Minutes
Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting
Wednesday, January 30, 2018, 6:00 – 8:00pm
Contois Auditorium, 149 Church Street, City Hall

Attendance:
Committee Members: Chair David Hartnett, Councilor Joan Shannon, Councilor Ali Dieng


Meeting called to order at 6:06pm

1. Approval of agenda
   Councilor Shannon moved to approve, Councilor Harnett Seconded, all were in favor

2. Approval of draft minutes from August 23, 2018
   Shannon moved to approve, Harnett Seconded, all were in favor

3. Public Forum
   • Councilor Harnett opened the public forum at 6:08pm. He reminded those present that the forum is an opportunity for community members to bring anything before the community and that items discussed do not have to relate to the Moran building.
   • First to speak was Chris Flinn of South Prospect St. Flinn expressed his reservations about the FRAME concept. He felt that there is a great cost to this project for very little reward. He came prepared with a list of question for the committee and presenters. Those questions included: who initiated the process? What scope was used to bring the building forward and stabilize the site? Who provided input into the design process? What is driving the push for this current concept and is the urgency only because of the threat of the loss of TIF funds? Have any other concepts been considered? Has vetting been completed for the demolition of the building and the future of the site? What are the next steps in this process? What city department (or other company) takes over once this process is completed? What does PACC do (in this specific context)?
   • Roger Donegan spoke next. He felt the FRAME concept had great merit based on his personal experience and understanding of the plan. He suggested that one use for the space might be to use it as a restoration platform for the Spitfire Gunboat that currently

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resides in Lake Champlain. He felt that this artifact from American history would marry nicely with the unique space that the FRAME would provide. The boat could be restored there as well as displayed there once the restoration is complete.

- Kath Montstream expressed her support for the project. She feels it preserves history, is low maintenance, and provides a great backdrop on the waterfront. The views from the proposed top observation deck will be incredible and they will be a huge draw for tourists. She feels this will be a unique space, and, especially in light of the fact that we have TIF funds already set aside, we should move forward.

- Matt Kelly, son of Tom Carr (former Moran plant manager) expressed his concern about liability with FRAME concept. It could easily be a target for graffiti, and, with the open frame, might be a dangerously attractive climbing option. In terms of use of the space, he would like to see Moran turned into a vertical garden with observation platforms. A teaching partnership could be foraged with UVM, and food grown in the building could be donated to high risk/low income populations. He identified City Market and Gardener’s Supply as potential partners in green outreach. He pointed out that, like other great cities, the frame would be an anchor on the waterfront, but he would like to see ideas for the use of the building developed in parallel with the construction.

- Jan Schultz, former electric commissioner, recalled that, as his last act on the electric commission, he authorized the donation of the Moran plant to the city back in 1989. There is a lot of history in this building, from starting Burlington on its path to becoming a 100% renewable energy city to the fact that it was used as a prototype for the McNeil building. Schultz fully supports the FRAME plan and appreciates that this piece of history is still standing and can be preserved for generations to come.

The public forum closed at 6:25pm

Before CEDO began their presentation, Mayor Miro Weinberger addressed the gathered crowd. He stated that he was thrilled with the number of people who came out, especially considering the weather, and specifically thanked the students from Burlington City & Lake Semester who were present.

Mayor Weinberger went on to explain that the FRAME concept is the culmination of a series of efforts to renovate the building over the last three decades. All previous efforts to develop a four-season, adaptive reuse plan have failed and the building still stands abandoned. New Moran Inc. came as close as anyone ever has to finalizing a plan for the building, but their final effort came to a standstill in 2017. As the redevelopment of Moran was one of his campaign promises, Weinberger is deeply invested in completing this project.

Though the idea of completely demolishing the building has been a popular one, it would cost far more than the city originally thought (somewhere between $4-11 million). When it became clear that the plans developed by New Moran Inc. would not move forward and that the cost of demolition would exceed the funds available, the Mayor asked CEDO to come up with a third
option beyond adaptive reuse or demolition. The FRAME is what that team came up with. To his mind, FRAME transforms and eyesore into an iconic landmark, and while this is not unprecedented, it is unique to our region. Most importantly, the FRAME is within the budget of the funds currently allocated to the project. There are $5.4 million in TIF funds for this project, and if the city does not utilize the already authorized TIF funds on Moran then approximately 2/3 of that money would have to be returned to the state and it would not be available to add value to Burlington. The FRAME is an achievable goal without some of the major challenges faced by past projects. It is a framework for future projects and phases, a space usable as it is but one that can also grow and develop as new opportunities present themselves. It compliments other elements of the waterfront, tying the whole area together.

In conclusion, the Mayor expressed hope that the assembled group would come out of the meeting with momentum and energy so that the project can meet its 12/31/2019 deadline.

4. Moran FRAME Concept
   a) Presentation
      i. Overview of Concept – CEDO

Kirsten Merriman-Shapiro began by explaining that a tremendous amount of community engagement that has already gone into the FRAME concept. She thanked all those who have been involved, both with the current iteration of the plan and past versions of the project. She briefly highlighted the history of the plant and its significance in Burlington’s move towards being the 100% renewable energy city it is today. Merriman-Shapiro explained that, while the city does have the option of leaving the building as is for the time being, there is $5.4 million dollars in budget TIF funds dedicated to work on this site. If we do not use these funds for Moran they must be returned to the state. By waiting, we run the risk of leaving a dangerous, unseemly building that desperately needs repair or removal while losing the money we have to do that work.

She detailed the scale of the building, explaining that, while quite tall, it is not a wide building. Removal of the structure will not provide a significant amount of “green space.” If the building is removed, we lose a piece of our history. Due to surrounding buildings and parks, Moran cannot be dramatically demolished or imploded. Additionally, Moran is a brownfield site (contaminated with hazardous substances), and cleanup of this space is mandated by the state. If demolished, the city will need to follow a proscribed manner of deconstruction to protect the environment. Going as far as to remove the sub-basements of the building that rest on the lake bottom is the most costly demolition estimate. A study done in 2017 showed that costs for demolition would run between $4-11 million.
Merriman-Shapiro made it clear that a plan of action needs to be in place before the building is demolished. The land cannot sit fallow. Moran sits on land that is part of a public trust and must be available for public use. It has limited uses under zoning and state statute. City ordinances no longer allow buildings as tall as Moran on the waterfront, nor do they allow new buildings to be as close to the water’s edge as Moran currently is. If we demolish the building we lose the things that make it a unique draw (height, location, history, steel superstructure) and will never be able to get them back.

II. Conceptual Architectural Plans/Estimates – Freeman French Freeman

To CEDO’s mind, partial demolition is a win/win. The city uses the allocated TIF funds it already has, cleans up a brownfield site, keeps the height of the building, honors its history and architectural heritage, and provides the residents/public with an iconic landmark. The FRAME concept strips back the brick (amount removed depends on multiple factors and will be determined exactly should the plan move forward) and leaves the steel superstructure. The basement will be filled (there will be a ventilation element for safety reasons), and bathrooms will be added. Some lawn space will be added. This first phase is basic, simple, and, most importantly, attainable.

III. Review operational budget and future phases – BPRW/CEDO

The current cost estimate for work on phase one of the FRAME is under the budgeted $5.4 million. Operation costs for the new space may run between $65,000-75,000 the first year (restrooms, maintenance, and general upkeep) and will come out of the Parks budget.

Future phases may include:

- Large awning/covered space
- Art installations (such as fabric replicas of coal hoppers)
- A temporary or permanent ice skating rink
- Concessions/Food truck space
- A large film screen for public viewing parties
- Elevator and stair access to upper levels of the building
- Observation/viewing decks
- Enclosed vendor space
- Temporary or permanent kitchen space
- Public Promenade
- Tables, chairs, and benches for public

Costs for these items vary, but virtually any of these options can be added in the future (with future fundraising). The FRAME is function/usable in its basic form, but can be easily added to as new needs and desires arise.
b) Small group activity to get community feedback

The meeting broke into small groups to discuss how attendees felt about the FRAME, how the concept could positively impact the community, what additions they would like to see during future developmental phases, and what the highest priority additions might be at 6:55pm and reconvened at 7:25pm

c) Report out from small groups

Before the small groups reported to the meeting at large, Councilor Harnett thanked the Burlington City and Lake Semester students in attendance for coming out and participating.

Each of the four groups presented on their discussion of the four questions (special thanks to James Markly, Sam Donnelly, Silas, Ralph, Elias, and other presenters who did not introduce themselves from the Burlington City and Lake Semester Class). In general, the groups appreciated the fact that the FRAME concept preserves the building while still taking action on a disused space. They liked that the space would remain public and would be flexible (indoor/outdoor). They found the concept aesthetically pleasing, one group going so far as to say that it turns “an eyesore into an icon.” They appreciated that FRAME fits into the budget we have available and that it would be ready to use immediately upon completion.

In terms of positive community impact, they felt that the FRAME could partner with local (or world renowned) artists, provide a space for farmer’s markets or other craft events, make the waterfront more accessible to everyone, preserve Burlington’s history, and provide the final piece in fully updating the waterfront. Some groups had concerns that there is not parking nearby and that the walk from where there is parking is daunting for community members or visitors with mobility issues. Others wanted to insure that there is an operations budget in place before any work begins. A public/private partnership for the space or adding potential retail space and tenants was also something groups considered.

The most wished-for items were, by far, observation decks and an ice skating rink. Other things that folks wanted to see added to the structure were snack bar/concessions, teaching or meeting space, a fully accessible playground, art installations, bike and skate rentals, and gardens/vertical gardens. One group wanted to see if it was possible to keep the original sluiceways. Another group wanted to keep or emulate the coal hoppers. Honoring the past and preserving as much of the building and its history as possible (either through a museum or through physically saving aspects of the building, like the brick) was mentioned several times. In terms of the highest priority items (things to be considered for the next phase), the observation decks, skating rink, and elevator/stairs were a primary focus. One group

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asked that phase 2 be a big project, something by and for the community, something that will get people involved, incorporate them into the process instead of just telling them about it.

d) **Next steps and timeline – CEDO**

This information was moved to the end of the meeting, after PACC members asked their questions.

5. **Additional comments or questions from PACC members**

Councilor Shannon would like a list of what is included in the estimated cost. Merriman-Shapiro confirmed that that information is included on one of the posters used for illustration. She would be happy to dig into that information at the next PACC meeting.

Councilor Dieng asked if there was anyone present who didn’t like the FRAME concept at all. To a certain extent, everyone likes the FRAME concept. Dieng then asked if a risk assessment had been done for the FRAME concept. Merriman-Shapiro stated that they have started the process of identifying and stopping potential future problems (such as pigeons, graffiti, and climbing on the building). Dieng then asked if larger issues, such as lightening, high winds, other natural problems. As these were not part of the current risk assessment, Merriman-Shapiro assure Dieng that this information would be part of the presentation for the full city council.

Councilor Harnett stated that he is excited about this concept. He feels that its adaptability is an extremely positive thing. He shared with those assembled that the FRAME would be on the agenda for the next PACC meeting (Feb 13 at 5:30pm in Room 12 of City Hall) and that the public is welcome to attend.

6. **Adjournment**

Shannon moved to adjourn, Dieng seconded, all were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 7:57pm.