Department, for the project to move forward. Hannah made a motion to empower Mary to make the request, seconded by Jessie. The motion passed unanimously.

Armory kiosk discussion: Tex distributed a map of the Armory site, to better understand the zones of ownership in choosing a location for the kiosk. Members engaged in discussion, debating the best possible use of space for the Armory project, as well as what the proposed kiosk would include. Mary asked about the availability of photos from the Maine Historical Society. Alessa explained that there is a fee to use photos from their collection. Mary suggested that the committee establish a two-step process

for the Armory project, as selecting the exact location as a first step has been difficult. Mary further explained that voting to begin the project design is a solid first step, with the final placement to be determined at a later time. Members discussed this possibility. It was determined that voting on an area of the property, rather than the exact location, would be helpful in moving the project forward, as well as enabling Mary to begin the design process. Hannah made a motion to place the kiosk in front of the Armory, with exact location TBD. The motion was seconded by Mary, and passed unanimously. Tex suggested that Justin review the materials Mary has gathered, to help craft a design for the kiosk.

Historic database discussion: Members were reminded and encouraged to attend the Historic Preservation Subcommittee meeting on Monday, August 6th at 6pm, to work on the database. Members discussed how entries need be more prepared and deeply defined before submission to the city for consideration.

Knightville design standards discussion: Tex reviewed current City design standards, as well as goals for revising them. He explained that in the context of Knightville, our aim is to “prevent a worst case scenario” while addressing redevelopment efforts in the area. He described the current process as one where a project may go to the planning board for approval and be met with the need to apply for a variance. Tex focused on Sec. 27-1426, which states that a variance “will not produce an undesirable change in the character of the neighborhood.” Members discussed how this process might be used to protect vulnerable properties that are being considered for redevelopment, and how important it is to define the historic character of neighborhoods. Mary called attention to an issue with this mechanism in preserving historic sites: that there are no historically designated areas of the city, and that there is a need for a city-wide architectural review to determine those sites. Members reiterated the importance of the historic database as a tool in defining neighborhoods of interest. Alessa asked that we enact a more rigorous process for the database, suggesting that Julie Larry (Director of Advocacy for Greater Portland Landmarks) come to the Historic Preservation Subcommittee meeting as a resource.

Tex pulled up an image of the old bank at the Knightville roundabout as an example of an interesting Knightville property. The committee discussed what makes Knightville historic, as well as what defines the “character” of the neighborhood. Hannah described her impressions from the Knightville walking tour: that the defining characteristics of Knightville are primarily building scale, roofline and the simplicity of the property facade. She suggested limiting scale and bulk as a means to protect the neighborhood character, as well as preserving the “0 setback” for human scale. Jessie expressed agreement with Hannah’s observations. Tex stated that he and Justin would craft design suggestions for the committee to consider and vote on at the next meeting. Members discussed using “neighborhood compatibility” as a tool in preserving historic character. It was suggested that code enforcement be provided with a “Preservation/compatibility checklist,” rather than having projects go to the Planning board, which can be expensive for property owners.

Round robin: Hannah checked in with all members, to discuss their personal goals for the committee. Jon expressed interest in archeological historic preservation, with a possible list of precolonial sites.

Jessie made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Hannah.

Meeting concluded at 9:10 a.m.

Next Meeting: September 6th, 2018 at 7:30 a.m.

