



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
MUSEUM BOARD, PARKS AND
RECREATION BOARD, AND HISTORIC
DISTRICT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, January 16, 2018
6:00 PM**

Museum Board Chair Tina Krizanic called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Museum Board Members Present: Russell Dixon, Lori Eaton, Judith Keefer, Tina Krizanic, Marty Logue, Caitlin Rosso (arrived 6:03 p.m.)

Museum Board Members Absent: Carson Claar, James Cunningham, Hanna Sandler

Parks and Recreation Board Members Present: Ross Kaplan, Therese Longe, John Meehan, Eleanor Noble, Ryan Ross, John Rusche, William Wiebrecht

Parks and Recreation Board Members Absent: Ben Gould, Joseph Kummer, Raymond Stevens, Lilly Stotland

Historic District Commission Members Present: Doug Burley, Adam Charles, Keith Deyer, John Henke

Historic District Commission Members Absent: Josh Chapnick, Natalia Dukas, Dulce Fuller, Griffin Pfaff, Thomas Trapnell, Michael Willoughby

Administration: Museum Director Leslie Pielack, DPS Director Lauren Wood, Sr. Planner Matt Baka, City Clerk Cherilynn Mynsberge

Guests: Brian Devlin, Nagy Devlin Land Design

Introduction of Members of the Parks and Recreation Board, the Historic District Commission and the Museum Board

Members present introduced themselves and indicated their position on their respective boards.

Museum Board Chair Krizanic stated the following:

We're here today for a presentation of the Birmingham Museum conceptual master landscape plan for the museum site. The site is located in the Mill Pond Historic District and borders Maple Road to the south, Willits Road to the north, and along the Rouge River on the west, and is approximately 4 acres in size. It

includes two buildings--the 1928 Allen House and the 1822 Hunter House; and the grounds include built historic features such as stone walls and the remains of concrete walls that were once a pool at a natural spring-fed pond.

In 2016, the Museum Board initiated landscape planning to include identification and protection of the landscape's historic and natural resources in accordance with the current Birmingham Museum strategic plan. The result is a conceptual master landscape plan that preserves and protects historic and natural resources while also providing enhanced public access.

Tonight's Special Meeting of the Museum Board is to answer questions and solicit input from the Parks and Recreation Board and the Historic District Commission as well as the public regarding the proposed plan. The meeting is for discussion purposes only--no action will be taken.

Museum Board Chair Krizanic introduced Brian Devlin, Nagy Devlin Land Design.

A. Heritage Zone

Mr. Devlin presented maps of the Allen House, Public Plaza, and the Hunter House with discussion of trails, surrounding topography, and four landscape zones:

- The Heritage Zone, which includes the two houses and the plaza;
- The Transition Zone, with steeper slopes down to the pond area;
- The Pond Zone; and
- The Riverine Woodland Zone.

Mr. Devlin continued that the Heritage Zone plan includes planting:

- More elm trees in front of the Allen House due to the large number of elms already on-site;
- Birmingham heritage plants in the garden beds; and,
- A children's garden near the u-hedge and picket fence by the Heritage House.

Mr. Devlin noted that there has already been a tremendous amount of work around the Heritage House.

Mr. Devlin explained to Eleanor Noble that:

- Elms have much better longevity than they have in the past due to new disease-resistant cultivars.
- Elms are being planted in Birmingham again.
- Two elms have already been planted in front of the Museum. He believes they were the Valley Forge cultivar.

Mr. Devlin explained to:

- Mr. Rusche that elm trees have been used as street trees due to their roots' ability to thrive in compacted, low-oxygen environments.
- Mr. Deyer that:
 - Trees that seeded themselves, as opposed to ones that were intentionally planted, are the ones most likely to be removed.
 - The new trees will be smaller than the current trees because they are younger.

- Mr. Burley that a 3" tree will be about 4-5 years, and that the price for bigger trees goes up significantly.
- Mr. Henke that there is one designated handicap parking space in front of the Museum, but about three regular spaces that can be used for that purpose.

Museum Director Pielack told:

- Mr. Henke that during larger events that there are extra spaces made available for handicap parking, and that individuals with mobility issues are often dropped off in front of the Museum. Ms. Pielack stated that the Museum has never had an issue accommodating mobility issues.
- Ms. Noble that the cutoff spot and the driveway are often used to drop off mobility-impaired individuals because the driveway is barrier-free all the way to the Museum.

Museum Board Chair Krizanic told Marc Garrison (725 Willets) that the possibility of parking on Willets could be discussed during the discussion of the Pond Zone, but that no definitive information would be available prior to further discussion and review.

B. Transition Zone

Mr. Devlin explained that the Transition Zone is the steeply-sloped area behind the houses that extends to the pond. He continued that:

- There is an existing 2½ - 3' tall wall;
- There are elm stumps and evergreen trees;
- There is a wood stairway down to the pond that may be covering up cement steps with fieldstone edge;
- Any new wall installed will look different from the existent wall in order to belie the idea that the wall is historic;
- The green area will remain open with a few elm trees;
- The steps will be updated; and
- The goal is minimizing the change done to the area.

Mr. Devlin told:

- Mr. Kaplan that:
 - The metal handrail is currently supported by fieldstone.
 - An ADA compliant path will be discussed in the Pond zone.
- Mr. Deyer that ground lighting could be considered during the design phase of the process.
- Parks and Recreation Board Chair Meehan that walls are fieldstone and the landings are exposed concrete.

John Henke suggested that the stairs be updated with concrete because:

- The cost and labor is less;
- It is safer when wet;
- It is the most historically accurate.

C. Riverine Woodland Zone

Mr. Devlin explained that:

- This zone has an old fieldstone wall, a trail, the river, many dead branches, some undesirable trees, and some invasive species that are of concern.
- The trail has wood timbers for steps.
- This area is laid out in Birmingham's Rouge River Trail Corridor Master Plan, and includes:
 - An overlook near the existing trail entry;
 - Maintaining existing trails and upgrade with stone steps and handrail;
 - Extending the trail at the intersection with a boardwalk to a deck at the bank of the river according to the Rouge River Trail Corridor Master Plan;
 - Connecting the overlook with a trail along the top of the ridge to the entry of the existing trail at Maple Road;
 - Establishing a plan for eradicating the invasive species;
 - Developing a planting program to restore the sloped area to a Beech-Maple ecosystem; and,
 - Installing large boulders as sculptural elements.

Museum Board Chair Krizanic told Bill Wiebrecht that a children's play area in the Riverine Woodland Zone has not been discussed, but that the idea would be kept as a comment.

Mr. Devlin told Mr. Wiebrecht that a children's play area would be difficult because the area is subject to flooding.

Judith Keefer explained that the area could still be made child-friendly through:

- Maintaining the stump where families come to take pictures;
- Leaving trees that children can climb;
- Providing educational information regarding pools as an aspect of polio rehabilitation; and,
- Children's programming in the gardens.

Parks and Recreation Board Vice-Chair Therese Longe pointed out that Birmingham's Rouge River Trail Corridor Master Plan is conceptual and was never fully accepted by the Commission.

Mr. Devlin told Parks and Recreation Board Vice-Chair Therese Longe that:

- Crushed limestone is being considered for the connecting trail alongside the wall.
- Many of the existent steps that are part of the Rouge River Trail are rotten and have random spacing. They would be replaced with stone.
- There would be handicap accessibility in the lower portion of the park up to Maple Road.

Museum Director Pielack told Ms. Noble that:

- Invasive species are a particular challenge in this zone maintenance-wise.
- Using sturdier materials reduces the maintenance required.

D. Pond Zone

Mr. Devlin explained that the Pond Zone has more moderate slopes than the Transition Zone and:

- Pedestrian access from Willets;
- A light pole that provides internet access;
- A pool within the pond; and,
- Overhead lines.

Mr. Devlin continued that the plan for this zone also includes:

- Creating a handicap accessible path from Willets, and would include two handicap designated spots along Willets.
- A boardwalk adjacent to the eastern edge of the pool.
- A number of elms.
- Retaining walls.
- A water garden.
- Relocation of overhead wires.
- A seating area near the light pole.

Mr. Devlin told Parks and Recreation Board Vice-Chair Therese Longe that:

- Something would have to be installed to allow the water to flow east to west in the pond, and that the issue will be expanded upon as the plan is developed.
- The remaining area of the pool could be made into a water garden.

Museum Board Chair Krizanic told Mr. Rusche that:

- This pool was used by the residents of the house for their son with polio.
- There would be signage prohibiting swimming in the pond and pool.

Mr. Devlin told Parks and Recreation Board Chair Meehan that the plan is to keep the plants historical, but that vegetative barriers would be added to prevent people from inadvertently falling down the hill.

Museum Director Pielack told:

- Mr. Kaplan that she is in touch with DTE about running the power lines underground.
- Mr. Burley that the pond is 4-5' at its deepest.

Mr. Devlin stated that:

- The goal is creating accessibility to the pond.
- The floating divider wall would have to be custom made, and would need to both maintain the western edge and allow flow. He said this aspect would be challenging.

John Henke left at 6:57 p.m.

Mr. Devlin told:

- Mr. Ross that there are no photos of the original pond barrier.
- Mr. Rusche that there was a concrete swimming pool in the pond.
- Mr. Charles that none of the concrete will be removed because it is historic. The City's goal is to emulate it, unless someone wants to restore it.
- Mr. Wiebrecht that there would be an additional cost to bury the power lines.

Lori Easton stated that the pool provides a great educational opportunity regarding the history of polio, and that making the whole area accessible reflects the original intent of disability accessible surroundings.

Mr. Devlin told Mr. Deyer that the City would be able to find a way of exposing the concrete in order to reconstruct it.

Mr. Charles said he is concerned about the cost of the pool's divider wall, and Mr. Devlin said he had no way to estimate the cost at this time.

Parks and Recreation Board Vice-Chair Therese Longe stated that the City could either provide educational information about the divider if it ends up being too difficult to rebuild it, or that there could be a partial divider put in to demonstrate where it once was along with information.

Mr. Devlin:

- Suggested a few different ways that Parks and Recreation Board Vice-Chair Therese Longe suggestions could be accomplished.
- Told Mr. Kaplan that there is material that would have to be removed through dredging, and that the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) might have an issue with the proposal.
- Told Mr. Charles that the wetland creation and extra square footage is to create an off-set. Mr. Devlin continued that the seeps come from the southeast corner and south edge of the pond.
- Stated that this area provides a unique opportunity to create a water garden.

Museum Board Chair Krizanic thanked everyone for coming out.

Ms. Krizanic adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.