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> CITY WANTS MARIGNY GROUP'S BACKING OF REVISED PARK PLAN

## City wants Marigny group's backing of revised park plan

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Despite lingering concerns pressed by representatives of the Faubourg Marigny, New Orleans Building Corp. Director Sean Cummings says he is relatively confident the City Council will soon approve the rezoning of a parcel of property slated for development into a riverfront park and that construction on the \$30 million project will move forward in February.

Members of the Faubourg Marigny Improvement Association have repeatedly asserted that there are serious outstanding questions related to the maintenance and operation of Crescent Park, the first phase in the \$250 million Reinventing the Crescent project. FMIA officials argue that the venue, as proposed, poses potentially deleterious effects to their neighborhoods.



Chris Costello, Faubourg Marigny Improvement Association president, has not signed off on the city's plan to convert the Mandeville Street Wharf into an multi-use facility. (photo by Frank Aymami)

Some of the primary complaints have centered around allegations of insufficient parking, the possibility of excessive noise stemming from a park facility's operation and concerns over how the park will be maintained.

In one draft good neighbor agreement proposed to NOBC, FMIA proposed that the organization receive a 10 percent cut of the revenue from events held at the Mandeville Street Wharf, which will be made available for lease for concerts and other events. The money, the proposal suggests, would go toward maintenance of the neighborhood's Washington Square Park and other Marigny infrastructure improvements.

In a more recent version of the proposal, the group calls for the creation of a new entity that would collect that money and oversee some park maintenance and operation.

Cummings said this week, however, that while the city is able to make certain concessions to FMIA representatives, some of the group's proposals, including those related to a new management entity and the receipt of revenue from park operation, just won't fly.

"Those sorts of suggestions are not terms that the city as a matter of law or policy can accept," he said. "We have compromised on many issues intended to enhance the quality of life in neighborhoods situated along the riverfront."

NOBC submitted its latest good neighbor agreement proposal to FMIA Monday. In an e-mail to FMIA President Chris Costello outlining some of the changes made, Cummings invokes novelist Ursula LeGuin.

"The idea is like grass," Cummings writes, quoting from the author. "It craves light, thrives on crossbreeding and grows better for being stepped on."

"You all have challenged and stepped on our ideas," Cummings wrote in his own words. "We have listened. We have compromised. And, this agreement is better for it."

The city, Cummings said, is not "able or willing to pay you or cede control" of park facilities to a new improvement association, as per FMIA's proposal.

Still, he notes that NOBC has made certain concessions to the neighborhood group, listing among these ensuring that events held at the Mandeville Street Wharf operate below legal noise limits; that the number of special events held at the facility annually be capped at 24 instead of 36; and that a "skilled operator" will be hired to, among other services, prepare a park business plan.

"It is time to build our city," Cummings wrote. "It is time to inspire everyone around us to greatness. And, Reinventing the Crescent is one of the rare, transformative, lifetime opportunities to inspire the human spirit."

“Please join us,” Cummings urges Costello in the letter. “Sign this agreement. More than good neighbors, we will be great ones.”

Cummings said Monday that the City Council is scheduled to vote on the rezoning of the prospective park property in early January, and he expects the council to approve the measure.

He said a request for proposals for construction on various elements of Crescent Park has been advertised and a bid date of Jan. 27 set. Cummings anticipates construction on the project beginning in February and requiring 18 months to complete.

Neither Costello nor Councilman James Carter immediately responded to requests for comment. **To sign up for CityBusiness Daily Updates, click [here](#).**



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