INDIAN MOUNDS PHASE 1 IMPLEMENTATION

PAT Meeting #1

09. 06.2022

Attendees:

Maura Rockcastle, TxT

Katie Kelly, TxT

Franky Jackson, Lower Phalen Creek

Strong Buffalo

Adam Robbins, St.Paul

Ellen Stewart, St. Paul

Carol Carey, Community Member

Jane Prince, Council Member

Stephanie Harr, Council Member assistant

Melanie Buetow

Meeting Minutes

* Franky asked if there was a plant inventory on the Mounds for invasive species?
	+ Franky suggested cross checking the inventory of species list with the proposed herbicides being used
* Jane Price – area in the park that have been allegedly planted to be prairie restoration. Densely packed with invasives and boxelder trees. This is one of the concerns I have – when I see there is a maintenance plan for 3-years – as a City, we do not fund maintenance adequately and it is not operating as a prairie restoration site. It is just not working.
* Katie confirmed that Pilot Knob is a successful example of a publicly managed native prairie restoration project, which is why we are excited to be working with Tory at Landbridge Ecological. We are working closely with the city and Adam Robbins to make sure this is better managed long-term going forward.
	+ Addressing the existing prairie is an important part of this Phase I proposal
* Ellen asked whether we showed both studies for the gathering circle?
	+ Katie confirmed no and walked the group through the other option for a larger gathering circle further into the site
	+ Balancing picnic tables removal or relocation
	+ Ellen asked if people had thoughts/preferences on this location?
	+ Franky asked about whether we had proposed prairie around the gathering circle was still in the plan? Katie confirmed no, but that shrub planting or perennial planting could be possible. Franky suggested that Adam had ideas that included expanding prairie into this area. He noted that integrating planting here for educational purposes would be ideal.
		- Adam noted that this area is shady, so working with shrubs or shade-loving perennial plants mixed in is a good approach
	+ Ellen noted that wrapping the gathering circle in planting offered it some privacy as well
* Carol requested for the meeting materials to be shared with the PAT group so they could spend more time looking at the proposals and providing comments.
* The team will definitely share the materials to the PAT.
* Jane Prince asked about the fall clean up?
	+ Adam discussed the current status of the prairie and maintenance approach
	+ Limited funding and ability to maintain what we have now
	+ Believes that working with Landbridge is the best direction and will help with restoring existing and future prairies
* Jane asked if there would be a call for volunteers or a date set? Do you want community members to help, maybe not on the mounds?
	+ Adam, we are working through this – if Lower Phalen shows up with 40 people, we might be all set, but we are talking about volunteers and have not yet made decisions
	+ Franky said they are working on a date for volunteerism – falling on a weekend would be ideal for the THPO’s in October
	+ Adam said they typically do not host events on weekends, so those are open and he can commit to being there
* Ellen mentioned the community open house – asked the PAT for input on the format
	+ Stencils could also be a tool for a community meeting
* Katie noted that one of the outstanding features of the immediate acknowledgement project is the sand blasting templates, designed by Erin Genia. Those are getting installed using steel templates for the concrete sandblasting. Plastic templates were also made and we could use those to paint with the community for an event
	+ October 2 – Engagement Event currently earmarked
	+ Nov 6 PAT Meeting 2
* Strong Buffalo – didn’t have access to look at the report prior to this meeting, been listening and trying to follow. There are some real questions between what we originally spoke about to now. What are we calling this? A cemetery? A sacred burial ground?
	+ Sacred Site. Red flags or white flags ever going up about herbicide….
	+ “Install” sounds like “digging” – we are not supposed to be disrupting
	+ Herbicide is not ideal
	+ We had offered before to go in and clean up the area, because there is so much invasive stuff there. This needs to be addressed.
	+ I don’t think “cutting down” is the right thing
	+ Prior testing – we know the whole area is a cemetery
	+ How do we deal with that? Especially when you put in metal, asphalt, cement, lights, etc. How do we correct that?
	+ Will still be a road
	+ Human toxicity still here – bad behaviour
	+ These are some good steps – I appreciate all of the work and effort – but we are about 2/3 of the way
	+ My suggestion is to have a medicine person come in there to do some ceremonies in the area to guide what is happening and what will be coming.
		- Richard Moodscap, Oct 20 and 21 – Wakan Tipi, Ernie Peters?
		- Barry Hand?
		- Begin ceremonial meetings beside just community meetings
	+ Franky answered – I am glad to hear you bring up these concerns. Thank you. I am hoping the small steps we are taking to decommission the park-like structures and focus on planting are moving in the right direction.
		- As someone who has transitioned from stewarding private tribal lands to this public land steward, trying to do this work is hard and long.
		- NPS and other funders – I cannot tell you how painful it is as a Dakota man to see the ongoing disturbance and desecration of this site.
		- St. Paul Park and Rec will need to start dealing with what it means to have these two sites moving forward with limited access. Without restrictions the cultural activity happening at this site, counter to our stewardship beliefs, will continue to be a big problem.
		- 4-5 years ago when we were listening what folks were saying, we were so focused on the cultural resources, we didn’t listen to what the community was saying. These folks want their community back. I can drive my car to the parking lot at 10pm and I can see the desecration happening (drugs/sex) at the parking lot. This community wants its community back.
		- This is the right time to revisit how this landscape is revisited and managed.
	+ Strong Buffalo – I agree with you. There has to be a drastic change in the narrative here. I cannot site here and not act like some of this is being addressed. Franky, can you inform the community of this – THPO’s never came to us. More of an issue as a St. Paul resident – we need to resolve this in a good way. I am glad to be a part of this.
	+ Franky noted that it is not going to happen as fast as you and I want –
	+ Strong Buffalo – there needs to be a permanent Dakota body -involved with this that is there and is speaking up for those human remains and spirits that are there. Talk Up is that those spirits say –
		- Franky – have ceremony there! You do not need to coordinate that through this organization.
		- Strong Buffalo – We need a permanent body at the mounds.
		- Franky – I certainly hope we are working towards that.
	+ Katie wanted to jump in to answer the herbicide concerns – explained the conversations with the THPO’s in the last couple of meetings
		- 2-3 herbicides, along with a variety of other methods – hand pulling
		- We looked at smaller prairie by introducing soil on top, no herbicide and hand weeding – less prairie and more maintenance required in the future
		- Current approach is to carefully use herbicide and introduce more prairie very soon – used at Pilot Knob – used initially, and used limited after that
	+ Strong Buffalo encouraged us to use “cemetery” in our language and in decisions for future treatment
	+ Ellen noted that if we look at the trajectory of the plan – Phase 3 – we are making traction. Continue to hear this message – your message – we do not want to become complacent. It is important for the community to continue to hear it and for us as the City to continue to hear it.
	+ Carol – in response to the general awareness – what kind of presentations are you doing about the plan? Important information in the plan – how is that being disseminated? Continue to give exposure to the proposed plan?
		- Looks like engagement is targeted at immediate neighbors – that is one thing, but in terms of building broader public awareness – this needs more visibility. How do we change the culture around this – how to we broaden exposure and a culture of knowledge around this
	+ Franky noted that this is a broader conversation that we need to keep working on – burial mounds and sacred ground. How do we open communication between our groups and our community and MIAC – they are an incredibly busy agency, but having that document will really help us share this information
	+ Ellen – with regard to communicating – need to tap into our resources within this call - this is a regional site – can work with Met Council and other regional agencies – all things we could do better. Media and communications is just as important as community events.
	+ Jane Prince – I think one thing I’d like to say to bring back initial process on all of this, when this all began – it began when Parks was getting ready to install a splash pad by the playground. Community got involved and redirected funding into a CLS from the Master Plan.
		- Meetings 5 years ago – I am from the east coast and I like it when people say what they think. That was one of the healthiest things about that process – people came together and shared their feelings and thoughts. We made huge progress to lay the foundation for everything happening now. There was concern for when trails were removed, etc. People have responded very favorably after these changes have occurred.
		- When signage went up – we didn’t get any negative feedback – people understood it, prepared for it by the process you all held and established. The community – all of us on this call – the neighbors, are pretty well prepared for the next steps. Change is hard, but there is a solid foundation of people that felt like they were heard early on and were brought along. This is directly attributed to the hard work Crystal did to teach people that this is not a children’s play area.
		- Discussions and changes so far have gone smoothly as far as community processes go.
	+ Ellen noted that Melanie Buetow – joined us late, thank you for joining us – want to make sure you feel welcome and a part of this – anything to add?
	+ Melanie said thank you – active listening, appreciate being part of this
	+ Ellen thanked everyone for their participation