

**Symmes Advisory Committee Public Use Working Group
Meeting Minutes, 12 November 2002
Symmes Hospital Conference Room**

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

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

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

Meeting Minutes

Elisabeth Carr-Jones presented the minutes of the 3 September and 22 October 2002 meetings of the Symmes Advisory Committee (SAC) Public Use Working Group (PUWG). The minutes were approved as submitted.

Site Planning Update

Brian Rehrig reported on the site planning presentation of the VHB consultant team at the SAC meeting on 7 November 2002. At this meeting VHB presented alternatives with varying use components which ranged in floor area from 350,000 to 600,000 square feet (the current buildings occupy 200,000 sf.). All four of the alternatives showed a skyline park and some type of community center, although the location of the community center varied. Working Group members expressed a preference for the community center location represented in alternative 3B, a site near the current nurse's building.

Brian reported that the SAC, ARB and members of the public questioned the consultant's financial model and requested more use variation and broader thinking about planning for the site at the meeting. Brian also reported that the Brattle Hill Neighborhood Association had presented a statement responding to the VHB site planning proposals, VHB team's financial analyst had been replaced with another member of the same firm, and a medical use consultant had been hired by the Town to assist with strategies for retaining medical uses at Symmes.

Open Space Issues

Ann LeRoyer was thanked for her letter on behalf of the Public Use Working Group and the Arlington Open Space Committee to the SAC, ARB and the VHB consultant team regarding the retention of existing open space on the Symmes site.

Postponement of Symmes Public Forum

Brian Rehrig announced that, due to the site planning not being in the anticipated state of development and to allow the newly-hired medical use consultant to participate in the planning process, the Symmes public forum scheduled for 3 December 2002 had been postponed.

Community Center Issues:

1) Report on 22 October PUWG Meeting and Memo to SAC

Copies of the PUWG Community Center Report of 11 November 2002 were distributed. Brian Rehrig gave an overview of the public use components of the VHB team's latest financial model. Meeting participants discussed the financial model's implications on the funding of public use projects at Symmes. It was agreed that the next step towards realizing a community center would be to develop a funding strategy and credible implementation plan. Group members made suggestions of various methods to advance this step: 1) the further development of the web site and data base of people interested in the project, 2) a winter lecture series on related community themes, 3) professional feasibility studies, 4) targeted community planning meetings, and 5) modification of the community center program.

There was a discussion of the merits of modifying the community center program agreed-upon at the 22 October PUWG meeting. Some participants felt that a YMCA/fitness model would not

provide sufficient inspiration for the people in Arlington to get the project off the ground; others felt that the fitness-related portions of the program would make the project financially viable and would facilitate medical uses at the site. Deborah O'Donnell and Julie Rackliffe Lucey distributed copies of a report prepared by the Coalition for a Treehouse at Symmes (CATS) which detailed an alternative "Indoor Open Space Concept" for the community center. This report was presented as a possible addendum to the PUWG Community Center Report.

2) Meetings with Greater Boston Y and Independent Consultants

Brian Rehrig reported that he had scheduled meetings with John Ferrell, the Executive Director of the Greater Boston YMCA and Willy Sclarsic, an independent consultant. These meetings will take place this coming Thursday at Symmes, with Alan McClennen, Charles Foskett, Suzi Lubar and Brian Rehrig attending.

3) Coordination & Input, Town Departments and Institutions

Copies were distributed of materials from Greg Blass and Julie Rackliffe Lucey on their conversations with Matt Dolan and Gwen Hooper of the Arlington Children's Center and Patsy Kraemer of the Arlington Department of Human Services. Copies were also distributed of local resource lists compiled by the PUWG and CATS.

4) Rhode Island Model of Playspace

Copies of contact information for the Kent County Branch YMCA in Warwick, Rhode Island were distributed. Brian Rehrig referred to this Y's playspace program as being similar to that proposed at the Symmes community center and requested that someone investigate it and report back to the Group. Ellen Kushner volunteered.

5) Research on Rehab Component

Brian Rehrig asked for a volunteer to begin peripheral research on the interest of local rehabilitation centers in the facilities of a community center at Symmes. Deb O'Donnell volunteered to look into HealthPoint in Waltham. Ellen Kushner pointed out that the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital's satellite facility in Medford might benefit from moving to the Symmes site; she volunteered to e-mail members of the Medical Use Working Group with this information.

6) Outreach: Public Involvement, Leadership, Financial Support

The Working Group members agreed that: 1) more people will be needed to move forward with the community center concept, 2) a grounded hypothetical plan for funding and an implementation timetable for the community center is needed before the February/March Town Meeting and 3) a leap of faith may be required for any public use projects to be realized in the current economic climate.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Symmes Public Use Working Group was set for 7 PM on Tuesday, 3 December 2002 at Symmes.