

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON RIVERFRONT ACTIVITIES

February 2, 1999

5:30 PM

Chairman Reiniger called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Reiniger, Klock (late), Sysyn (late), Thibault, O'Neil

Messrs: P. Ramsey, R. MacKenzie, R. Davis

Chairman Reiniger addressed Item 3 of the agenda:

Update on status of master plan and contracts.

Mr. Ramsey stated basically what we have done and when I saw we it is really the staff committee of Tom, Kevin, Ron Johnson from Parks & Recreation, Rich Davis from Intown, Frank Thomas from Highway, Bob, myself, and David Fong who is new to the City but brings a real interest and world-wide perspective. The other person I think we will be inviting on a regular basis from now on will be Jay Taylor. We met probably 20 times over the past nine months and the good news from my perspective as a public citizen is that I think sitting on the table we have an incredible amount of talent. We have some really talented people sitting around the table and I think we have all agreed that this is a great project for the City. We went through an extensive interview process with 11 different international firms applying to do the job. We narrowed that down to five different firms that we met with over the period of a long day. Each firm came in for about an hour and they presented just incredible stuff. It was "knock your socks off" sort of stuff that is really completely visionary. After reviewing all of these proposals, we hired the firm of LDR and CLD as a team.

Mr. MacKenzie stated LDR, as some of you may remember, did the original downtown planning which actually a lot has come out of those plans and CLD will be the engineer on the project and they have been involved for quite awhile.

Mr. Ramsey stated that was consensus of the committee. There was a lot of discussion and it took a long time to do it. We are in the process now of reviewing the contract. Tom's office is doing that. We are trying to figure out the dollars and hopefully we will be in a position to move ahead with it shortly.

Mr. Clark stated we have the first cut of the contract and are going through it. I met with Tom Sommers a couple times. We are reviewing what should and should not be in there and what kind of help we may have to budget for, what type of things the City is going to be looking for in addition to just the preliminary design. It is coming along well and the contract should be in final form very quickly.

Mr. Ramsey stated our goal is to have a comprehensive, visually stunning report around May. It is a very aggressive schedule. That will occur after LDR meets with every stakeholder in the downtown area. We sort of, the other conclusion we have come to which I think is good is that we are now calling this Riverfront Development, not just Riverwalk. It has become clear that this impacts the whole downtown area. In time, we can do from Stark Street to all of these connections on how Manchester develops its riverfront. We plan on having three or four meetings open to the public. The scope is pretty much limited to imagination.

Mr. MacKenzie stated also tonight, I wanted Peter to talk a little bit about the idea that we are not just focusing on the Riverwalk, but we are really looking at riverfront development. The entire area. We are looking at the economic development part and I kind of wanted to give you an idea of some of the other projects now that are starting to meld together with this and we are looking at it as a comprehensive approach to the Millyard.

Alderman O'Neil stated I have a question for Tom. At our last meeting we talked about the west side bike walk path being incorporated and kind of coming under this whole project. Is that in the contract that you are discussing with CLD?

Mr. Clark replied I am not sure exactly the design of it. They had already gone out for RFP's on that portion.

Alderman O'Neil asked but how can we pick it up going forward.

Mr. Ramsey answered Ron Johnson is on our committee and we have discussed that among ourselves after your last meeting. We have come to the conclusion that we can coordinate it as a team. We have told both Ron Johnson and Ron Ludwig that we are going to be coordinating that project with them and they are going to be keeping us up to date on everything as far as I know.

Alderman O'Neil asked but it will still be that portion will be Parks & Recreation handling it where this portion will be the team. What I was trying to push for last time was that the whole thing would be the team of which Parks & Recreation is part.

Mr. MacKenzie answered I think some of the difficulty was that they had already gone out and contracted for certain things under Parks & Recreation. I am not sure how legally or technically we would bring that under the Riverwalk Team.

Mr. Ramsey stated there is also the fact that there is money coming through the State to them to allow them to do it. We are going to coordinate it and we are going to make sure that it fits in.

Alderman O'Neil asked but that money can't come to the team.

Mr. Clougherty stated no it has been appropriated for them, but I think we have that concession from them. They understand that this is a piece here that is important to add.

Alderman O'Neil stated I just want to make sure that when this all ties together, it ties together.

Mr. Clougherty replied that is a priority because that is a big important piece over there.

Alderman Thibault asked are we saying now that this is going all the way down to the West Side Arena.

Mr. MacKenzie answered this would go all the way to Goffstown and potentially Goffstown has interest in extending it.

Alderman Thibault asked even crossing the old trestle.

Mr. MacKenzie answered the trestle has been a long-term problem for the City and it is possible that we could reuse that and make it safer.

Alderman O'Neil stated I just want to make sure that if we come out or if the team comes out through LDR and CLD and says we are going to have 12' wide paths on the east side, we should make sure we have 12' wide paths on the west side and not 11'. That is what I am looking for. Everything looks the same and you wouldn't even know there is a break in who did it and who designed it, etc.

Mr. Ramsey replied it should all be coordinated together. It may not all look the same because different portions of the development are going to be used for different activities. That may lend itself more to biking, walking, some parts of it around the building but it will all be coordinated together.

Mr. Clougherty stated I think we have to understand that where the trestle is its an important hub because if you took off across the trestle and went under the canopy of trees it goes all the way out to the ice arena and then passed onto the trestle. You can go from there all the way to the Vermont border and if every town there picks up their share and puts it out, you can conceivably have people going on bikes from Keene or Vermont all the way through. Also, when you get to that hub you can go from there and hook up with the Massabesic Trail and go all the way to the beach and you can go north to at least Conway if not to the Canadian border. You can go south to Massachusetts. So that Singer Park and when we talked about this way back it is important because people can come from all different directions and merge on that property. That is an important hub that we can sell as a multi transportation type of thing for in-line skating, for biking, for walking. We have to make sure that all of those things connect. So it is going to be phased in, but that is the potential of the thing. You can have people coming from all different directions to have festivals and things like that at the field and then take off and go on a bunch of different directions or go and take advantage of some of the other things that will happen in the Millyard area.

Mr. Ramsey stated the other thing you should be aware of is, and the Harvard kids, I shouldn't call them kids they were young adults, and it has been on Channel 16 a number of times, but there were about 150 people that received their final presentation. The other interesting thing is that this line here goes right to the Airport. That is potentially a massively importantly stretch of track. As Kevin said, it veers off to Massabesic. This hub here that we are talking about, there are all sorts of different options for that piece of land.

Mr. Clougherty replied it will serve as a magnet for people on bikes if you have some type of bike festival. It will draw people from all over the State to come in here which is what we want and then they can walk around and go to the restaurants and do some spending. So there are two things. There is the physical piece of how much it is going to cost to do these things and how you are going to make them all work together and how you are going to phase them in, but there is also the programming side at Singer Field and what Peter and his people will look at in terms of making sure that they sponsor these events. If you have a concert, you know think about having a concert on the river on a Sunday and having people come on bikes and peddling around the Millyard and doing things. That is really what we are looking at here is alternative means to move people into the City and the people who use the bikes or different clientele and different customers like people who use cars and people who walk. You want to make sure you get all of those coming in for the civic center and all of the things you are planning for

downtown. It has an exciting potential if we can get it all coordinated. I think Bob and Tom and the rest of the committee appreciate that. That is why we think it is so important to make sure that Parks is involved because they have some expertise to make sure this is done the right way, but we also have to make sure that all the pieces come together so nobody gets left out or somebody feels that they are not getting their fair share.

Alderman Thibault asked I see Southern NH Planning is also involved in this, why.

Mr. Clougherty responded because again, there is federal money for multi-mobile approaches and that includes trains and bikes and skates and who knows what the future holds, but if you have the infrastructure there you can move people around on different things and that is really why we need consultants and Peter has spent so much time to get consultants that have an international expertise because they have seen these things in Europe where these types of paths are used and in the Middle East where they are much different than what we are used to. So we want to take advantage of those things and make sure that these things are usable to get the maximum result. That is why we are relying on their expertise to try and do something a little bit different and then make what we want. We are just waiting for them to do their work and then get back.

Mr. MacKenzie stated I have a couple of other things that I briefly wanted to mention and again to give you an idea of some of the other things going on in the riverfront area. One is that we have made preliminary application to the State Community Development Finance Agency, the CDFIA, for a half million dollars for the Riverwalk. They haven't given us any clear indication yet and I am not sure what the chances are, but they have asked us to submit a complete application. We will be putting that application out hopefully in the next three weeks. That was one of the pieces of the financing that we hoped to get for the project. I do want to talk a little bit more about some of the projects that you may not know too much about that now come into the fold and we are working closely together to make sure that they work together. One is, and you may have heard the term cultural and scenic by-ways. The Millyard was designated that a couple of years ago and we did get some funding. We are about ready now to put in what I call a series of informational kiosks throughout the Millyard, several of which will actually be on the Riverwalk. Really these will be handicapped accessible kiosk signs that will be laid out. They will be about 5' long. Some of these actually have form to them so you can tacitly feel what some of these things look like. It really gives a history of the Millyard, the importance of the Millyard, different parts of how it worked and just to give you an idea of what these will

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look like, I will pass these around. We have 10 sites. I think we have funding at this point for

9 of those 10 sites and eventually we would like to put one of them right up here near City Hall to direct people from the downtown area to the Millyard and tie the two areas together. Each one of these again will be about 5' long and about 1 1/2' wide. I do have, if you are interested on the map, the 10 locations that have been identified. There is a Cultural and Scenic By-Ways Committee that has worked on this, along with the Historic Association who have actually done the text for the kiosks. One other interesting...Kevin mentioned multi-mobile. One thing we have been working on with both the Southern NH Planning Commission and the State is actually something that will serve a lot of purposes. We are not sure if it is going to happen yet. There has been a lot of talk about parking demands, especially for the civic center. We have identified a piece of property that could serve a number of purposes. Parking, perhaps a carpool lot could serve as a site for a future rail station if a rail comes up from Nashua. That site is at the junction of the existing tracks and the track that goes down to the Airport so it would be a logical extension if we wanted to connect in the future to Boston, as well as the Airport. This is the ideal location to do it. Several people have been working on this. I know that Peter has been in discussions and Jay Taylor has worked on this property for a couple of years now. Interestingly, it is also within easy walking distance of the civic center site and I think it could serve several purposes. It is also important, as I know Alderman O'Neil has talked about, to start looking at how do we harness the economic spin-off from the civic center and how do we tie several of these things together. That is something that we have to start looking at but clearly if you have parking right down here that could be a multi-mobile transportation center in the future and we have to tie that directly to the civic center and the Riverwalk. So the State is also interested in that particular site and that type of facility, something that could get, if we get rail service some day, that is the ideal location and somehow we have to pin that down.

Alderman O'Neil asked are you talking like a Park & Ride. Would it have to be designated as something like that?

Mr. MacKenzie answered we still think it could serve many purposes. For example, most civic center activities are in the evening when Park & Ride isn't in use. Park & Rides are not used during weekends when you have lots of events at Singer Field, for example. So we think it could serve a number of different purposes.

Mr. Clougherty stated it is whatever we define it as, Alderman. Right now, we have got the Riverwalk. It is the Riverwalk plus this biking opportunity plus all those things around it and that is why we have the consultants looking at that and saying what is the best way to do this. Maybe they will come back and advise us to do a parking lot or whatever.

Alderman O'Neil asked but the State is not restricting the funds to a specific use. Mr. MacKenzie answered the State is interested, primarily, in carpooling and multi-mobile. We have made it clear that we would like to make it a multi-use and they understand that.

Chairman Reiniger stated as I recall from the Amoskeag Industries Study, that area you are talking about would hold about 250 parking spots, right.

Mr. MacKenzie replied I don't have an actual number. There has been a higher number even then that discussed, but we are also looking at potentially extending South Commercial Street which might cut into that.

Alderman O'Neil asked is that part of the scope of the consultant's work for the master plan.

Mr. Ramsey answered yes, we are open to approved parking in that area. That would make sense.

Mr. Clougherty stated one of the things we have with parking is there is a problem with parking in the Millyard and the thing that we have never had is someone who comes to us and says listen in all the Millyard this is where there should be housing, there is where there should be retail and this is where there should be parking and they identify a couple of different areas. Once we know that, we can do the financing. The financing isn't necessarily going to be a problem to phase in to address that. The thing you want to make sure of when you do it is that it is in the right spot and it is based on a look at the entire area. That is what we have asked the consultant to come back with. Primarily they are economics people. We don't want to put a parking garage someplace that we find later on is not going to develop in a commercial manner but could be more residential and it is in the wrong spot. That is why we have asked them to do the master plan and identify where the parking area opportunities are that we should be focusing on and then we will come back to you people and say here is their plan, this is why they think it will work, and this is what it is going to cost over a period of years.

Mr. MacKenzie stated a couple of addition things. One is that again as part of the cultural and scenic by-ways program we recognize the importance of getting additional tourists into the City, visitors into the City, and we have to make it easier for them to find their way around. You come down Granite Street now and there is a dozen signs and sometimes you can't figure out where you want to go because you can't see the forest because there are too many signs. We think it is important to have a very consistent and very logical series of signs to get people off the highway system, make sure that if they are coming up 93 or going down 93 they know how to get to downtown Manchester, they know how to get to the historic Millyard. Once you get off the highway, there has to be a hierarchy of signs to let you know this way to the west side, this way to the Amoskeag Millyard and then once you get into each of the neighborhoods you have to find specific points. Where is UNH? Where is the ACA building? So there has to be a logical hierarchy and we have a group and we have some funds for signage and I wanted to give you an idea of what some of these look like, to make it easier for the average visitor to come to this City, find the key points and find their way around the City and we also want it done in a way that gives a high quality image and tells something about the City. These are signs that we want to portray with some of the character that the City has. I will pass the signs around.

Mr. Clougherty stated that was recommended by the consultant, by the way. One of the things that was pretty clear from all of the consultant responses that we got was that when we are looking at these things we should be developing themes. In fact, one of the consultants went back through the start of the Millyard and had pages of the patents that had been developed for everything from steam locomotives to things with Silknet, etc. and it seems that that one mile of area has had more patents developed in the United States than anyplace else. We have had more patents that have affected the industrial revolution and the current microbiology and the software than anyplace else in the United States. That was one theme that they were talking about taking advantage of. That is one example of what these people are doing and that is kind of how all of this stuff gets in. Those are decisions you are going to have to take a look at. What is the image that you want for the City? Do you want to have it move toward the future or the past? We have some options, but all of that has to be considered as part of the master plan.

Mr. Ramsey stated the other major development you should be aware of is that very shortly, as you may have read in the *Union Leader* there is going to be activity taking place in the Seal Tanning Building. This is, in my opinion, a major

development. It is an eyesore. It has been that way for a long, long time. That has some great benefits. Don Clark is here and he represents the owners. They have said publicly it is \$4 million. That is real money invested in downtown and it is a long time coming. It is a major positive development in the City.

Alderman Thibault stated I would think a brochure with some kind of a map detailing the area would be something that could be given out at information centers all over the route or the area and would be very helpful to people who are not familiar with this City.

Mr. Clougherty replied one of the finished products that we will get from the master plan are those types of brochures that we can hand out. That was one of the requisites we put in the RFP.

Chairman Reiniger asked, Kevin, you talked quite a bit about and maybe you have a TIF. After having done work on this effort, are you more or less confident now that we can proceed with that?

Mr. Clougherty answered when I look at debt, I don't look at it necessarily as a TIF of GO or whatever. I look at what is our capacity to do this.

Alderman O'Neil stated quoting Alderman Rivard, remind me of what that means.

Mr. Clougherty replied that is a Tax Increment Finance. Really what that is is if you want to build a parking garage say here, you would float the bond and the debt would be paid back by the increase in the value of the properties around it. So these people would be paying for the parking garage. That is one way you can do it. The other way is to just vote a bond and you spread it out. The thing that you have to realize with TIF's is they are the rage right now. Everybody is talking about them and the economy is going good and that is great but there is a downside to it too and you have to be aware of that. For example, today might not be the right time to go into a TIF and the reason for that is because of what is going on with the Claremont lawsuit. Concord did a TIF, just as an example, they went out and issued bonds and when you issue bonds that are a Tax Increment Finance proposal you tell investors this is what the rate is going to be, this is the growth evaluation and that is great and all of those rates and all of that growth is based on the total tax rate for the City of Concord. So if there is some change in the tax rate for schools and now there is no longer a school portion, all of those documents, something is wrong. So now you have to go back and redo it and you can run into some mechanical problems doing that. That is not to say that

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hopefully by the time we will be looking at some of this stuff that the State won't have that resolved, but

if they haven't you are not restricted from doing that because you can go out and do a GO. I think the need to do it is clear. Once we get some input back from the consultants as to where we feel comfortable doing these things and phasing in, then we will take a look at the best financing. It may be a GO, it may be some combination of tax exempt and something else. Maybe some of the owners want to contribute something. We can use all of those and we will.

Mr. MacKenzie stated at the present time we are proposing, at least for the next fiscal year that we don't use a TIF and that we do allocate some more money for economic development, specifically riverfront development, including both the portion of the Riverwalk but also parking. In order to make the Seal Tanning Building work, there is some parking demands there and we think certainly if we are going to generate a \$4 to \$5 million project clearly the return on investment is going to be significant in that particular area. There was a deadline for the CIP submittals. We did put a request in for riverfront development and that will be coming through the process. The Mayor will be reviewing that in a couple of weeks and it will be coming through the process to the Board. Again, in order to make the Seal Tanning work, we understand that there is some demand for parking and we believe we can address that without any major expense like a parking garage, at least at the present time. The Board, of course, has also forwarded to us the issue of the Amoskeag Industry Parking Study. We would like to see these two work hand-in-hand, both the parking that you need for new economic development and the Riverwalk itself. I think that terming that riverfront development and assigning some economic development money to it is the right way to go for the next fiscal year.

Alderman O'Neil asked when are we actually going to see some paving.

Mr. Ramsey answered quite a bit of work has been done down there and it has all been done legally and properly as far as I can tell. The good news is that by the beginning of the summer we should have something down.

Alderman O'Neil stated secondly, and I didn't go to Peoria but I have heard comments from people, they actually entered into an agreement with, I don't know if it was a non-profit, I don't know the specifics because I am still waiting for the report on Peoria but at some point here somebody is going to have to take control of this Riverwalk. I know in Peoria I think it was part of an economic development group that specifically was for the Millyard. Again, I am going just

on comments that I have heard from about ten different people. We are going to have to, very shortly, you know we are getting ready to enter into an agreement to start paving, somebody has to be responsible for maintaining, operating. How close are we to doing something there?

Mr. Ramsey replied the committee has discussed this and we have discussed it with the consultant. It is going to take the next two months for all parties to come up with an agreement.

Alderman O'Neil asked am I correct that in Peoria that they tied in with a group that was responsible for economic development along the river that was also responsible for operating and maintaining the Riverwalk. Correct me if I am wrong?

Mr. Clougherty answered what happens in the mid-West, Alderman O'Neil, is different than what happens here. In the mid-West, you have a big number of districts and the districts out there are what we call authorities here. So you have the Parks operation for Peoria. It is not a City Park operation and it is not like a county operation, but that district is like its own authority. It has taxing authority. It has borrowing authority. It is like an independent authority. They have their school district that way. All through the mid-West, it is not uncommon for these independent districts to be set-up. Now if we wanted to replicate that, the only way you could replicate something like that is to go to the Legislature of NH. Now we may not want, and the Board may not want to set-up an authority that has all of that bonding and taxing capability because we have a different approach to government. Our structure is different. It may not be that we can just lift something out of the mid-West or out of the south and bring it into our government mind set and have it be successful. That is what we are wrestling with. We are certainly looking at all of these different structures, but we don't want to recreate something that is done in Peoria and works in Peoria in an entirely different environment that we have. Now the problem that Peoria has today is to get the thing started out there, they used this independent district and they contracted with parks people. The parks people are now saying, and the parks people loved that because the economic development group for the city paid the parks district money to develop this so when their tax bill went out, it reflected on the city side and not on the parks & recreation side. Kind of like what we go through with school and city. So now the city is saying well know that we have got this started and you are running it, you should really be raising those taxes on your side and they are going through that type of debate.

Alderman O'Neil stated I am not necessarily interested in creating this whole new branch of government, but somebody, either a city department, somebody like In-Town, somebody like the Riverfront Foundation, somebody has to start taking the lead and being responsible for this. My question is how far are we away from this? You are telling me that it has been on the table and that you are talking about it and within two months you should be back with a recommendation?

Mr. MacKenzie replied we have identified the options and basically they are the same as you have just mentioned. I always hate to create a brand new group because you keep adding layers and layers, but there are several good options out there and you named them from In-Town to Riverfront. We do want to get the perspective of the group that has done riverwalks before to give us their opinion because we know that it is going to be two years down the line. The most important thing is that there is enough money to keep this property maintained. That is the critical part. If you don't maintain it, it is just going to degrade and people are going to lose interest. We have asked them to give us...we know what the options are and we need some information from them as to not only what group but how to finance the long-term maintenance. That is extremely important.

Alderman O'Neil stated the one thing I have isn't so much a riverwalk as it is a riverfront which I think is in the scope of our Committee, Mr. Chairman. When we had Alabama in last August I guess it was, I had the opportunity to talk to the promoter and one of his big concerns was fixed cost to come in and do a show. The police situation really didn't help and actually turned them off. To do a continuous, if we had a series once a month or to rent a stage, I believe is in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range and I had a similar conversation with somebody from the Don Law Company who happens to be a Manchester resident. They said that is what restricts them from taking a look at Manchester. They really need fixed costs and one of the things that was suggested was if the City could put up a stage and leave it there from April to September, that would, in turn drive down the cost to do a show. I don't know how often the stage is being used at Veteran's Park which I believe the City owns, but my feeling is if we are going to make a commitment to the riverfront, we have to make a commitment to the riverfront and I think a concert series is part of it. I would like to see us give strong consideration to...I have no idea where it is right now, where it is stored, does anybody know.

Mr. MacKenzie replied they keep the tent at Parks & Recreation. They are the ones that put it up and take it down each year. We just bought a new tent fabric. The stage is there and available but the actual tent fabric is new this year. It lasts about 12 years.

Alderman O'Neil stated I would like to see us give some strong consideration to moving that stage and tent to Singer Park and seeing if that, along with, I know the Committee on Administration is taking a look and trying to get some control over safety issues and that, get a couple of those large costs under control and we may be able to attract a promoter in here to put on a concert series.

Alderman Thibault asked what about a stage similar to the one we used to have at Arms Park.

Alderman O'Neil stated that may be the same one, isn't it. We own one. The City owns one. It goes up every year at Veteran's Park. I know it is used for graduations. I know it is used for some smaller concert types of things, but the promoters think there is a market here but the costs have to come under control in order for them to take a look and \$5,000 to \$10,000 per show each time if you rent one that could be the difference with us having a show or not. They talked about some pretty quality groups they could bring in here. I don't know if a motion is in order, Mr. Chairman, but the problem is it is the first of February.

Chairman Reiniger asked Mr. Davis if he had any input.

Mr. Davis answered certainly we are here to implement any program that the City has underway. For years the City has had a program of sponsoring public concerts and they used Veteran's Park for that venue. As a matter of fact, it is my understanding, although it was before my time that Veteran's Park was really rehabed and developed for those kind of public concerts. It is the public bandstand that is equivalent to the town bandstand that you see in any town or village throughout New England. That has been there for some years and part of our initial contract with the City of Manchester was to operate that series. Now certainly the City has the prerogative of making that series happen in whichever way it wants to, but I do stress that the programs which happen in Veteran's Park are free and open to the public. They are publicly accessible. We think that is an excellent sign, as I have discussed with Peter, to help promote surrounding businesses. We know that a lot of people walk to those concerts which I think is very important and we certainly support the idea of a larger venue concert series. Veteran's Park could never do Alabama for example. That just wouldn't work there. The riverfront stadium is the best place for those size of concerts, but there are different audiences, there are different markets and certainly we are here to do whatever the City wants us to do as a contract agent and not particular lobby our point of view.

Alderman O'Neil asked, Rich, would what you folks have been doing, could that work at Singer Park.

Mr. Davis answered it is possible. One of the questions would be is it going to be publicly accessible or is it going to be an alcohol sales event or not. I don't have an opinion on it, but those are questions that need to be answered.

Alderman O'Neil stated I would hope that we could do it similar to what has been going on now. I wouldn't think that would change, but the fact that the stage could be fixed there for the spring, summer and early fall could help bring in a medium to large concert once a month, I have no idea. You know we were in this business 10 years ago and kind of blew it, in all honesty. I am just wondering and Alderman Sysyn brings up the point that maybe we need to look at buying another stage. I don't know.

Alderman Sysyn asked how much would it cost for another stage.

Mr. Davis stated the stage is in its final stage of disrepair and is coming to pieces. It is stored outside and it has to be rebuilt. We have estimated the cost at about \$80,000 to rebuild the stage. A permanent stage could be built for probably less if you want to put a permanent stage on location. I suggest that one solution may be to create a permanent facility at the Riverfront Stadium.

Alderman O'Neil stated can we ask that everyone get together and...the first of March might give us enough time to get back into the concert business a little bit here.

Mr. Ramsey stated there are two things happening. Notre Dame College now runs four free concerts up at their place in the summer. It is very successful. They average anywhere from 500 to 1,000 people. They have played their soccer games at Singer Park and indicated an interest in moving their free concerts down there to upgrade them a little bit. The other thing is the park has been contacted by Coca Cola International and they are going to have some sort of concert series this summer. They have indicated an interest. We have also talked to two other groups. The NH Philharmonic is very interested in pursuing the concept of a Pop series. I think that to have one or two or three Pops concerts on the river that would be a minimal charge would be a fabulous idea. I think it would be a great success.

Alderman O'Neil asked can, depending on the type of show, could it fit in either venue.

Mr. Ramsey answered I think it depends on how many people you want. The advantage we have at the park is we fought the battle for liquor and it worked all right. We still have to negotiate, and I say we, the City of Manchester still has to work on the permitting process and it is not just for Singer Park. It is something that we are going to have to do with the civic center. We have to figure that out. Now the other thing is that it is not unreasonable at all and Rich and I have talked about this and I think we both agree that in the future, two or three years from now, it is not unreasonable to have two or three venues. For example, the Harvard people recommended an outdoor movie screen in here somewhere and it is really not a bad idea. The question with all this stuff is how to afford it and how we figure out the stage, I think, is something worth debating.

Alderman Sysyn asked could you get Coke or somebody to give some money towards this.

Mr. Ramsey answered yes. I have already talk to a couple of corporate sponsors who are interested in being involved in this sort of thing. The other thing on the table is the \$25,000 a year now given every year to have concerts. I don't think it is unreasonable to think that the City of Manchester could give \$25,000 for a couple of years and then stop that and then have these concerts be self-running. I don't think they have to lose money. Now, that goes back to whether or not we want to have free concerts. I would charge \$1 or \$2 at the gate for every concert and if there was somebody who couldn't afford the \$2, you could have someone at the Mayor's Office give away free tickets. I don't think that is unreasonable to have this sort of stuff pay for itself. I think we have entered, in government, a new age where we are trying to find ways to save money.

Chairman Reiniger asked on Saturday, the conductor of the NH Philharmonic asked me to...well he had not seen the stadium but heard a lot about it. He couldn't believe it. He thought it would be a superior location for outdoor concerts and he compared it to the Esplanade on the Charles River in Boston. He thought it was a great opportunity for an outdoor concert series, at least for an orchestra of that size.

Mr. Ramsey stated I mean it is not hard to imagine that we have the NH Philharmonic down there and for lawn seats charge \$2 and you have tables under tents for some of the corporations and you are going to have to pay the NH Philharmonic \$5,000 or \$6,000, but some of that gate money goes back to pay them. You also have corporate support. I think it would be wonderful. I don't see any downside to it.

Alderman O'Neil stated well maybe this month, and I am certainly not trying to put the Veteran's Park situation out of business, maybe and I certainly would be willing to commit to two stages if that is what is needed and if we think the market is there to handle it. If we listen to Rich, we are going to have to put almost \$100,000 into the stage we have just to maintain it. I am sure Bob and Kevin could find us some money someplace to maybe...

Mr. Ramsey asked can Rich and I talk about this and get back to you at the next meeting.

Alderman O'Neil moved to have Peter Ramsey, Rich Davis, Planning Department and Parks & Recreation representatives further research the staging issue and get back to the Committee at the next meeting. Alderman Sysyn duly seconded the motion.

Chairman Reiniger noted that Moni Sharma will be available to make a presentation at the next meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Special Committee, on motion of Alderman Thibault, duly seconded by Alderman Sysyn, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee