

# MINUTES

## Tennessee Residence Commission

August 24, 2011

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### 1. CALL TO ORDER / INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Bob Oglesby called the meeting to order and noted that a quorum was present with the following in attendance.

#### Members Present

Brian McCormack for Governor Bill  
Haslam  
First Lady Crissy Haslam  
Steve Cates  
Lois Riggins-Ezzell  
Jody Folk  
Dr. Wayne Riley  
Patrick McIntyre

#### Members Absent

Wade Hill

#### Others Present

Alan Robertson  
Christi Gibbs  
Casey Pash  
Emily Daniel  
Jason Gabbard  
Ben Page

### 2. PRESENTATION OF CONCEPTUAL LANDSCAPE MASTER PLAN UPDATE BY PAGE | DUKE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Following introductions, First Lady Crissy Haslam described her focus on landscape, not a building program. She introduced Ben Page whose presentation included the following key elements of description and discussion:

- Focus on the beauty of the natural landscape
- Refine and knit back together a very domestic setting
- Stewardship based polishing
- Old growth management – trees need help in maintenance to survive and prosper
- How does the property need to inform those residents and visitors who engage it
- Early entry sequence- only partial view of house, primarily about Conservation Hall
- Driveway decision points – at Conservation Hall, at Service entry drive
- Notice a small statue on way to front door, but no time to enjoy it

- At front door – there once was a fountain in the center of the auto court area; now more of a corporate presentation at the drop-off
- Once you turn around looking out from vantage point of the entry doors you see what was once a nice formal garden
- This is a very dignified house now surrounded by many fuzzy landscape moments
- Spruce trees are not native and have a hard time surviving in TN, so it is expected to see the demise of at least some of these trees in the near future
- Like the Biltmore, they can expect a possible controversy of loosing significant trees. The Biltmore took down all of their dying trees at one time in a similar prominent location and quickly restored their site
- Back of house issues with lots of required support systems needs to be incorporated into the plan
- Parking under trees is compacting the soil and roots – this will kill these trees in just a few years if not quickly addressed.
- The current conditions have eroded away any back yard moments
- The new vegetable garden is a great addition to the property
- First impression Ben wants to create is to say *Welcome!* with a big hug.
- Need to address the current ambiguous moments at Conservation Hall pull off decision
- His approach, like Olmstead's, is to create the needed setting. Ben does not want to diminish Conservation Hall, but tie it into a TN forest vernacular.
- When driving at the top of the hill you now encounter an elbow-shaped turn in the road which he suggests needs to be reconfigured.
- There is a very large, but badly damaged, magnolia tree which will fall someday. If taken out, that area creates a new opportunity and a framed perspective of the house including heavily screened service area.
- At center of the auto court drop off area, Ben is proposing this area to also become more domesticated by placing a large tree off center which should be trained to create a veiled view through the tree of the distant gardens.
- Also at grade access to overflow parking could easily be created down to about where the current Sundquist rose garden exists.
- Commissioner Cates asked if they had any concern about compacting the roots of those trees with overflowed parked cars. Ben replied that he understood that area would be used 3-4 times a year, and as long as it is properly maintained (aerated, etc.) then it would be a very manageable solution.
- The loss of the spruce trees will have to be addressed, and Ben suggested putting back an elegant garden

- He also suggested relocating the McWherter sculpture to the center of the current half circular garden area off to the side of the main garden with spruces. The circular garden area needs to be recreated into a more personal space.
- On the other side of the house on top of the existing geothermal field, Ben proposed a great lawn area providing an ambulatory pleasure garden.
- He would like to also resolidify the new vegetable garden and separate and screen the current pool area for private use by the residents.
- Ben says he is trying very hard to not build any buildings, but be mindful of functional underpinnings like parking requirements, storage buildings, security requirements, etc.
- He would like to see a properly restored carriage house for use as a wonderful guest house with designated parking.
- This is an enormous piece of property but treated like in suburbia.
- Ben would like to create a personal scaled secret “four seasons” garden beyond the formal garden area with a central sculptural type focal element.
- Visitors will be able to stroll through the pleasure garden, then the vegetable garden, etc.
- He proposes all high maintenance type plantings occur in one place – vegetables, flower cutting garden, rose garden, etc with an adjacent green house / small building (gardening office, storage, etc.)
- Security function can be deeply hidden in the carriage house.
- The First Lady stated that she has spoken with Executive Security about their function being located permanently in the left side of the Carriage House, and they are satisfied with this location.
- Ben also envisions a tiny little garden on the driveway side of the house that can be viewed while circulating from the house outside to the front of Conservation Hall that could possibly be gated.
- In summary, Ben sees a need for a lot of polishing and stewardship – keeping tree maintenance part of a long term program and funded budget.
- He sees his challenge being how to bring the house to 21<sup>st</sup> Century in a graceful personal way.
- First Lady Haslam reminded Ben to talk about the two trees he is proposing on a front lawn between the house and Conservation Hall. Ben added he wants to frame the view and put back anchors around the house (these two and the one in the auto court). These two trees need to be major trees with deep, vertical “tap” roots.
- Mrs. Haslam said that former First Lady Andrea Conte started a traditional fundraising luncheon every two years, and this year would be the next time in the sequence. She intends on hosting her first fund-raising luncheon October 6.
- She also will be hoping for in-kind contributions of native species from nurseries, etc.

- Mrs. Haslam said they have quite a few tours by children and women and hopes garden clubs may join her in fundraising as well.
- Alan Robertson commented that, in the past, donations have been made in the form of gardens, plantings, sculpture, etc and the plan probably should accommodate similar future offerings.
- Ben said he already had one such opportunity in mind in the secret garden – a place for a significant focal point that says Tennessee and is really fun!
- Bob Oglesby added he would think the State should consider funding some of this scope as well.
- Commissioner Cates agreed and added certainly the maintenance type issues like tree maintenance, soil aeration, leveling of the geothermal field, etc could be done by the State
- Dr. Wayne Riley added, the security requirements he would expect to be funded by the State as well.
- Bob Oglesby thanked the First Lady for her interest and leadership, and Ben Page and team for their vision and creativity. He added he supported their vision and complimented them on their design. Others joined in their support.
- Alan Robertson followed with a motion to approve the master plan concept, understanding the items raised today would be given consideration and that member of this Commission would be kept in the loop via email. Additionally, he proposed that the master plan be brought back to the Commission with any significant revisions.
- Dr. Wayne Riley seconded the motion.
- Additional items discussed included to further address the security issues.
- Bob Oglesby asked if Ben felt a need to better hide the underground Conservation Hall footprint in the front lawn. Ben said he did and would propose various methods to engage the ground and integrate the contours into a controlled and cohesive view of and from the house. Ben said he would love to see a perfectly manicured front lawn.
- Alan Robertson asked how many landscaping staff did Ben envision would be required to maintain the grounds, gardens, etc. Ben replied it depends on the ability of the staff, but he gave an example of a similar property about two acres larger than this which he also has worked on and they had an excellent head landscape person and two additional staff. Ben commented he could not get over how immaculate they kept everything.
- Alan Robertson brought up another issue – addressing ADA access outside the house on the grounds for tours, etc.
- Ben Page addressed a question regarding next steps stating he needed to respond to the comments made today, prepare Opinions of Probable Cost, identify digestible parts of the plan, identify phases all before the First Lady's October fundraiser.
- Bob Oglesby asked if the Committee was ready to vote, then took the vote which was unanimous in favor of the previous motion.

**3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

The minutes were approved with one request that they reflect Jody Folk was not in attendance at the December 13, 2010 meeting.

**4. OTHER BUSINESS**

Other business included a revision of the usage fees on page 9 of the Policy and Procedures. A motion was made, seconded and a vote taken in unanimous support for the revision. It was asked when the next meeting would be held and Alan Robertson clarified it would be scheduled only on an as-needed basis. With that, there was no remaining new business and the meeting was adjourned.

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