



Friends of the Canalwalk Meeting 7/24/08

Meeting Minutes

Present: John Gurvitch, Elaine Pluta, Cynthia Sommer, Ken Harstine, Sandy Ward, Nona Hatay, Andy Laties, Rebecca Migdal, Carlos Vega, Eric Fogg, Bruce Fowler, Nancy Sachs, Kari Gatzke

Meeting began with introductions and run-down of meeting agenda.

First item discussed was an update on Canalwalk rephasing. Due to resistance or special requirements made by property owners on what was phase 1 of the Canalwalk project, the city has decided to change the phase order of the work. The first phase will now be the area of land running along the upper canal, just parallel to, but across from, Heritage Park. From there it will continue down Dwight St, wrapping around onto Race St and then up Appleton St. to Heritage Park. This loop may also include the small railroad bridge connecting Race St to the land running along David's building, then running south to connect with Appleton St. An engineer's report on the structural viability of the bridge is required to proceed with this aspect of the plan. With this rephasing of the Canalwalk project, a new design and bidding process must begin. According to Kathy Anderson the RFP went out to the Federal Register around July 13th. The group was informed that the Register is updated weekly. We can check on whether or not the Canalwalk RFP has in fact been posted.

Next item brought up regarded meeting with Deval Patrick at Heritage Park July 17th. A new contact was made: Clare Kelly, Advocacy Director in Deval Patrick's administration. She is very pro Holyoke and handles issues pertaining to the arts. Even though the funding for the Canalwalk is a federal initiative, she could be instrumental in supporting art programming surrounding the Canalwalk project. The suggestion was made that at some point we may want to invite her to meet with us. It was also suggested that in the future, we should pursue a meeting/contact with Congressman Olver to seek the additional funds needed to complete all phases of the Canalwalk.

The next item raised was a discussion surrounding 'Friends of the Canalwalk' blog. It was agreed upon by the group that the blog would be made public, but the general public would have 'read only' access, while members of the Friends group would have a password allowing them to read, write and post material on the blog. The blog will be created and launched prior to next meeting. To aid in the administrative function of the group, a general group e-mail account will be created for future e-mail communications.

Three samples of a "Friends of the Canalwalk" group logo were presented as well as a mock-up of a potential "Friends" brochure. The group reviewed and selected one logo that can be used in the brochure, on

the blog, for buttons, letterhead, etc. The brochure will be developed further to include the logo, possibly more photos or photos with higher resolution, the blog address and other contact info. It was decided that we would use 80 Race Street as our groups' physical address. When more complete, a pdf of the brochure will be e-mailed to all members.

Next item(s) on the agenda: 'Who are we?' What do we want to do as a group? How do we fund our activities?

Members emphasized the need to establish 501C3 status in the future, but it was suggested that, at this point, it might not be necessary. Instead it was proposed that we develop the group identity more organically. Rather than formalize ourselves as a legal entity right now, we should phase that aspect in, as our activities/fund-raising require us to. It was noted that applying and obtaining nonprofit status could take up to six months. It was also suggested that we talk to Craig Della Penna about possibly using his 501C3 status as an umbrella organization for our group. Until that is a real option, and while we need only a very minimal amount of seed money right now, it was decided that we should send an e-mail to all Friends members requesting a small donation just to cover administrative expenses, i.e., first-run printing of promo materials, brochure, letterhead, etc. Another idea was brought up that we could pursue a local business sponsor for a small, but not tax-deductible contribution, or pro bono services, as in the case of a printing company, for our group.

Some other questions were raised. Who owns the canals? Who maintains them? Someone mentioned that the City is likely responsible for maintenance, but the department and funding was unknown at this point. Another possibility was that HG&E may own or manage them.

The discussion turned toward what we as a group could do in raising the profile of the canalwalk project. One idea brought up was arts programming; the creation of public art along or around the canalwalk. One example cited was the "Artwalk in Rochester." Other samples were passed around of previous 'arts-walk' brochures, which detailed similar initiatives for Holyoke from 2000 and before. Nona Hatay announced that she was putting together a series of urban photographs of Holyoke, to be shown at the Artisan Café in September. She is also working to have them made into a book. The opening for her show will be on Sept 5th 5-7pm, at the Arstisan Café. It was decided that we should attend and have several copies of our brochure available at the opening to begin to raise our groups' profile. Work will continue on the brochure over the next month and we will print a small run of brochures ourselves, for distribution at the opening.

Continuing on the topic of our groups' identity, other groups cited as examples to look at: Passport Holyoke and Holyoke Unites. It was suggested that perhaps we post links to their sites on our blog.

Action Items (to be accomplished by our next meeting on August 28th)

- Talk to Craig Della Penna about using his 501C3 status as an umbrella organization
- Develop brochure
- Obtain pricing for printing and/or possible discount or pro bono work
- E-mail Friends group members to request a small donation
- Create and launch group blog
- Set-up general group e-mail account
- Check Federal Register for new Canalwalk RFP