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Minutes

Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting

Thursday, July 11, 2019, 5:30 pm

Room 12, 149 Church Street, City Hall

Attendance:

Committee Members: Chair Joan Shannon, Councilor Ali Dieng, Councilor Karen Paul

David E White – CEDO, Jesse Freedman – CEDO, Luke McGowan - CEDO, Cindi Wight – BPRW, Laura Wheelock – DPW, Doreen Kraft – BCA, Sara Katz - BCA Holli Bushnell – BPRW/Clerk’s Office

Meeting called to order at 5:33pm by Councilor Shannon

1. Approval of agenda

Councilor Dieng moved to approve the agenda. Councilor Paul seconded, all were in favor.

2. Approval of draft minutes from August 23, 2018

Dieng moved to approve the minutes, Paul seconded, all were in favor

3. Public Forum

Public forum was opened at 5:35pm. As no one wished to speak, the public forum was also closed at 5:35pm.

4. Old Business

a. CEDO –Moran Update

Interim CEDO director David E White informed the committee that the FRAME is in the middle of the permitting process and will be ready to go before DRB on July 16th. Once it goes through DRB, they will be fully permitted and ready to move forward.

Shannon asked what plan exactly will be going before DRB. White confirmed that it was the same plan presented to City Council in February. The scope of this project is limited to deconstruction and stabilization of the site. The only item that has been added to that original plan is gender-neutral bathrooms.

White reports that a few other changes might occur before the project is officially approved, but those items are limited to the roof and additional landscaping. That's the great thing about this concept. It's just a frame. Additional items can be added as funds become available. White continued by explaining that, as Moran is an historical building, the plan will require approval from the state preservation office. There will likely be a commemorative marker and interpretive panels documenting the history.

Dieng asked if the rapid speed of the project is in an effort to meet the deadline to bond for TIF funds. White confirmed that this is correct. This means that the plans for the building and the construction drawings need to be completed before December 31, 2019. Dieng also asked about the risk study the committee had previously requested. White confirmed that things like lightening, ice, and site contamination hazards as well as overall safety are part of the review process and action plan moving forward.

Shannon asked if the work on the building will effect boat storage for the sailing center. White confirmed that boats will need to be moved off site when the first phase (deconstruction) begins. The sailing center has been notified and plans for maintaining their access to the waterfront and boat lift are in place.

b. CEDO – Memorial Auditorium Update

Jesse Freedman took the commission through the two phases of market studies put together by Webb Management. The first phase concerned the viability of venue the previous (and proposed) size of Memorial in Burlington. It looked at 4 different venues in comparable cities all over the country with spaces similar in size, design, and age to Memorial. In all of those spaces the respective cities were focusing on both active and passive participation in the spaces with an emphasis on social experiences. When measured against comparable cities, Burlington has more "seats" available for audience members with less overall ticket sales. Burlington is also nearly at capacity in terms of arts entertainment venues. However, the study identified a gap area for 500 to 1400 seat venues. This gap still exists even when proposed future venues such as Higher Ground at Burton are taken into account. Using these metrics, Memorial would need to hold between 100 to 150 events per year to make the renovation viable.

The second phase of the study looked at user demand. Based on the number of seats in the venue, Webb Management calculated the number of events Memorial would need to host per year to cover its expenses. For a 2000+ seat concept, 10 to 20 events would be required to break even. For a 500-seat concept Memorial would need to host 50 to 100 events, and for the "Banquet" concept 14 to 22 are needed for viability. The study also highlighted the fact that there is a high demand for arts learning and creating spaces (which might lead to a partnership with the Flynn). The

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possibility of having a standard 500 seat theater within a larger theater that could be converted to hold up to 2000 was explored. Also, the idea of partnering with the Burlington School District and allowing them to rent the space while they complete their own renovations is a possibility.

Webb explored the possibility of working with local and national operators. Higher Ground and the Flynn were both approached as possible management companies. Higher Ground would use the space for shows and events where the Flynn would want to use the space for educational purposes. The Flynn did express concerns that Memorial might take away some of their sales. There were also 6 national operators who had interest in partnering with the city and managing Memorial, but, as they are not wholly familiar with the Burlington market they were hesitant to commit to the kinds of events they would hold in the space.

With that said, Freedman presented three possible options to PACC. The first is to continue forward with the 2000 seat venue concept and create an RFP for potential operators to get a feel for the market. Alternatively, the city could go ahead with a 500 seat arts center concept. Before going much further with this CEDO needs to have an in depth conversation with the Flynn to ensure the smaller venue would not cause undue economic stress to the Flynn. CEDO is also hesitant to bring the arts center concept forward to the community as it is quite different than the ideas previously presented. They would like to firm up the details of this possibility before approaching the public. The final option that Freedman presented was to defer the work by allowing BSD to move into the space for the next five to ten years while completing minimal repairs and firming up a larger plan for the space.

The next step is for CEDO to develop an RFP to test the market. They will make sure to include the importance of all community members having access to the space and ask bidders to identify how they will interact with the community.

Dieng stated that CEDO needed to think about more than just performances or concerts. He asked if conferences and trade shows had been taken into account. Freedman reports that, according to their research, conferences might cost more than they bring in. Because of the size and scope of the building, large conferences could not be accommodated and the space is not conducive to smaller, breakout sessions. While conferences could be a piece of the puzzle they are not a major player in what will make Memorial a viable space. The research shows that we could accommodate no more than 20 per year.

Doreen Kraft put forward the idea of using Memorial for artist's housing, for working and/or living space. A market study needs to be done to check the affordability of this proposal and see how many artists would be needed, and they are hoping to look into this further in the fall, however they need more funding to

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complete the study. If the 2000 seat venue is off of the table that opens up a number of new, exciting possibilities. White shared that, while he likes the idea, he's hoping to get a sense of what might be possible from the RFP.

Shannon asked when CEDO thinks the RFP will be back. Freedman believes it should be back by mid-September. If there is a viable proposal and operator CEDO will bring it and them before the council. It's an 8 week process from creation to consultant approval. The hope is to use Webb Management and their network of operators to get a well-rounded, higher quality group of proposals. The RFP will cost around \$12,500 in addition to the \$25,000 that has already been spent on the project. The reason for the high cost is the use of Webb Management, but it is believed that their assistance can help the city find the best possible operator for the space. There is the possibility of getting an RFP template from Webb, but that would prevent the city from accessing their network and making use of their phenomenal analysis.

Councilor Paul asked if the funding gap had been narrowed. White explained that, once an operator is found some of the cost may be shifted from the city onto them. Depending on what the operator wants to do with the space they may take over some of the renovation costs. If the city ends up being fully responsible for the renovation costs, at least they won't be responsible for the operational costs. Kraft asked if White could provide the committee with firm numbers. White stated that it really does depend on what's included, but it looks like the work will cost around \$30 million. That may or may not include the loading dock. Kraft worried that operators from other parts of the country might not be interested in bidding on something that doesn't have a firm cost. Freedman shared that there was a third phase to the studies that CEDO was hoping to do that focused on the economics of the space, but it would cost for that study would be \$14,000. CEDO is hoping that Webb's expertise will allow for the elimination of this study.

Paul asked if the goal is for Memorial to be on the March ballot. White confirmed this, stating that there is a need for TIF commitment and General Obligation bonding in March for the Memorial project. Paul asked if CEDO felt they could complete everything in two and a half months following the return of the RFP while eliminating the funding gap. Freedman stated that the funding gap has now been narrowed to around \$1.5 million. Both Paul and Shannon asked for confirmation of these numbers. Shannon asked how the \$1.5 million was arrived at as previous estimates of the gap were much higher, and Paul asked of Jeff Glassburg could attend the next meeting to explain the change in the budget.

c. BPRW – Dog Park Designs

Cindi Wight presented the committee with four maps. Map 1 showed the existing Starr Farms dog park, Map 2 includes additional trees for sound control, an increase

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in the area allocated to small dogs, and an overall decrease in the size of the park. Map 3 has substantial tree buffers on the north and south ends of the park and a significantly larger area allocated for small dogs. And Map 4 added more trees compared to Maps 2 and 3, a significant decrease on the north end of the park, additional parking, and more area for larger dogs than either of the other plans. BPRW plans to hold a public meeting at the park to discuss each option. They also intend to hang the maps up at the park for several weeks to allow for public comment before any decisions are made.

Shannon asked about the cost for the projects, noting that the maps show a cost of \$22 per linear foot of fence. Wight stated that the cost of the trees could be taken from BPRW's tree budget and that, depending on what size they ultimately decide is appropriate, they could save money on the fence (the cost is believed to be about \$40,000 as it currently stands for all 3 projects). Shannon asked if dog license fees were going to be used for this project. Wight stated that license fees go into the general fund and run around \$30,000 per year. Shannon also asked what the process will be to reach a decision. After the public meeting at the end of July the maps will remain on display at the park for two to three weeks during which BPRW will take in public comments. When that time is concluded BPRW will take statements from the meeting and public comment period into consideration when creating a final proposal.

Dieng asked that the option of entirely removing or moving the park be put on the table for the public's consideration. Residents he has spoken to want the dog park removed, and even neighbors who use the park comment on how loud it can be. That said, he was happy to see the number of options BPRW presented. Shannon commented that a great deal of work went into the selection of this site over the course of many years. If the option to move/remove the park is available residents should know just how much went into selection that space. Residents of her district would love to have a dog park, but research showed that it wasn't viable in their area. She would like to make sure community members know why the Starr Farms location was selected. To Wight, the dog park is part of the community make up and moving the park would negate all the work that went into its creation. Wight has asked that BPRW go door to door and ask the same 3 questions to everyone in the neighborhood to see where everyone lands on the dog park.

Though there is a long way to go, Wight was happy to report that the gates have been locked during "closed" hours (8pm to 8am) which has eliminated some of the issues. BPRW will be adding new signage and a plan for dog behavior programming is taking shape.

d. BPRW/DPW City Hall Park Update

Before beginning her presentation, Laura Wheelock asked if the councilors could help her determine the best way to provide the City Council with updates as the project goes on. Her hope was that PACC would be the proper venue for these updates.

All the planned changes to the plan for City Hall Park are still in place after taking value engineering into account. The details of the engineering plan are still coming together, and the park will be reassessed after excavation to see what can be restored.

Paul asked how many seats with backs are in the current plan. After some searching Wheelock found that there are 23 planned benches in the park and a total of about 92 seats on those benches (four people to a bench). There is also seating planned in the form of low walls and architectural curves. Paul and the other councilors were pleased to hear this.

Wheelock went on to share that the promised restroom has been funded and must go through the City Council for approval in August. Kraft added that the list of items that had to be removed has been prioritized and can be put back piece by piece as funding becomes available. Wheelock continued that the park had closed as of that evening and the neighbors were informed via multiple avenues starting back in June with a meeting. A door to door visit to all neighbors of the park was conducted, as well as leafletting to park neighbors and frequenters on July 9. The city website has also been updated.

Paul shared that she was aware of a resident on St Paul Street who claimed that they had not been notified. She asked for confirmation that everyone was told of the park closure. Wight confirmed that everything possible was done to ensure that everyone was informed of the park closure. She also shared that there is an option on the city website for people to sign up to receive updates on City Hall Park.

Paul brought up the on going issues with the work on St Paul Street and asked Wheelock what the contingency on CHP is. Wheelock confirmed that the schedule outlined is supported by the contractor, whose work goes through the summer. BPRW will need to work into fall this year, but DPW is confident that work on the park should be completed by fall 2020 with lawn closures until summer 2021.

5. New Business

a. French Frenliness Resolution

Wight reports that BPRW will be adding French instructions to all fitness stations on the bike path. Icons will also be used on the new signage in addition to the dual

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language text. Wildways maps will also use icons and dual language, and beach closure signs have been translated into the 8 most common languages in Burlington, including French. Going forward BPRW will be adding both French and linguistic icons to all their maps and signage.

Dieng commented that having multilingual signage could be a factor for DPW to consider as well, however that discussion is outside of PACCs purview.

b. BCA – “Everyone Loves a Parade” Mural/City Council Resolution

Sara Katz provided the committee with some background on BCA and public art. The guidelines and policies BCA currently uses were adopted in 1999. Those guidelines state that panels must be appropriate and represent the citizens of Burlington. Though it is not official policy yet, BCA has adopted the 1% for Public Art ordinances, and these are currently in the process of becoming official policy. The goal is to also include language in the new guidelines and policies that reflects the goals of BCA. BCA has studied what other comparable cities have done and is using their best practices to influence our own. A draft is in the works and is on track to be completed by the end of the year. Though it will be sometime before a complete first draft is ready, an introductory piece sharing the goals and excluding the legal language could be ready much sooner. BCA would be happy to share that with PACC as soon as it's ready.

Dieng asked if there is a plan for any other public art projects before the new guidelines and policies are completed. Katz shared that BCA is currently working on projects on St Paul Street, but that won't be completed until St Paul is no longer under construction. BCA is not currently soliciting new public art pieces. That said, were they to solicit new work, the spirit of the new guidelines would be implemented.

Kraft reports that restoration work has started on the mural and a location change will not begin until restoration is completed. In terms of a replacement piece, having talked with city partners, BCA will partner with DPW to create art a piece (or multiple pieces that carry from the alley into the parking garage) about transportation. There is probably not any private funding available for the replacement piece(s), but there are lots of public options that BCA is exploring. In terms of new locations for the ELAP mural, an area at the airport has been identified as the best location, a place where it would have a different context and be less prominent but still clearly visible.

Once the mural is restored and until it is able to be moved to its new location, BCA will be installing new, updated placards, explaining that the mural is a whimsical interpretation of Burlington's history. Placards will be installed in roughly one

month and the hope is that the restoration will be completed in two to three months.

Dieng questioned the timing of the installation of the placard, stating that he believed the council ruled to have it installed no later than March 1, 2019. After some examination of the minutes, it was determined that the council had ruled for a March 1 installation, however that timing was not conveyed in the final resolution. Dieng also asked if other public locations could be considered for the new location besides the airport. BCA will consider more options.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:38pm. The next meeting will be held on September 11th, 2019 at 5:30pm, in Room 12 of City Hall.