

Symmes Advisory Committee Public Use Working Group Meeting Minutes, 1 October 2002 Symmes Hospital Conference Room

Members Attending: Harris Band, Greg Blass, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Steve Frigand, Ellen Kushner, Ann LeRoy, Suzi Lubar, Deborah O'Donnell, Brian Rehrig (Chair)

Also in Attendance: Alan McClennen (Director of Planning & Community Development), Carolyn Kenney

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM.

Meeting Minutes

Approval of the minutes of the previous two meetings of the Symmes Advisory Committee (SAC) Public Use Working Group was delayed until the Group's next meeting.

Workshop #3 Comments and Feedback

Brian Rehrig distributed a memo written by SAC Chair Charles Foskett to Ken Schwartz, Scott Schilt and the VHB team regarding the September 26th Symmes Community Workshop. Group members expressed concern over the general confusion and frustration of participants at the workshop, the lack of consensus and the inability of participants to answer the questions and agree on trade offs. Other criticisms were that the assimilation of the land use analysis matrix and conceptualization of the floor area ratios were difficult, there appeared to be a lingering lack of understanding of market conditions, and the logistics and physical conditions of the workshop were less than ideal (not enough time, difficulties with the auditorium acoustics, and break out groups that were too large and unevenly facilitated).

The graphic materials in the workshop presentation received several positive comments from Group members. The scale comparisons, site design development parcels and single & mixed use block out drawings were acknowledged to be productive and thought-provoking. There was a suggestion that it would have been useful to expand upon the scale comparisons. Positive comments were also voiced on the Working Group priorities lists.

Group members commented that many workshop participants emphasized medical uses, with some being intent on resurrecting a hospital at the site. Specific ideas raised by the working group members for the consultant team were to: 1) estimate the number of vehicle trips generated by the hospital during its peak years for the purpose of future comparison and, 2) determine how long it currently takes for emergency patients in Arlington to arrive at a hospital and compare with that of surrounding towns in order to ascertain how "at risk" we are by the lack of local emergency services.

Public Use Priorities Statement

Brian Rehrig distributed copies of the Public Use Working Group's Public Use Priorities Statement. A suggestion was made that there be a reference in the Community Center portion of the Statement to the influence of other uses on the site. The Group approved the document.

Community Center Discussion

Brian Rehrig distributed information on the Newton Jewish Community Center, Chapel Hill Homestead Park Aquatic/Community Center, Lake Oswego Aquatic/Community Center, and an article entitled "Joint-Use Agreements Pool Municipal, School Resources." Suzi Lubar, Ellen Kushner and Brian Rehrig reported on their investigations into aquatic/community centers. Both the Williamsburg, Virginia Community Center and the Newton JCC are 95% self-supporting and were constructed with funds raised through capital campaigns. Brian pointed out that the community center construction cost estimate from the VHB consultant team was between \$150 and \$200 per square foot. If this were the case, a facility the size of the Williamsburg would cost over \$10 million to build.

Fundraising options were raised by Group members, including grants, linkage, private gifts and a capital campaign. Concerns were raised that any discussion of subsidies for a community center would be received unfavorably by the town, given the current fiscal climate. Deb O'Donnell

volunteered to discuss general development strategy for Symmes with Susan Cronin Ruderman and Suzi Lubar volunteered to discuss Arlington's private gift potential with Susan Rudd.

Alan McClennen updated the group on the cost-cutting efforts of the town at the Symmes campus. Excluding the debt service, the cost of maintenance could be brought as low as about \$1,000 per day--or approximately \$350,000 per year. Alan suggested that since the projected yearly amount for maintenance was \$1.5 million, the town might be in a position to buy some time for the economy to improve. The community center's site could potentially be held for some period of time, while funds were raised for construction. Alan also pointed out that renting the North and East Wings of the existing facility could bring in as much as \$1.3 million per year.

The Working Group agreed that a basic architectural program and business plan for the community center must be developed, with provisions for the unknowns built in. Implementation strategy for the community center could be based on interim use of the existing buildings on the site. There was agreement that the goal should be to produce a credible plan that would consolidate the support of the community and produce a facility the town could be proud of.

Brian Rehrig asked group members to think about the future of the Public Use Working Group, pointing out that the development of a community center plan might be performed by a separate task group. Discussion of how to best divide the work was scheduled for the next meeting.

Brian asked which members would be interested in visiting the Oak Square YMCA in Brighton, saying that he would arrange an appointment for the Group to tour the facility. Brian announced that a meeting with John Farrell of the YMCA's of Greater Boston is also being planned. Group members suggested contacting the Arlington Recreation Department, the Boys and Girls Club, Fidelity House and the Arlington Children's Center to further evaluate the town's existing facilities before the next meeting.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Symmes Public Use Working Group was set for 7 PM on Tuesday, 15 October 2002 at Symmes.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Handouts

1 October 2002 Meeting Agenda, Memo from Charles Foskett to Ken Schwartz, Scott Schilt and the VHB team, Newton JCC information, Homestead Park Aquatic/Community Center information, Lake Oswego Aquatic/Community Center information, Public Use Priorities Statement, "Joint-Use Agreements Pool Municipal, School Resources" article.