



## **MEETING NOTES**

**Author:** *Robbi Woodburn*

**Re:** *African Burial Ground Public Forum – May 5, 2007*  
*Summary of Comments and*  
*Small Group Input Notes*

**Date:** *May 7, 2007*

### **SUMMARY OF COMMON THEMES**

- MESSAGE:** Honor and respect for the people buried there  
Create the story of their connection to the community, ie: seaport community, contributors to the life of the community through their labor  
*"we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream."* *"Free at last"*  
Keep historic vision, tell background story
- TONE:** Simple, peaceful, reflective, respectful, not too majestic, a little uncomfortable, a sense of flow, flow of history, flow of the generations, flow of time
- MEMORIAL:** Tells the story simply  
Tells who the people were and gives light to their lives in Portsmouth, highlighting trades, maritime industry, and Africanisms  
Indicate that this is part of a bigger whole, on many levels  
Symbolism of water  
Symbolism of the anchor  
Symbols of the trades and skills of people
- CONTEXT:** Part of the whole, but different, visible and attention getting in a calm way
- FUNCTION:** Durable, well planned, sustainable, accessible, easy to maintain



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**Group One Comments:**

*Led by R. Woodburn and JA Boggis*

- MESSAGE:** Honor and respect for the people buried there  
Create the story of their connection to the community, ie: seaport community, contributors to the life of the community  
*"we will not be satisfied until 'justice rolls down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream.'"*
- TONE:** Like a cemetery – demands respect  
A little uncomfortable "uncomfortable truths"  
Example: Salem Witch Trial Memorial  
Example: Holocaust Memorial – Boston  
Example: Vietnam Veterans Memorial – Washington  
Create a feeling that shows this is only one part of the bigger story  
Continuity  
A sense of flow, generations, water  
Not picnicky  
Emphasize the positive, personal stories, more than the enslavement story  
Celebrate the African Story  
Get to the hardship
- MEMORIAL:** Educational– Past and Future where are we going  
Correct the misunderstood view of slavery (or lack there-of) in NewHampshire/New England, along with the view of the benign treatment of blacks in NE.  
Indicate that this is part of a bigger whole, on many levels  
The sacred space is everywhere on site and beyond  
Thinking about the future  
Create a "Sense of Absence" – a missing portion of history  
Have multiple layers
- CONTEXT:** Different paving material .....to set off the design  
Treat street and sidewalk as one  
Same but different  
Give a sense that it fits, but can be noticed  
Remove existing sidewalk  
Mosaic walkways  
Does not have to blend in with the surrounding cityscape  
Do not segregate the memorial from the rest of the City "as the black population was"  
Ex. Shaw Memorial in Boston blends in too much
- FUNCTION:** Concerns about depths and foundations  
Possibly use Stepping Stones



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Soft green spaces would be appreciated  
Concerns about drivers driving into the street and getting out.  
Needs signs or physical evidence that this is not a street.

**Group Two Comments:**

*Led by R. Hull and Dr D. Mack*

**MESSAGE:** Mariners trade  
Interior of a ship

**TONE:** Not too majestic  
Real/authentic sense of Colonial times, hardship and difficulty of lives

**MEMORIAL:** Boat anchor as symbolic of maritime industry and salvation  
Should be similarly treated to Portsmouth pocket cemeteries  
Have a mural or model of the city  
Elements of a ship as art  
Possibly use markers of coffin locations that were discovered – symbolic  
Utilize drainage in the design, rain garden, reflecting pool  
Illustrate the triangular trade route (part of the journey)  
Incorporate white pine, materials, trees  
Utilize the shape of the coffin in the design  
Water feature, fountain, pool cascade  
Elements suggestive of water  
Veil of sand – representative of water  
Interpretative plaques  
Emphasize construction materials of the time, cobbles, shells etc.  
Trades/Skills, symbolism to illustrate trades, anvil, barrel, anchor etc.  
A structure or building or connected to the site for shelter as well as education, may be too big for a small site  
Altar/ Gazebo  
Acknowledge the youth of these people

**CONTEXT:** Pocket park  
Important relationship to Strawberry Banke & Prescott Park  
Emphasize memorial, not extension of other sites

**FUNCTION:** Consider durability and function  
Seasonal and climactic concerns about using actual water  
Element to introduce the Black Heritage Trail  
Involve abutters for support and buy-in



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**Group Three Comments:**

*Led by Dr. K. Wheeler and J. Ring*

**MESSAGE:** "Free at last"

Keep historic vision

**STONE:** Peaceful, reflective, simplicity

Keep simple because it is a relatively small space

Solemnity and Joy for the discovery

**MEMORIAL:** Should attract attention

Should be visible

Should utilize color and depict diversity

Should have a site to sit and meditate

Should utilize trees and hedges

Possible curves in the walk

Black Green White and Red

Reminders of Africa

Diverse symbols

Texture change at Court Street end of the space

No clutter, not too busy

Main entrance to reflect what is inside

Plaque designation

Stone monument

Ornamental lighting

Uplighting on monument

Disturb nothing below ground

Reinter remains respectfully

Possible flexible sculpture, interactive, personal component

Enclosed hedge space

Possible for the surface of the monument to mark the graves

Should have an entrance off State Street with and immediate understanding of the concept of the park

**CONTEXT:**

**FUNCTION:** The entire street should be closed off

No vehicles

Stone benches, easy to maintain

Wheelchair accessibility/curving pedestrian path

Snow removal may be difficult on the dead end street

Possible grates to collect snow melt and rain

Concrete walk at monument to allow a user to walk up and touch it.

Lighting so people could visit the monument anytime