



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, 28 November 2023, 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:

- Terry Grossberg, Board Member, Park District of Highland Park
- Emily Taub, Assistant City Manager, City of Highland Park
- Amanda Bennett, Communications Manager, City of Highland Park

Others:

- 1 resident in attendance

Welcome

Mayor Rotering read the following statement:

Thank you to everyone who is joining us today as we take our first step towards creating a Place of Remembrance for the Highland Park Shooting.

The Place of Remembrance will have three primary objectives:

- Create an accessible public place for reflection, remembrance, and solace
- Pay tribute to the memories of Irina McCarthy, Kevin McCarthy, Jacki Sundheim, Katie Goldstein, Eduardo Uvaldo, Nicolas Toledo-Zargoza, and Stephen Straus
- Honor the community's resiliency, especially those who were injured

These objectives are based on research into the purpose of memorial sites and their role in long-term individual and community resilience. Studies show that memorial sites should be understood from an individual and collective perspective, and that they must also be conceptualized with a view towards the present and future post-traumatic needs of all who were directly impacted – as well as those who were not. The term “Place of Remembrance” is thus recommended because it emphasizes that this space will continue to be one of active remembrance, not just for today, but for future community members and the greater public.

The planning process for the Place of Remembrance is anticipated to be a multi-year, open, inclusive and transparent process, with a focus on sensitive and compassionate deliberation, continued outreach and on-going and reflective public engagement. The City remains committed to implementing a trauma-informed approach to the planning process, incorporating expert feedback and best practices.

The group will follow the City's existing public meeting structure and will be tasked with providing multiple avenues of public input and feedback that will be communicated throughout the process. A summary of the proposed process is below:

- This working group will be responsible for guiding the planning process. The working group will not vote; rather they will make recommendations based on research and public input concerning pertinent details, including location, scale, scope, cost, and other factors.
- The working group will only serve in an advisory capacity to the City Council.
- The City Council will be the final decision-making body. When the time comes, the established building and planning process will be followed, including national Requests for Proposals and Qualifications.
- Standing members of the working group will include the Mayor, the City Manager, the Park District of Highland Park Executive Director, the City's Resiliency Manager, and a City Councilmember. Other City or Park District staff members will be invited to discussions where they may provide pertinent feedback as required. The working group will also engage regularly with other government partners and community partner agencies.
- The working group will be tasked with identifying an appropriate process for community engagement. This process will be communicated with victims' family members, individuals injured and those present at the shooting, and the general public, and opportunities for participation will be communicated by both the City and the Park District.
- The working group will establish a process that maximizes inclusion of different perspectives, utilizing different modalities to ensure that community members have multiple opportunities and formats through which to share their points of view, consider the points of view of others and reflect back through an iterative process.
- Victims' family members, individuals who were injured and those who were present and directly impacted will be invited to participate at their own pace, place and time.
- Public input will be invited throughout the process, and updates will be provided to the community on a regular basis.
- Meetings of the working group will be open to the public. Meeting agendas and minutes will be posted to the City's website.
- The City will ensure that community members remain informed via all communication modalities, including the City's website, social media and eNews.

The City will continue to maintain the temporary memorial as an accessible, public place for remembrance and reflection until a permanent Place of Remembrance is established.

We know from our own experiences and from conversations with others who have gone through this experience, this is a complex, emotional topic and process. And as we have learned over the past 16 months, time takes on a different context within these conversations. What is most important is that we maintain our compassion for each other, for our community, and for all who were and continue to be impacted by the horrific events of July 4.

We are not alone in this endeavor. We will lean on those who have endured this type of experience before us, those who are experts in this field, and on one another.

I thank you in advance for joining us.

Communication Guidance

Manager Neukirch indicated that meeting agendas, meeting notes and supplemental information will be posted on the City's web site. Individuals interested in being kept apprised of information can email the City at remembrance@cityhpl.com to be added to an email contact list.

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. Thank you to Communications Manager, Amanda Bennett for drafting the guidance based on feedback from other City staff, the City's Communications Consultant Alyssa Knobel. The document was also reviewed by the Mayor, City Council, and the City's government and resource partners. The document has been updated and posted to the City's web site at www.cityhpl.com/remembrance.

The group did not have questions or changes to the draft document.

Draft Code of Conduct

Manager Neukirch indicated that a Draft Code of Conduct was developed for the placement of remembrance/memorial discussion. Sixteen guiding principles were drafted to promote and protect the mental health and general welfare of everyone impacted by the shooting.

The group did not have questions or changes to the draft document.

Draft Values

The group reviewed the draft values which were established based on feedback from City staff and the City Council, with input from the Department of Justice Office of Victims of Crime.

The group did not have questions or changes to the draft document.

Preliminary Action Items and Timeline

Manager Neukirch indicated that preliminary action items were developed and the worksheet will be updated as the group progresses on its work. The timeline and action items set forth the content for each meeting and possible action items for the future. Communication and public engagement tools and timing are also included on the worksheet. The worksheet includes a suggested timeframe when work will be conducted by quarter, and a check-mark will be denoted when work is complete.

For the second meeting, the group agreed that Josselyn will conduct Trauma-Informed training.

The Mayor indicated that based on feedback she received from others who have undertaken similar memorials, the use of artificial intelligence was not advisable. The group agreed relating to the concerns with AI for obtaining public input and engaging with the public.

Name of group

The group brainstormed several options for the name of the working group, including Permanent Memorial and Place of Remembrance working group.

After much discussion, the members agreed to “Dedication Working Group”.

Next Steps

Josselyn will conduct a Trauma-Informed training for the working group at the next meeting. The training will take approximately 30-45 minutes.

Resiliency Manager Vargas will share research conducted from other communities.

The group agreed to avoid communication with the public around the holidays in consideration of the challenging times people may be enduring.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on January 23, 2024 at 3:30pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Prepared by:

Cynthia Vargas
Resiliency Manager

Reviewed by:

Ghida S. Neukirch City Manager	Emily Taub Assistant City Manager
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