

**MINUTES
COUNCIL WORKSHOP
DOVER CITY COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 6, 2004**

**NON PUBLIC SESSION
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
6:30 P.M.**

The City Council will be meeting in non public session to discuss Labor Negotiations.

NOTE: This meeting is not open to the public per RSA 91-A:2 (c).

**WORKSHOP
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 P.M.**

Councilors Present: Colwell-Ellis, DeDe, Keays, Hindle, Mayberry, Myers, Perry and Trefethen.

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilor Keays led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. DISCUSSION RE:

A. Preliminary Report Re: McConnell Center (*SEE FOLDER FOR REPORT*)

Gary Gilmore, Chairman of the McConnell Center Reuse Committee began by stating that 7 years ago the students from the Junior High moved to the new Dover Middle School. He stated that difficult choices will be made in the upcoming CIP and he is here to give a preliminary report of what the committee has done thus far and hopes for some Council feedback so that they can give a final report in December. He stated that he will be asking other steering committee members to speak as well.

On February 18th they set the goal of reusing the building keeping the best interest of the city in mind. They formed sub-committees which have held many meetings as this is a complicated issue. He stated that they have received positive responses from potential tenants because it is such a centralized location.

Jim Verschueren of the Dover Adult Learning Center spoke regarding the mission of the committee. They are keeping in mind those who will be served and envision an intergenerational use building from childcare to senior center. He reviewed some of the services already being offered at the center i.e, Ready to Learn, Headstart, HUB, and feels that it would be more efficient to combine publications and promotions. They also feel they can do a better job with creating the intergenerational aspect of the services. He asked Gary Bannon, Recreation Director, to assist him, Gary held up poster board which outlined some different examples of how there could be intergenerational connection i.e. "Rose" is a 64 year old woman who takes computer classes, takes ballroom dancing lessons, nutritional classes and volunteers in the head start program. Jack is a 12 year old who comes to the gym and participates in recreational programs, goes to the library, is a member of Youth to Youth also takes the computerclass with Rose, etc.

Gilmore stated the committee hired a consultant through grant funding and introduced Elise Klysa who put together this information tonight (See meeting folder).

Ms. Klysa explained that her role has been to be a centering point of the activities of the various sub-committees and to keep the progress going forward. She explained that there has been an aggressive effort to survey all potential tenants and to have initial collaborative meetings. They have tried to make this a fair process to best serve the community.

DeDe asked if there are groups asking to get into the center. Gilmore stated yes, by word of mouth.

DeDe asked if we are looking at primarily public service groups.

Gilmore stated we are looking for city agencies that meet the mission and vision of the Committee.

DeDe asked if they currently pay rent or will they be paying rent in the future.

Gilmore stated not yet, but will speak of this later in the presentation.

Gilmore stated that Mike Lassel was hired to do architectural plans a couple of years ago but nothing more was done, but the committee has been able to use some of those ideas. He stated that there is a high demand for the space and it will be hard to fit everyone in who wants to get in. He explained that there are already the "anchor" tenants which are Headstart, HUB, DALC, Dover Recreation, Human Services, Police Outreach Services which are all currently in the building and they are looking to put in space for Seniors to have recreational activities, a Child care center which is badly needed, the Cocheco Arts and Tech Academy is also looking to occupy space, so there is plenty of interest. He stated that the location is ideal because it is the center of the city and provides easy access to public transportation.

Planning Director Steve Stancel then reviewed the size of the space and how they are looking to utilize it. They plan to have shared space on each floor for community use at night for meetings etc. The first floor will be the former cafeteria space, the second floor will be the former library space and the third floor will be the former band room. DeDe asked what the size of the units will be. Stancel stated 800 to 1,000 square feet, but they can also be cut in half. DeDe asked if the cafeteria is staffed. Steve stated the kitchen is not functioning at this time, but there are plans to have 2 working kitchens in the future.

Stancel then reviewed the site plan for the outside of the building which includes widening the driveway on the library side of the building as well as cutting down the current hill on that side of the building. A new main entrance will be created on that side which will accommodate the handicap access and elevator. It will allow for a drop off area and no more slope. They will have the senior and children services on the 1st and 2nd floors and a play area on the front lawn with cuts for doors onto the play areas. They will also be upgrading the lighting on the back of the building and installing a 2nd elevator on the opposite end.

Keays asked why the entrance needs to be changed from the original one in the front.

Stancel explained that all of the current entrances are inefficient and not handicapped accessible.

Keays would rather upgrade the front of the building so as not to spoil the original concept.

Stancel stated the existing front entrance will remain, but because the building is a "U" shape, people have to walk a lot to get to anything inside the building, whereas a side entrance is easier access to where they need to go.

Perry agrees with Keays and feels they should keep the focus to the front entrance. He stated that the Museum of Fine Arts recently decided to go back to their original entrance after redesigning the building because they found they had made a mistake in changing it.

Discussion ensued and it was clarified that the original façade of the front will be remaining.

Stancel stated that having the side entrance will allow for busses and parents to drop off their children. Mayberry agrees that from a customer service point of view, the entrance is better on the side.

DeDe asked what the current monthly cost of maintaining the elevator at City hall.

Mr. Beecher is unsure and will find out.

Stancel continued that one of the ideas is to also connect the library and 3rd floor of the McConnell Center with a walkway, but the cost may be too high.

Keays asked isn't it our objective to get this building on-line to rent it out for income and feels that all of the extras are unnecessary such as a walkway. He feels the focus should be on getting the building back into shape.

Gilmore clarified that the building was originally built in 3 separate parts with the original portion nearest to the library being built at the same time as the library with the vision that they would be utilized together.

He continued that the committee is looking for what the tenants will offer to the citizens and not just filling the space. They want to have maximum resources for the community.

He then discussed the costs (See page 6 of handout). They are seeking 3.5 – 4 million for bonding in the CIP. There are oil tanks that need to be pulled out, grading issues for drainage, sprinkler systems need to be installed, elevators, bringing the building up to code which should have already been done.

DeDe asked if they are looking to have one floor committed to commercial space to develop income. He stated that the Old Liberty Mutual building in the mill was wired for fiber optics which made it more desirable to future occupants and feels this needs to be considered.

Gilmore stated that there are covenants on the building which require the left hand side of the building be used for education. He stated they are focusing on putting things in the building that will work together to provide similar services to all citizens. He stated they are not going to give anyone a free ride and that the bond will be paid back through rent.

Mayberry stated he wants everyone to recognize the hundreds of hours put in by these volunteers on this so far.

Discussion ensued regarding the users of the building and the potential for rental income.

Gilmore explained that non-profit agencies can seek grant funding as well as the city which provides us with a unique opportunity and feels that it is in the best interest of the city to bond for as low as possible and look for grant funding. He stated that when agencies are interviewed regarding occupying space, this is a part of the discussion. He stated currently we are looking for the money to make it occupiable.

Trefethen asked if potential tenants will be signing on to a contract for as long as the bond.

Gilmore stated they will be signing a contract because they are also looking for assurance on their end to be able to stay in the building long-term.

Ron Oullette of HUB Family Services, serving as the chair of the facilities sub-committee – explained that the 5.5 million total estimate was for the entire building to be built and occupied without furniture but if the interior design part is eliminated and left to the occupants that brings it down by approximately 1.1 million.

Perry thanked everyone for their efforts and secondly, stated that if we seek grant funding we also need to deal with the Historic Preservation Office in Concord to accept the design changes as he knows that any CDBG funding will require their signing off on the design.

Earl Goodwin, committee member, explained that construction needs to begin to bring this building up to code as occupancy cannot occur until this is done and it is projected to be done by early 2006 if they are able to start this coming Spring.

Mayor Myers asked if this will disrupt the current tenants while the upgrades are going on.

Goodwin stated that it is difficult to phase in certain aspects such as heating, but the current tenants won't have to leave, they will work around the construction.

DeDe thanked everyone as well and then asked about the heating and will it be more energy efficient.

Gilmore stated yes.

Mayor Myers asked about the parking.

Gilmore stated the city owns the lot and they are looking at it based on occupancy, which at this time doesn't appear to be a problem.

Mayor Myers asked if currently the structure of the building is acceptable.

Gilmore stated that the most serious issues will be addressed in an upcoming resolution 10/13 for deteriorating windows and the crumbling window wells, etc.

Gilmore concluded that they are currently doing a cost analysis on a square foot basis to determine the rent and will come back with that in the final report in December.

Perry suggested going to PSNH and the Gas Co. for rebates as he has found that to be a good funding source.

3. ADJOURN

Perry moved to adjourn, seconded and passed unanimously at 8:10 p.m.

Valerie A. Fench
Deputy City Clerk