

CITY OF BURLINGTON, VERMONT

Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 21, 2018 5:30PM

City Hall, First Floor, Conference Room 12

Councilor David Hartnett, Chair, North District

Councilor Joan Shannon, South District

Councilor Ali Dieng, Ward 7

Attendance:

Committee Members: Chair David Hartnett, Councilor Joan Shannon

Neale Lunderville – CEDO, Kirsten Merriman Shapiro – CEDO, Phet Keomanyvanh – CEDO, Will Clavelle- CEDO, Jeffry Glassberg – Real Estate Development Consultant, Jerry Lindsley – CRPP, Brooke Lindsley – CRPP, Doreen Kraft – BCA, Gillian Nanton - CEDO, Martha Keenan – DPW, Ian Jakus – CEDO, Destenie Vital – BED, Councilor Brian Pine, Chris Hadsel, Chris Wagner, Blythe Usher, Bill Keogh, Devin Coleman, Katie Jickling, Charlie Messing, Barbara Wynnroth, Jake Rugg, Helen Rugg, James Lockridge, Marge Allard, Jerry Manock, Stephanie Morse, Colin Hilliard, Peter Keating, Alex LaVin, Albert Petrarca

Thursday, August 23rd, 2018

5:30 –7:00 PM

City Hall, Contois Auditorium

Draft Meeting Minutes

Meeting started 5:38 PM

1) Approve agenda

Councilor Joan Shannon moves to approve the agenda

2) Approve previous meeting notes

Councilor Joan Shannon moves to approve the minutes

3) Public Forum

James Lockridge thanked CEDO for being open minded about Memorial Auditorium. He has a petition that gathered 1800+ signatures that 242 Main be reinstated if Memorial gets brought back. 32 Pages of comments were gathered through that petition.

Bill Keogh stated that Memorial represents a lot of memories, basketball games, and entertainment. He suggested saving the shell of the auditorium and using it for housing because it's a good location in downtown with access to the amenities.

Jake Rugg stated he used to watch basketball games at Memorial. He went to Rice and stunt night was a big event. Jake said while there are great memories it is not a building that we should drop a lot of money into, we should consider bringing a new multi purpose building on the site.

Barbara Wynnroth stated the building should be preserved because it is part of the great music scene that has developed here in Burlington. She said this is something that means something to the history and the future.

Chair Dave Hartnett thanked Alan Abar for putting together the presentation at the All Wards meeting about the future of Memorial.

4) CEDO presentation on Memorial Auditorium Process

Neale Lunderville thanked the PACC for hosting this meeting. He stated that CEDO is committed to the process and hearing from the community. He noted 2,600 people who live and/or work in Burlington participated in the survey about the future of Memorial Auditorium.

Kirsten Merriman Shapiro began the presentation with background information on Memorial Auditorium.

Will Clavelle summarized the public outreach done for the survey.

5) Presentation of Memorial Survey Results by Center for Research & Public Policy

Jerry Lindsley made a presentation on the survey results. He noted that the open ended question results are still being tabulated and will be released shortly.

6) Questions and Answers on the Process or Survey

Chair Dave Hartnett stated a bond vote wouldn't go to the ballot until at least March.

James Lockridge asked, regarding the survey question on potential uses, if there's a threshold at which a use is chosen or not chosen.

Jerry Lindsley responded that no use is ruled out at this time, but that the potential for uses will be considered through subsequent public workshops. He added that there is likely a market for uses even at lower support levels.

Chris Hadsel said she has been in many auditoriums across New England, and have been to many downtowns where they have been abandoned. Those towns don't thrive in the same way as towns that invest in public buildings. It's easier to tear it down but something new is never the same.

Jake Rugg agreed that buildings are important to communities but if you walk outside, it's a vibrant town. Its not the bricks and mortar, it's the people. He asked why tie yourself to an anchor that stuck in the mud and suggested building a new mixed use facility. The building is 90 years old, architecturally its not extraordinary. Despite the memories that he has, Jake suggested it's time to move forward and consider something new.

Albert Petrarca: Memorial is more beautiful than the new and shiny. 36% of the people want a community kitchen but he felt we don't need another food court. He stated that the City owes a debt of gratitude to Jim Lockridge for getting us to this point and to even have a survey.

Charlie Messing stated he does not think of Memorial it as an anchor stuck in the mud. He thinks of it as the roots of a tree that gives energy. It's made of bricks, and whatever replaces it wouldn't be as solid, and as far as being shiny, the auditorium was shiny once. He suggested putting a large tree on the corner. He said repairing memorial will save us money and community.

Jerry Manock stated he was disappointed that there was no mention of the whole block, and he felt the development of the parking lot and the adjacent lot that should be considered in any deliberations. He said that a connection to the library could turn the whole block into a civic center. He asked if there is a price tag on the renovation.

Jerry Lindsley responded that the analysis will be driven by a consensus on the use, that will drive a design and a cost estimate. In information about tax implications it stated that the City would look at all available resources including property taxes as a potential source. All sources will be considered to assemble a full package.

Doreen Kraft said she wants to build on this place as being the soul of Burlington, and the memories associated with the building. It really is very truly the center of Vermont for civic engagement. She said that the greater region should help fund it because there isn't any larger public gathering space in the state of Vermont, so this is where statewide events take place. She spoke about managing Memorial Auditorium, and the love that emanates from the walls, and recapturing the spirit of that to rehab its original beauty.

Chris Hadsel said her husband raised a lot of money to fix up the plaques honoring those who served because that is the Burlington memorial to all the people who died in all the wars to that point. She said the City must not put those plaques back into storage because this the only war memorial in the downtown.

James Lockridge said he understood memorial to contribute to our uniqueness, it's a symbol of commitment to a community made up of innovators. He said it will be a challenge but it will be fruitful. He asked if CEDO and the City will engage with stakeholders who are domain experts, such as a round table, that could contribute to programming as well as contributing resources from different sources.

Neale Lunderville responded that we need to have a very robust public engagement and bring in the expert voices who can help us move the process forward. Specific programming knowledge will be necessary down the road. The first step is to stay engaged through the workshop process which will take all of this data and see how it fits together. We want to make it a package that works and is sustainable for the future. We don't want to have another discussion in twenty years about a deteriorating building.

Councilor Brian Pine asked about the potential for public private partnership given the pressing need for a high school and wastewater treatment, and this is a project that lends itself to a collaborative approach without relying entirely on the tax payers.

Neale Lunderville responded that there are opportunities down the line for the right type of partnership. The first step is determining what will be in there then putting together a funding profile that works. Then we could consider partnership on the uses or the programming. If there is somebody that wants to come in and bring funds to the table, we do want to consider it as funding is a major challenge.

Councilor Joan Shannon asked the consultant why they were surprised about the high level of awareness, because those who responded were probably aware. There could be a whole group of other people with a much lower level of awareness.

Jerry Lindsley responded that the reason they wanted to see an awareness question in there is for analysis, differentiating somewhat aware vs. very aware. That as an initial question allows cross tabulations of results with level of awareness. We don't know if only those who are aware would take the survey.

Councilor Joan Shannon said the survey asked people about a variety of uses, and the consultant said the lower percentages don't mean there isn't interest in that use. Was there an unlimited choice of uses in the survey? Would any of these uses be considered as accessory uses?

Jerry Lindsley responded that survey respondents could choose as many uses as they wanted. Regarding the level of support for a specific use, there is still a market for a use with 10 percent support, and it may be considered as an accessory use.

Joan Shannon stated her personal opinion that Memorial Auditorium is one of our best buildings and is worth saving. Anchors are important. In historic preservation we can preserve the use of the structure, the interiors or we can just save the shell. For example the shell could form the base of a higher building.

Jerry Lindsley said that the survey respondents clearly want to keep Memorial Auditorium as a memorial. The favorite memories give a flavor of what people value and continue to value in the building.

Neale Lunderville added that while the responses to the open ended questions are being analyzed, the raw data will be made available. Based on the survey people want to save the public assembly space so carving up the space for too many different uses would not achieve this goal.

Chair Dave Hartnett stated that this is the Gateway of Burlington. There's two parts to this; the building, and the whole block. The property next door it takes away from that. Would the owners of that property be willing to come to the table? It's more than just a building. We want to save the memories but we shouldn't be afraid of change. Doing nothing is definitely not an option here and that we go to the voters and March, and if it's not March it's more important to get it right. Was there any question about public-private partnerships? Was there any general comments left in that regard? Dave added that when he was young he visited the Boys and Girls clubs in the downtowns of various cities, and he always envisioned that kind of use.

Neale Lunderville responded that the survey was designed to focus on the reuse of the building as a publicly owned assembly space. It's also important to talk about partnerships and private uses which this process isn't considering. Based on the survey there seems to be strong support for publicly owned assembly.

Chair Dave Hartnett asked if we know the structure is sound?

Jeff Glassberg responded that we have a lot of good useful information about the building and part of his work is to make sure the city gets value from the previous studies. Martha Keenen and others have looked at the building, providing the information for baseline assessments. A lot of those assessments looked at the use of the building, but did not look at functional obsolescence. In order to make the building useful for the future we may need to consider adding onto it and reconfiguring the inside to address basic functions such as accessibility. Perhaps the most prominent obsolete feature is the lack of a loading dock. The City paid for a study in 2002 that assessed the condition of the building and putting an addition on the building for a loading dock. Those are some of the things we will start to get to. Some of this data exists already and one of my roles for the City is to make sure we are putting that to good use going forward.

Devin Coleman asked if there could be a public tour of the building.

Dave Hartnett responded that updates will come through the PACC monthly. If possible he would hold a meeting at the auditorium.

7) Next Steps on Memorial

The first workshop will be next Thursday August 30 at 5:30 PM.

8) New Business

9) Next meeting/ future staffing

Meeting adjourned at 7:20