

PAC Steering Committee

City Hall Room 208

November 1, 2018

Room 208

Draft – Unapproved Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Brian McCarthy

Present: Lindsay Rinaldi, Rich Lannon, Maryann Melizzi-Golja, Trish Klee, Tracy Hall, Brandon Laws, Judy Carlson, Brian McCarthy, Jim Donchess, Tim Cummings

General Highlights of Meeting:

Last Night of Interviews with potential architects and construction managers

An introduction was given from all of the members present.

An introduction was made from the following businesses: Ned Collier, Principal at Icon Architecture; Mark Kevitz; Gary Martinez – OTJ (theater architectural consultants); Joe of Fisher Decks Associates; Chad Montrose, Risk Frochomway (structural engineer); John Easterling at OTJ.

A discussion was given about what they saw when they visited the area and noted that there are three items that a good arts district has: things that are teaching the arts, things that are developing the arts, and then things that are showcasing the arts.

Gary Martinez gave an overview of what they thought the types of venues we could have: traditional theater, club/music space, and social/event room. A PowerPoint presentation was shown relative to their completed projects that might be comparable to Nashua's project. Depending on what you want to do, the stage area itself could be 20, 30, 60 feet. If they took the volume up through the apartment building, it would be around 50 feet. It allows you to have a dead hung set. Chad explained NH Building Code requires new buildings or renovated buildings to be designed for snow drifts. The challenge on building on your existing exterior wall is you're creating a snow drift on an adjacent property that you don't own. So if you impact that snow drift, by code you would need to upgrade somebody else's building to comply with that load. It was noted that there is some space for boutique retail, concession area, storage area, and back of house space.

Mayor Donchess asked about the seating capacity. Gary said 700 seats which included 425 seats at the orchestra level. The rest will be in the balcony.

Mark indicated opening up the blank wall at Alec and develop the space with access. Gary further described what the inside of the theater would look like and went back to the slides and diagrams. Shawn talked about without removing all the space from the buildings helps by keeping the structure at 5 feet deep to support the span which would have more vertical height. You're significantly increasing the load on the existing foundation wall which will need to be retrofitted and modified. The two walls that adjacent buildings are granite lock walls and the work needed to upgrade is significant. By pulling each side in 20 feet from each side, you can do interior footings in the basement which is a simpler process. The layout of the stage is set at the level of the sidewalk. As you enter through the sidewalk, you go through the lobby and go right down to your seat. At the orchestra level, you would use stairs and/or an elevator to go up.

Joe indicated the fact that the stage is at street level is huge. The flexible use of the space allows doing as many things as you can during the course of the day in terms of the theater function. It also makes it a much more dynamic relationship between what's happening on the street and what people would see in the theater. One of the things that is key to many of the uses is height. In order to have flexible and safe accommodations for lighting, it's best to have catwalks rather than accessing it from below. If there's a popular entertainer or amplified music, you want a room that's absorb to and you don't need a lot of height. If you wanted a chamber orchestra with natural acoustics, you'd need height. The height is also useful to hang different scenic elements, projection screens, etc. and other things that come your way.

In doing a multi-use venue, Gary explained they strive for as much flexibility as can possibly be designed into the venue. The broader the range of shows, the broader range of events, the different types of performances you can have increases your audience size, and you reach a broader range of age and interest levels which makes the theater economically much more viable and sustainable. The National Endowment for the Arts have shown and have done studies that for every dollar invested, there is a multiple return of dollars that come into the community. The more kinds of shows and events that are designed into the facility, the greater the chance of success.

Mayor Donchess asked about the back of the house. In the feasibility study there's no real ability to raise or lower any sets. Does the concept create the ability to do the sets that would allow a broader use of the theater and where would you gain the height to do that? The speaker noted if it's around 50 feet that is a good height to be able to fly scenery out. The visual opening per show is going to be around 20-25 feet. There is the ability to have live flying.

Trish Klee asked about using the space for conferences or Chamber events. What type of flooring would be used and also flexible seating. The speaker explained in this situation we would come in and create a flat slab below the seating and then the seating would either be on wagons where it can be moved through a lift or the seating could be retractable and pulled back to the back part of the room. John explained there's 275 to 300 seats on the floor level that retract when they don't want theater seating configuration in order to hold banquets, etc. Gary indicated flat floors is popular for a "general admission ticket" where you stand up. Music is a big driver for venues.

Gary said doing structural work in the 1920 building to create a frame, support a grid, and allow them to open it up and support all the floors. Mayor Donchess asked working in the 1920s building does that add cost or can you still do this within the budget. Gary's opinion was yes this can be done within the budget because they understand what has to happen. It does have cost but the cost buys you the ability to put on events, shows, and provide entertainment that would otherwise walk away if you didn't have this space. Joe noted the important point is that you have a limited amount of resources and they want to work with the City to apply those resources to get to the end which means they're not removing the entire building. They're not building up a 98 foot square 25 feet in the air because they can better achieve it by compressing the footprint which means building less roof and wall.

Rich stated that capacity was one of the major drivers of the success of the theater. Are we up against the ceiling for potential capacity of the theater? Do you agree with them in relation to capacity and financial success in order to draw a more diverse catalog? The speaker said that will vary with the kind of performances being put on. There will be shows that will easily sell out 700 seats and second shows may be added if the demand is there. There may be theatrical presentations which would come close to selling out. In the marketing sense to draw a larger show, we are up against the maximum capacity for the size of the stage and the loading access. The loading access, size stage and seating are the three components that are contrinsically tied to the kind of shows that can be put on. Rich asked what does the extra 10 feet get you. Gary said it may get you a different show. Mayor Donchess asked the ten feet gives you another show because the sets could be more elaborate or how does that fit into what a performance wants. Gary indicated we're looking at a stage that is going to go up to 50 feet to the grid and 30 feet deep. A stagehouse is built to about 100 to 125 feet wide, 50 feet deep, and 70 feet to the grid. Female speaker stated the feasibility study that was done on having a performing arts center showed the sweet spot of need is the 500 to 750 seats and there isn't a sweet spot for the larger one. It's not worth it for us to look at a bigger one because it's not going to impact us. There are other theaters than can do that and not what we're looking to build. Gary indicated those are the questions that would be asked and they would drill down with more questions.

Female speaker asked do you think that there would be a positive impact to the experience if we looked at using your design of the 350 seat on the floor, 150 in a mezzanine and had flexible space for floor capacity to get to 700. It would provide a lower cost and would that give us the flexibility for the larger capacity 700 when needed for rock shows or other events? Gary indicated 700 seats is as far as we would go if you wanted this kind of intimate feel to the house. Speaker noted flexible is always looked at and discussed and try to balance out for the proper venue. They further discussed the roofline, the design of the building and the acoustics.

Mayor Donchess stated the stage would be on the Main Street side so you would need to bring whatever the performer wanted to bring would be brought in through the back and then transported up to the front through the building and

possibly to the second floor. As proposed, any equipment would be brought right to the stage right off the stage. How much of an advantage do you think that is in programming a theater? The speaker indicated that was huge. The first question asked is how fast can we load this show in and how fast can we load this show out.

Mayor Donchesse asked what was the difference in time. Speaker noted a lot of shows travel with their own gear which includes 10 or 20 foot long truss sections in pieces and lights on racks. It would take hours to break down and go through the building to the loading dock. So the faster to break down the set, the better for them and the more likely it is they're say yes we'll come to the Nashua performing arts center. The other difficulty is the clearances to be designed to get the trusses in and out.

Gary indicated when they start a project they like to focus on maximizing the one-time decision, one chance to make the decision. They'll gather all the information that they need, give the best view of the future, will put construction numbers to it, talk about it operationally, how much it's going to cost to move stuff around the building, what are the pathways, etc. Will you be putting a pit lift in? That's what they'll be looking at.

Rich asked about fundraising. Gary stated he's coming up on 35 years working in the cultural and performing arts. These projects are very hard to do and never enough money. It takes a determined fundraising effort to raise the funds and a lot of support from us for rederings, designs and cost estimates. Their understanding is that they'll be working with \$11.5 million with additional funds outside of that for lighting, sound, etc.

Lindsay asked how many other major projects will your group be working on. Gary said our teams don't work on multiple projects at a time. They would be dedicated to the one.

For a project of this size, Brian McCarthy asked what's your typical experience with RFIs and change orders. Gary stated we have to distinguish between owner generated change orders and change orders that happen because we're working on an existing building. What you really want to know is how many change orders because of the mistakes that we make. Mistakes will be made. We have decades of experience. We know how to coordinate the documents. An extensive amount of research is done on the buildings. There are things that we won't catch but nonetheless we write our specifications and we create documents for projects like this and know what the major elements will be. The rigging, the stage tower, and flat tower is critical. Seating goes to the subcontractor who does the final documentation on that. Joe indicated less than 2 percent. You have to expend the effort up front to know the building you're working with to analyze and document.

Brian McCarthy looked at the RFIs more as impact and schedule than necessarily budget. Gary agreed but it varies. Speaker indicated there is a period of time in the contract that is assigned in the contract to answer RFIs, to answer shop drawings, and act on that. In the contractor's agreement, there is usually a requirement that they attest to you that they are familiar with the documents, familiar with the scope of work, they understand the project, they understand the building, and they understand the drawings are drawings of intent. It's controllable.

Brian McCarthy asked about your litigation history. Gary said they have never been sued for something that we did. There have been third party suits that have been brought against the contractors, the design team, and the developers. I can't say we've never been in that situation as we have but you have to defend yourself just like any other business. We've never had a suit/complaint lodged against us directly.

Brian McCarthy thanked everyone and took a short recess.

An introduction was given by all the committee members.

An introduction of the next firms: Dennis Mires, The Architects from Manchester; Joe ?; Kreg Jones, Architect with Dennis Mires Architects; Michelle Miller with designLab Architects; Bob Miklos, founder of designLab Architects; Ben

Youtz, partner at designLab Architects; Sam Batchelor, partner at designLab Architects; ? Smith of Ground?; and Donald Flare of ?

Bob Miklos gave an overview of the organizational chart. designLAB Architects will be working together with Dennis Mires and have work together in the past. They will be hired as one architectural team. The different firms gave more details about themselves.

The speaker discussed key success factors to the project through analysis of things they've seen back up with examples and some of their work that addressed similar issues. Other members from the different firms discussed downtown Main Street area, how the lobby could function as, . Further discussed projects that they worked on.

An issues that is critical to the success of this project is the flexibility of the theater. Joe indicated the different levels of flexibility – type of uses, ability to respond to the needs of each event, to be flexible to go from one to the next, design of space needs to respond to different audience sizes.

From a capacity standpoint, the RFP calls from a 300 seat up to a 750 seat. There are pros and cons of each. It was pointed out that as the capacity increases so do the egress requirements which is something to keep in mind with a second floor theater. The strategies used to address flexible capacity is the use of balconies and showed an example. The other critical piece is function. To be able to sport that kind of range of events, you have to have a theater that can be transformed quickly and effectively. Showed three seating layouts used at MIT project. Evaluating the priorities and understanding what's the right tool for the flexibility is what's needed for each project.

Promoting and fundraising ideas were discussed.

In summary, there were several examples of adaptive reuse of this scale on a building. You saw our experience and expertise with the multiple ways of developing a flexible theater, engaging the street, and the other issues which were highlighted to demonstrate our familiarity with the program. In terms of the model, you can see where we certainly understand Nashua and are real excited about some of the possibilities here. They are going to start engaging people to push things around, write things down, and vote.

Lindsay asked if you were to move forward within our tiemframe, how many other projects would the people who were working on the Nashua performing arts center be working on. Speaker noted it varies from person to person but for almost all of us, this would be our lead commitment.

Trish Klee asked would you have any kind of concept or idea about putting the theater on the first floor to help with loading and unloading and making things easier without losing all the retail. Speaker noted that was the trade off. A lot advantages to putting the theater on the first floor. The biggest trade off is the loss of retail space. They'd work pretty closely with the operator to figure out where the priorities are. There's a potentially a smaller theater first floor while still maintaining retial in front of it. They also talked about how to solve loading for a potential second floor theater.

Rich noted he is stressing this needs to be a 700-750 seat theater and the origianl study talked about those numbers. We're trying to strive to get that 700-750 seats. Can we do that with a second floor with the obstacles that were talked about earlier? The speaker thought there's room for it. There will be structural challenges, underping work that may need to happen, loading becomes a big challenge. All of those challenges are solvable. Selecting a CM will be a great help in coming back and confirming programming options. The best way is to try out different configurations for space fit. The more important assessment is going to be what does it cost for each option. Some of them may not be viable.

Brian McCarthy asked for a project this size what would you expect for a change order and RFI experience. They discussed the different projects recently renovated. When changing the confirguration, you'll be seeing more RFIs than you would in a new construction project. One of the great benefits of engaging a CM early in the process is that you can get into the buidling with potential subcontractors before the project goes out to the market.

Brian McCarthy asked what is your litigation history like. This is designLab's 15th year of practice with no claims. It's not that we haven't made mistakes but the key is a great relationship with your clients and working through issues.

Mr. McCarthy thanked the participating firms.

MOTION TO ADJOURN BY ALDERWOMAN MELIZZI-GOLJA

MOTION CARRIED

Adjourned at 8:57 p.m.