

June 6, 2018

FRIENDS OF THE PUBLIC GARDEN

Director's Report for the June 6, 2018 Board of Directors Meeting

PR Communications Support:

Solomon McCown has succeeded in getting an article authored by me accepted by WBUR's Cognoscenti. The piece is on the occasion of the BPL's exhibit Breathing Room. Their work has included supporting our efforts to engage with the Boston delegation at the State House, drafting a letter regarding Rep. Hunt's bill limiting billboards to send to our state senators, and attending planning meetings to counsel us on our year of programs related to the Shaw reconstruction. As we enter our second six months of work together, we will hone their efforts to focus on the most strategically effective assistance in expanding our voice and public awareness of the Friends.

Literature Search – Shade and Plant Health:

A Stockbridge student with the support of a turfgrass professor prepared an annotated bibliography of research findings on the impact of shade and soil temperature on turf and tree health in the urban environment, which we just received. Bob, Norm and I will review her work, and will look to continue the research in the fall if there is a need for further data.

Downtown Planning:

The BPDA just put out the RFP for a consultant to engage in the downtown planning study. It is to be seen whether the study leads to zoning for the Financial District, which is needed in order to provide better controls on growth and height in this district.

Boston Common Master Plan:

Drafted by myself and Beatrice with input by Common Committee members, I have been working with Margaret Dyson of the Parks Department on the detailed RFP for a consultant team for the Boston Common Master Plan. It should be ready to send out this summer, and a team engaged by September. The process will take more than a year and most likely up to two years, given the importance of the public process as well as the need for data gathering.

Hempfest Advocacy:

The pro bono work we received from a law firm did not yield a promising new legal angle for opposing Hempfest, so the most effective tool we have is vocal opposition from ourselves as well as the five neighboring communities and nearby schools Leslie and I have been meeting with. We will be asking them to sign on to a letter to the Mayor in the near future. Chris Cook also said that the Parks Department has documented instances of permit violations by the organization, which I have requested. I spoke with the Mayor at the Commonwealth Avenue Mall coffee last week about it, and he wants to meet soon with Leslie and me to talk about what we can do to help the City push back against the event and its occupation of the Common for three days.

MBTA Digital Signs:

Jay Livingstone along with Will Brownsberger and Byron Rushing continue to work the back channels to prevent, or at least reduce, digital signage across the street from the Common and Garden. We, along with a NABB member, are having a conference call next week for an update.

Shaw Memorial:

Construction documents and specifications for the reconstruction project have been approved by Parks, Landmarks, and the Art Commission, and have been sent for review by NPS. The construction funding is accounted for, with the City authorizing up to \$750,000 for the project. We are working with our partners, including the Museum of African American History, on the programming piece of the project, and will be hiring a consultant to support the effort. I met Charlie Baker at a fundraiser co-hosted by Solomon McCown last week and briefed him on the project. He asked if the state shouldn't be helping, which I responded positively to. I also asked him if he would be a co-chair. He said he had to ask his team, and I told him I would send him a letter. After we spoke, he talked to Dan of our SM team and said, make sure she sends me a letter.

Pilot Temporary Restrooms, Boston Common:

The program has received approval by the Landmarks Commission, and we have begun talking with potential vendors for the units and wrapping them with park-like imagery. The Parks Department is working out details with the Legal Department on the partnership with the Friends to hire contractors with Parks management of them, which we hope will be resolved soon.

MLK Memorial:

Chris Cook will be meeting with Paul English the day of our Board meeting to discuss the group's current thinking on location. In our conversation with the Mayor at the Swan Boat opening, Leslie and I heard his support for locating the memorial on the Common, echoed by a number of other influential voices. Bob has thought of a number of possibilities for appropriate siting of the memorial in the park, and Solomon McCown will be working with us on a statement if this in fact becomes their choice.

Parks/Friends Partnership Plan:

Bob and I will be having a working session with Parks management and maintenance staff in the near future to review the detailed operations plan we drafted. In your packet is a Draft of a Term Sheet, the outline of terms which we are proposing for our Cooperative Agreement. Kathy Blaha recommended the outline from another city she works with, that she saw as a close analogy to what we need.

Five-Year Strategic Plan and 50th Anniversary:

In the next two years, we will be updating our five-year Strategic Plan as well as planning to celebrate our 50th anniversary, in 2020. As we look to expand our visibility and reach new audiences, we need to continue to advocate for excellence in our parks. It is hoped that a new and formal relationship with the Parks Department will support a stronger working relationship and shared goals.

Citywide Parks Advocacy:

CPA: Applications for the first round of projects have been received by the City, as a pilot round of shovel-ready projects to fund. I continue to be involved with YBB, which is supporting the City's effort by providing technical assistance to applicants. We will also continue to be watchdogs, to make sure that the program is implemented fairly and transparently, and that CPA funding does not result in reduced support of the three program areas through the City's budget process.

Boston Park Advocates: BPA will be planning forums in the coming year. Ideas have included how parks support climate resiliency and tools to assist parks groups that are not staffed.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Vizza