



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, August 3, 2017
5:30 PM**

Members Present: James Cunningham, Russ Dixon, Tina Krizanic, Marty Logue, Caitlin Rosso

Student Members Present: Hannah Sandler, Carson Claar

Members Absent: Lori Eaton, Judith Keefer

Administration: Museum Director Leslie Pielack

Guests: Brian Devlin, Devlin Nagy Land Designs; Parks Manager Carrie Laird

Guests introduced themselves.

**Approval of the Minutes
Minutes of July 13, 2017**

MOTION: by Dixon, seconded by Logue:

To approve the minutes of July 13, 2017.

VOTE: Yeas, 5
Nays, 0

Announcements

None.

Unfinished Business

A. Historical landscape architect, Brian Devlin, shared his ideas and reactions to members' priorities for the four landscape zones. In general, the steep grade change is a significant part of the landscape and despite challenges it poses, it is part of the historic aspect of the site. It should only be altered where necessary, for instance, to create ADA/barrier free accessibility. Some stabilization of slopes will be necessary for barrier free path around pond and for improved trail access, which could be done with (new) stone retaining walls to suggest other historic aspects of the site. The existing stone walls are also important features and will need some repair and stabilization. Mr. Devlin emphasized that new garden areas should be introduced in only a limited sense as appropriate for the mission to avoid disruption of the historic character of the site. Invasive species and inappropriate or potentially harmful trees and shrubs can be replaced with native species to reconstruct the 'interstitial woodland' appearance that

historically reflects the Allen House and earlier periods. These changes would be a long-term plan to bring the trees to maturity and may involve removing healthy but inappropriate plantings as part of a whole master plan.

Pond Zone: The pool/pond area will require additional study to determine and reduce to the historic water level in order to reveal the concrete side walls of the rectangular pool. This level will also determine the natural level of the barrier free path. Mr. Devlin may be able to provide a general estimate of the engineering survey costs that would be involved for planning purposes. A seating area/overlook for the pool would be an important way to serve the public. Low plantings along the slope of the pond could provide a natural barrier without impeding the view. A water garden could be introduced at the spillway area.

Transition & Heritage Zones: Mr. Devlin recommends consideration of a parlor garden (historically simple, with perennials) in the front of the Hunter House and a demonstration vegetable garden behind it. Both would be small in scale, and used for educational purposes. Introducing disease-resistant elms is an important consideration for returning the landscape to some of its former character. Trees of 2"-3" in diameter will have less transplant shock and will be able to recover more quickly than larger diameter trees. Mr. Devlin suggested that the earlier stone stairs/steps could still be under the present wooden steps and if so, could be integrated into new stone stairs that are wider and have a landing and possible seating halfway down.

Riverine Zone: Ms. Laird clarified that a master plan is in process for the other city parks, and if a Master Plan for the museum site were ready, could be combined with their plan for an early 2018 presentation to the city commission. Public input and focus groups will be held in the fall, and the museum board could participate at that time. City park initiatives parallel the concerns raised by the Museum Board for the museum site. They include 1) providing barrier free/ADA access, 2) removing invasive species, 3) reintroducing native species, 4) enhancing trail connections and 5) education. It may also be beneficial to coordinate furniture acquisition and signage with planned city initiatives for all parks. A Rouge River Master Plan was adopted in 2006 and may also offer guidelines of interest. One of the goals of the Rouge plan has been to provide ADA/barrier free access, which is not met with the existing wood chips. A crushed limestone path would meet ADA requirements and could possibly be sited from the sidewalk at Willits near the bridge to the river. The Museum Board would like to include this second barrier free point in the landscape master plan if feasible.

Communication and Reports

- A. Joint Bicentennial Book Committee Report-a public survey has been created that will be launched around September 15 electronically and on paper to get public feedback about the form and content of a bicentennial publication.
- B. Museum Director Pielack provided updates to her report and clarified the concept for the 2018 exhibit.
- C. Ms. Rosso pointed out that Museum Assistant Caitlin Donnelly has been doing a great job on the museum's social media efforts, and that the museum staff seems very strong at this time.
- D. There were no public comments.

Ms. Krizanic adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.