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Minutes

Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting

Thursday, December 6, 2018, 6:00 – 8:00pm

Contois auditorium, 149 Church Street, City Hall

Attendance:

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

Neale Lunderville – CEDO, Will Clavelle – CEDO, Kristen Merriman-Shapiro – CEDO, Will Clavelle – CEDO, Cindi Wight – BPRW Holli Bushnell – BPRW/Clerk's Office

Meeting called to order at 6:07pm

1. Approval of agenda

Councilor Shannon moved to approve the agenda, Councilor Dieng seconds, all were in favor.

2. Approval of draft minutes from August 23, 2018

Councilor Hartnett moved to approve the minutes, Shannon seconds. All were in favor.

3. Public Forum

The public forum was moved to later in the meeting after the presentations.

4. Memorial Auditorium – CEDO

a. Presentation

Interim Director Lunderville welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained the process CEDO has taken over the last year in developing their plan for Memorial Auditorium (survey, workshops, tours of the space), and detailed the plan for the evening's proceedings. He then turned the presentation over to Will Clavelle.

i. Overview of process to date – CEDO

Using a PowerPoint presentation as a visual aid (see supporting documents), Clavelle took the assembled crowd through the history of Memorial Auditorium, from its building through

its most popular uses to its present day state as a defunct, unsafe public space. It was originally built as a World War I memorial and was and remains the largest public gathering space in the state. In the past the space has been used for everything from concerts and theatrical performances to sporting events, circus performances, and political gatherings and fundraisers. The building has housed BCA, Generator, and many other organizations over the years, and has been the winter home of the city farmer's market.

CEDO was tasked with creating an ***adaptive reuse plan for memorial that would allow it to remain a publically owned public assembly space*** using input from stakeholders and members of the public. They have conducted 12 promotional events, several workshops with community members and compiled data from a survey that had been translated into 4 languages (completed by 2583 community members) concerning possible future uses of the space. The top ten preferred uses of the space gleaned from the survey are as follows:

1. Shows and entertainment
2. Civic meetings
3. Farmers' Market
4. Arts and crafts shows
5. Youth music
6. Youth-led programing
7. Musician rehearsal space
8. Dance space
9. Conference space
10. Trade shows.

In conjunction with Jim Lockridge and 4 Champlain College students, CEDO filmed a virtual tour of the building. At this time Clavelle showed a short video clip of that tour to illustrate the larger short film to come. He thanked the students, Scout, Max, Kirsten, and Alex for their hard work and assistance in developing this aspect of the project.

Currently, CEDO is between 75 to 80% finished with their plan for the space. Their goal in this meeting is to gather more information through a dialogue with the community members present.

The current assessment of what would be required to bring the building into a usable condition includes new boilers, HVAC, air conditioning, windows, and elevators, improved access for individuals with physical limitations, tests for structural integrity, masonry work, and repair of water damaged steel reinforcements.

In order to make this a viable space for all the proposed uses, it would also require the addition of a loading dock for large concerts and performances and improved acoustics.

ii. Conceptual Architectural Plans – BH+A Adaptive Reuse consultant

Once Clavelle completed his part of the presentation he turned the floor over to Steve (NEED LAST NAME), the Adaptive Reuse consultant from Bargmann Hendrie & Archetype, Inc. Steve took the group through the current structure of the block where Memorial anchors the southeastern corner, and detailed important considerations when it comes to changes to the memorial space. Those considerations include other historical structures on

the block, pedestrian ability to travel around the center of the city, and the need for a beautiful “gateway” as visitors enter the city from the east.

The current architectural plan involves the addition of landscaping on Main and South Union Streets and an addition on the north side of the building that would add 11,000sqft of space. This addition would primarily be used as a loading dock where up to two large tractor trailer trucks could back down to load in for concerts and events. The addition would also have space on the second floor for a community/multi-use and purpose room as well as an entrance area on the Annex (lower) level.

Steve presented photographs of the outside and inside of the space and discussed the changes BH&A are proposing. Following the photographic slides, the proposed work is as follows:

- Patch and repair the building’s foundation (it is structurally sound but needs repair work).
- Reutilize the ramp on S. Union and make ADA compliant.
- Replace stairs and entrances on Main.
- Update and improve Main St Courtyard.
- Change Club 242 entrance to exit only.
- Repair wooden beams on ceiling of auditorium space.
- Repair balcony and floor of main auditorium space.
- Move memorabilia and commemorative plaques from lobby to 3rd floor multi-purpose room, creating something of a “memorial auditorium museum.”
- Renovate lobby while maintaining historic character of the space.
- Patch roof.
- Retain footprint of Annex level (same size as auditorium space but divided into smaller rooms).

That work alone is required to bring the building to a usable place and is in addition to the structural and functional work already proposed by Clavelle. Steve then shared the proposed changes to the space. The lobby would require some of the most extensive changes, moving the current wall into the auditorium space to make room for an accessible lobby with more bathrooms and concessions. It would also remove the current seating/open space that exists under the balcony. This would bring the maximum level of floor seats down to 1,100 to 1,300 seats, however seated concerts are not the only option. Steve continued by detailing several proposed layouts for the new auditorium space.

The auditorium itself could host seated concerts, standing concerts, and/or banquet dinners. Seating on the main floor of the auditorium would be removable chairs and retractable theater or stadium seating. This would provide the greatest amount of seating with the best layout. The option of standing or cabaret style concerts is also a possibility. In that scenario no chairs would be placed on the floor but the retractable bleachers would be utilized. There would also be viewing platforms for handicapped individuals. Both options

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would allow for the same or similar number of people to attend concerts. The balcony in either of these scenarios would remain the same, providing approximately 500-700 wooden seats while adding more bathrooms and an additional concession stand. All told, the auditorium would retain roughly the same occupancy number in either scenario. The third option of using the main floor space for banquets would include café tables, chairs, and a portable dance floor. In this proposal there would be room for approximately 300 attendees, 2 food stations and 2 bars.

The stage of the auditorium level also requires some improvements. These include new, state of the art equipment, rigging, line sets, and a lighting baton for stage productions, acoustic curtains on the windows to make the space tunable and “deadenable,” fireproof curtains and scrims for the stage, renovated dressing space and green rooms underneath the stage on the Annex level, and new mechanical systems and duct work under the balcony.

The main floor would also include A small side lobby, community rooms, and storage, admin, and meeting on the second floor of the addition. The main floor of the addition would also have some office space but would primarily be used as a loading dock for large performance equipment and a storage area for seating.

The Annex level has been proposed as a space for community and cultural events, civic and community meetings, smaller performances, trade shows, and farmers’, arts, and crafts markets. It could hold around 60 booths/stalls in the main area and around 325 seats for smaller performances or around 240 seats and tables in a curtained off “black box” style theater set-up. The Annex level would also retain the former Club 242 space which could be used for smaller gatherings and will include youth focused and led programming.

There is also proposed storage, art display, and rental space on the Annex level as well as larger men’s, women’s, and gender neutral bathrooms, a mechanical room, space for trash and recycling disposal, and a moderately sized commercial kitchen for banquets and other functions with food. The current outdoor spaces on Main St that connect to the Annex level would be retained as a courtyard and an art sculpture garden.

Steve concluded his presentation by summing up necessary exterior work on the building. The work on the upper portion of the exterior walls is required for continued use. The building currently does not meet accessibility or safety standards and improvements on the outside will go a long way towards bring it up to code. While the possibility of demolition and a rebuild exists, the current building is adaptable to contemporary standards (with the north side addition) and could and should be preserved and used if at all possible.

iii. Review budget and operational models – Jeff Glassberg Consulting

The cost report was presented by Jeffery Glassberg. He broke the expenditures down into capital (up front) costs and operating (annual) costs (see supporting documents for details).

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The estimated capital costs total \$32,788,739 and the operating costs will run an estimated \$343,859.

Glassberg presented 5 possible financial options that the city could choose to undertake. Those options are as follows:

- “Mothball” Building – Building would remain closed, annual cost of \$100,000 for upkeep and utilities (additional \$200,000 budgeted for emergencies). The building would remain preserved for future projects, but it would continue to deteriorate over time.
- Basic Renovation – Make repairs necessary to bring the building up to safety and accessibility codes, but forego any modernization. The cost would be between \$10 and 15 million (provided by GO Bond) for these repairs and minimal upgrades, and the upkeep of the building would be approximately \$250,000 annually. While the space would be usable for smaller events, exhibits, activities, and gatherings it would not be improved enough to hold the larger events, shows, and conventions and amenities would be limited.
- Community Hub Tiered Performance Space (City) – The full renovation proposed by BH&A, complete with modernizations and upgrades owned and operated by the city of Burlington. As previously mentioned, the cost for this option would run around \$33 million with an annual operating cost of \$350,000. The city is only capable of bonding \$15 million leaving us with a \$18 million funding gap.
- Community Hub Tiered Performance Space (Public/Private Partnership) – This option is exactly the same as the previous in terms of the kind and amount of work done and cost, but, instead of the city as the sole owner and operator, CEDO will seek a partnership with a private organization to assist in upfront and annual costs. With additional tax breaks this brings the funding gap down to \$8 million and removes the risk that the city takes in operating a performance space.
- Super Block – Restore and update Memorial as previously proposed while also improving the entire surrounding block. The building and block would remain city owned but would be privately managed. The annual cost would not impact the city budget as they would retain control but not management. The upfront cost to repair and improve Memorial remains at \$33 million, but the costs for the work on the rest of the block have yet to be determined. Improving the entire block would create an attractive entry point to the downtown area, improve the Grand List, and unlock the value in the rest of the block, however there are a lot of unknowns that could complicate the project.

Glassberg concluded by summarizing the pros and cons of each option as the assembled individuals broke into smaller groups to discuss the proposals in greater detail.

b. Small group activity to get community feedback

The meeting briefly adjourned at 7:20pm and smaller groups formed to discuss the proposal further. The meeting reconvened at 7:50pm

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c. Report out from small groups

When the large group reconvened, each of the 3 smaller groups gave a short presentation of the issues and ideas they discussed. Topics discussed included the environmental impact of the repairs as well as the possibility of making the new building as green as possible. Folks were concerned about the possibility of a private/public partnership and wanted to ensure that the space was kept accessible to all members of our community. The question of whether or not the building repair could be done in phases, starting with the basic repairs, raising funds, then moving on to the modernization efforts and ultimately working on the super block. It was pointed out that a space like the one proposed would bring move the city of Burlington to another level of the kind of events and activities we could provide and attract. This project is on such a large scale that it might warrant contacting state and federal resources to see if they could provide financial support.

d. Public Forum

The public forum was opened at 8:08pm. The questions are as follows:

- Q – Was demolition considered as an option at CEDO? A – No.
- Q – What happens if the city does not approve the project by a 2/3 margin? A – To be determined.
- Q – Is this going to be on the March ballot? A – Hartnett believes we could potentially put this item on the March ballot, but he also thinks we could take our time, make sure the plan is perfect, and come back in 2020. The current timeframe to finalize the plans is extremely short. Shannon added that, as the Super Block was an extremely popular option more time is needed to work out the complex details. Dieng thanked the designers and CEDO for their hard work, but believes more time is needed before the plan is brought to a vote.
- Q – Could there be a sliding scale for cost of use? A – The goal is for this to be a community space for everyone, and thus a sliding scale is a strong possibility.
- Q – Could a sliding scale be implemented with a private operator? A – Yes, the city would set the rules of use and be able to enforce them.
- PJ commented that she has done quite a bit of research into buildings like Memorial. There are many other similar projects out there that we can look to for inspiration. She feels strongly that Memorial must be available to every strata of the community.
- Charlie asked if another story could be added to the building as the lake view is not being utilized by the current design. According to Lunderville, this has been mentioned before, but the part of the building that faces the lake is where the stage is placed. Additionally, the roof is not designed for public occupancy and the cost to make it usable would be astronomical. The second floor of the addition will utilize the lake view. Councilor Shannon

commented that the surrounding area may be zoned for taller buildings, so the idea of adding a story may be money poorly spent if a taller building is built to the west of Memorial, blocking the view.

- Q – Generally speaking, the community thought the building was in terrible shape when it initially closed. What is the current structural consensus? A – The problem was not structural but concerned falling materials. The steel in the walls and the ceiling trusses will be restored and protected and the stone cornices need replacing, but the building itself is fairly solid.
- Q – A petition with 2000 signatures supported the creation of Club 242/retention of its name and goals, but nothing has been done. What would it take to retain the name? A – this needs to be discussed further, and there is an opportunity to do so.
- Dieng asked what environmental concerns were being addressed. A – Green and sustainable is the intention of the design and repair work. The goal is to meet current standards for technology and efficiency and consumption. There is the possibility of incorporating alternative energy sources into the building.

e. Next steps and timeline – CEDO

The next step for the Memorial proposal will be discussed at the next PACC meeting (12/18/2018)

f. Additional comments or questions from PACC members

Councilor Shannon commented that she appreciates the work the team has put into this project. They have provided a fantastic list of pros and cons. She does have a bit of sticker shock at the price and is concerned about the burden placed on tax payers, but she also feels that there are options available that may alleviate that concern. She also thought the process of this meeting was wonderful and hopes to work in a similar format in the future.

Councilor Dieng echoed Shannon's sentiments. He commented that Clavelle gave an inspiring presentation and thanked him for his work. He believes the idea of a private/public partnership is important to consider. Most cities do not have a publically run venue like this. He asked if the other area venues (such as the Flynn) have been consulted during this process. Clavelle commented that Memorial will not compete with the Flynn and that a partnership with them is actually a possibility.

Councilor Hartnett tries to see the bigger picture and possible outcomes of the new Memorial Auditorium. Burlington is the economic energy of the state, and he thinks the new building would be great for the city. He wants to know what the possible revenues would be. He is also curious if the city could, one day, pay itself back for its investment in the building. He also is heartened by the fact that no one ever considered tearing the building down. Though only 50 people came to the meeting tonight, thousands have been part of the process and he is thrilled by that.

5. Adjournment

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Shannon moved to adjourn, Dieng seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 8:29pm.

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