



City of Highland Park

Place of Remembrance/Memorial Planning Meeting

MEETING NOTES

City Hall, 1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, IL
Pre-Session Conf Room

Tuesday, 23 January 2024, 3:30 PM

Committee Members Present:

- Nancy Rotering, Mayor, City of Highland Park
- Anthony Blumberg, Councilmember, City of Highland Park
- Brian Romes, Executive Director Park District of Highland Park
- Ghida Neukirch, City Manager, City of Highland Park
- Cynthia Vargas, Resiliency Manager, City of Highland Park

Other Officials:

- Emily Taub, Assistant City Manager, City of Highland Park
- Amanda Bennett, Communications Manager, City of Highland Park
- Madeline Kati, LCSW, Victim Specialist, City of Highland
- Maggie Nash M.Ed., MSW, Director of Mental Health Education, Josselyn

Others:

- 3 residents in attendance
- 1 AmeriCorps Fellow, Josselyn

Welcome

Mayor Rotering welcomed attendees and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes

Mayor Rotering asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 28, 2023 meeting. Councilmember Blumberg made the motion and Director Romes seconded the motion. On a voice vote, the working group approved the motion.

Trauma Informed Workshop

Director Nash lead an interactive workshop with the working group and attendees designed to provide information on trauma and strategies for communicating in a trauma informed manner. Director Nash responded to questions from attendees and working group members.

City Manager Neukirch shared that the City has always had strong relationships with government partners, however since the shooting the City has enhanced its professional relationships with resource partners including Josselyn. The City meets regularly with resource partners to discuss common themes and areas where everyone can work together to support the community.

Communication Guidance

Manager Neukirch reminded the group that based on feedback from the Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime, Communications Guidance was drafted using a trauma informed approach to guide individuals. This guidance is available to individuals on the City's web site at www.cityhpl.com/remembrance.

An individual shared that several members of the community felt or feel that there has been a question as to why the City shifted from Highland Park Strong. Manager Neukirch shared the reasoning and the group discussed the reasoning and the feedback.

Research

Manager Neukirch shared that research on other community memorials/place of remembrances was included in the agenda packet for review. She asked that the working group identify if there is any additional information requested and the research can be updated.

Suggested Process

Manager Neukirch reviewed the recommended next steps in the process to include the following:

- Brainstorm site selection
 - Public feedback of site options
 - The working group will not be making recommendations, rather will identify various options with considerations for each
- Request for Proposal
 - Scope, review criteria, timeline, pricing, maintenance plan
- Framework for reviewing proposals
 - Focus groups, surveys, dedicated mailing etc.

Council updates/engagement, public engagement and public communication will take place throughout the process. The working group discussed the importance of giving people their voice when critical decisions are being made.

Director Romes recommended that the working group establish considerations for the place of remembrance to guide and provide a framework for further discussion regarding site selection. Following discussion, the working group determined the next meeting would include discussion of possible consideration such as location/ability to opt-in or out, availability of property, accessibility, security of the site, etc.

Continued Discussion

The working group discussed the timelines of other affected communities to establish a place of remembrance, which is approximately 5-10 years, with outliers on either end. Foundations were set-up by many communities to fundraise for the place of remembrance. Mayor Rotering mentioned that many communities' memorials cost between 5-10 million dollars to build and establish, including any potential land acquisition.

It was discussed that it is critical to give individuals their voice whether or not they wish to provide their feedback publically or privately.

Next Steps

The communication strategy was discussed and the group agreed to include information on the place of remembrance process on the front page of the next Highlander. Information will also be sent out to all victims that reminding them that support services are available if and when they are ready to access them.

The working group determined that the next meeting would include discussing the key elements of site selection, brainstorming potential sites, and identifying the key considerations of each potential site. The Mayor noted that she has been working from the framework of remembrance, reflection,

respite for the place of remembrance, and would like to determine if the community agreed with that framework.

The working group also discussed and confirmed that the name of the group would be the place of remembrance working group.

Manager Neukirch noted that Gaby Strobehn, Community Engagement Manager for Josselyn has been invited to join the working group.

Next Meeting(s)

The next meetings were set for the following dates/times

- Friday, March 1, 3:00 PM
- Wednesday, April 3, 7:00 PM
- Wednesday, May 1, 7:00 PM

Prepared by:

Emily Taub
Assistant City Manager

Reviewed by:

Ghida S. Neukirch
City Manager