

Manhattan Project National Historical Park – Foundation Document Workshop

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on February 8, 2016)

Monday, 2/1/16, and Tuesday, 2/2/16, were dates that saw yet another huge step forward in the implementation of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park – Oak Ridge. The Oak Ridge Foundation Document Workshop was held at the Department of Energy's Public Information Office meeting room. The workshop consisted of the next step after the Scholar's Forum held in Washington, DC, on November 9 – 10, 2015 which created the major high level Interpretive Themes for the park.

Those themes are: Big Science, Concepts, Science and Technology, War Context, People, Place, Secrecy/Censorship, Consequences/Impact of using bomb, Decision to use the bomb, Legacy, Scale, Peace. Within each of these there are a number of subthemes.

The Foundation Document Workshop focused on eight specific elements of planning: Park Purpose, Park Significance, Fundamental Resources and Values, Interpretive Themes, Special Mandates, Administrative Commitments, NPS Policy-Level Guidance and Assessment of Planning and Data Needs.

As you can see, one of the eight elements was the list of Interpretive Themes. I found it encouraging to see how the workshop built on those high level themes and put specific details on each of them.

Another aspect of the workshop was a public input working session where anyone with interest in the park could provide written suggestions. That portion of the workshop was held in the Oak Ridge High School Cafeteria at 5:30 PM on Monday. An estimated 200 people attended. As the nature of the session was one where people could come and go, it was hard to get a firm count.

I was pleased to see a display of the Oak Ridge International Friendship Bell there with information about that initiative available. As we Oak Ridgers realize, that bell has become an iconic symbol of Oak Ridge and as such will contribute to the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

Other interests were present as well, and a very wide range of our community participated. Each person took time to explain their desired input to one of the four Park Rangers who had flipcharts to capture input as well as sticky notes for the participants to leave their ideas in that fashion. Comment cards were also given out to anyone who wanted to take a bit more time to write out their suggestion and mail it in later.

Coming back to the main two-day workshop, after introductory remarks by Tracy Atkins, who was just announced as the interim Superintendent of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park, the group worked on a Purpose Statement for the park. As with some of the other elements, the Purpose Statement will be a result of input from all three sites.

The workshop will move to Hanford, WA, next and then to Los Alamos, NM, before culminating in Denver, CO, at the Management Planning office and headquarters for the park. Input from all three sites will be included into the final Foundations Report which is intended to be provided in first draft form for review in June, 2016, with final publication in November, 2016. This document will be a public document and will form the foundation (thus the name) for future, plans, activities and implementation of the park at each of the three sites.

Throughout the two-day workshop, I was continually impressed with the insight gained through working through the various aspects ranging from the issues surrounding access to the two buildings at Y-12, Building 9731 and Building 9204-3, to the Graphite Reactor and K-25 historical interpretation. Representatives from these sites participated in the afternoon session on Monday. Included in the plans is the intent to provide online virtual tours in addition to the one that is already available as the K-25 Virtual Museum: <http://k-25virtualmuseum.org/>

This workshop focused on the Department of Energy facilities primarily, but we also realized there are contributing elements throughout Oak Ridge and surrounding area that will eventually need to be considered for their role. I feel confident the public input will bring additional attention to many of these.

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Finally, Niki Nicholas, who is the Park Service person managing the immediate park activities in Oak Ridge, gave us a preview of upcoming plans she has in store for us. Exciting is all I will say. Much of what she is planning is already known because of her open discussions with the Oak Ridge City Council, The Oak Ridge Rotary Club, the Volunteer Orientation session and she has also provided Press Releases that keep us informed.

I will tell you that the next thing being planned is a World War II National Parks Film Festival on February 20, 2016 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm presented by the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. See more at: <http://amse.org/#sthash.9ryxUEFL.dpuf>

There was more, but I don't want to steal Niki's thunder as she is someone who is meticulous in her planning and very thoughtful about the timing of activities and their announcement. She is a great treasure for us, for sure!

I will remind you that she has hired another Park Ranger and hopes to have the volunteer coordinators and volunteer program up and running over the next few weeks.

So, the Manhattan Project National Historical Park – Oak Ridge is moving ahead. The final event of the Foundation Document Workshop was to provide those who came here from the National Park Service and DOE headquarters with a tour of the three DOE sites and the park facilities there.

Let me also not miss this opportunity to remind you of the Friends of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park Fund <http://amsefoundation.org/friends-of-manhattan-project-national-historical-park-fund/> This is where all of us can help fund these special efforts.

Specific identified needs for the park in Oak Ridge are:

1. Print Park (Oak Ridge site) newspaper, \$500 per run of 3,000
2. Print Park (Oak Ridge site) Junior Ranger Booklets, \$900 per run of 1,000
3. Junior Ranger badges and patches, \$4,000
4. Volunteer uniforms and supplies, \$2,000
5. Part Time Education specialist Park Ranger, \$20,000
6. Manhattan Project National Historical Park - Oak Ridge site display at Knoxville Airport, \$3,000
7. IT equipment, \$6,000
8. Part Time Lead Ranger, \$30,000
9. FY16 Teacher-Ranger-Teacher summer program, \$4,000 per teacher
10. Seasonal Park Ranger, \$16,000

If you want to become involved as a volunteer or if you want to contribute to special efforts such as the ten items listed above, please make that known by going to the Friends web site listed above or by dropping by the contact/visitor center at the American Museum of Science and Energy.

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Tracy Atkins, interim superintendent of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park speaks at the public input portion of the Foundations Document Workshop which attracted an estimated 200 people who contributed their ideas in writing for future consideration