

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

MARCH 11, 1996

PRESENT

G. Daley, Chair
J. Milardo
J. Vinci
R. Santangelo

ABSENT

S. Shapiro

ALSO PRESENT

W. Kuehn, Staff
C. Wilcox, Staff
W. Daley, Courant
G. Weitzman, Armory Project
R. Szczypek, Tai Soo Kim
H. deYoung, Tai Soo Kim
C. Gill, Arts & Culture
25 members of the public
(see attached sign up list)

G. Daley called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. in Room 208 of the Municipal Building.

Public Forum - Earle Roberts spoke to item f. 4 on the Agenda, appraisal services for the Shuck's Gasoline property on South Main Street. G. Daley noted that this was a request to repay the Mayor's Contingency Fund from the Economic Development Fund for these appraisal services. E. Roberts questioned the expense of public tax dollars to appraise this property. G. Daley said it was necessary because the City wants a fair market value upon its sale. Chairman asked if anyone from the public wished to speak to the Committee on any item other than the Armory. (They will have a chance to speak to the Armory issue during the presentation.)

There being no response the public forum closed.

Minutes - Upon a motion by R. Santangelo, seconded by J. Milardo the Minutes of February 13, 1996 were accepted as written with the abstention of J. Vinci.

Communication - The Committee received a letter from Attorney Karpel which will be handled under the North End Industrial Area Agenda item.

Armory Presentation - Ryszard Szczypek on behalf of the Armory Board gave the presentation, and passed out a preliminary planning report. He noted that his firm, Tai Soo Kim Partners, had been hired by the Armory Board and started their work six to eight months ago. They did the building measurements last summer and consulted with over thirteen offices, organizations, and/or experts the list of which is on page two of the preliminary report. He discussed the location of the Armory in terms of its context with other buildings and properties; and pointed out that the Armory, itself, is comprised of three parts, all of which are historic. They had used the expertise of Roger Clarke, preservation architect; and met on January 11th with City staff regarding the immediate needs of the building. The historic nature needs attention soon, since there are problems with the roof, with drainage and general deterioration of the historic detail. From a Planning & Zoning point of view the building sits very tightly on its site; however parking will not be a problem. As far as traffic, the Building Department, and the Department of Public Works no insurmountable problems were found.

On January 18th, Tai Soo Kim met with users in the arts sector and services. There was a strong reaction from that sector to the original plans to the effect that the stage was too small, the back stage was too small, the seating was too small; and the architects were challenged by the desire of the arts community for a 1,000-seat theater, or a space large enough to accommodate a banquet of 300 people. (They now show banquet seating of 314, with no dance floor, or 260 with a stage.) Following that, they received reports from their consultants. Their structural engineers reported that the floor currently holds eighty pounds per square foot and needs to be reinforced to hold one hundred pounds per square foot. This can be done. Their environmental engineers tested the soil in the motor pool for paint and asbestos. They found no asbestos, however, the soil has low levels of petroleum which can be addressed at no extra cost. Lead based paint does need abatement throughout the building; and its removal is estimated at \$35,000. Mr. Szczypek went on to present a layout to satisfy the programs as proposed in a phased renovation. In the preliminary report, and on his charts Phase IA is accented in blue. This phase includes, on the lower level, the front and very rear sections of the basement of the drill shed. On the main level, all of the drill shed, except for the curved stage; and on the upper level, only the stairways and the mechanical space over the stage area of the drill shed. Renovation of the two houses in the front are not part of Phase IA. He went on to describe the proposed drill shed itself. On the main level, one first enters an open entryway to the lower level which has bathrooms and a gallery, etc. The main floor, itself, will have a curved stage, in back of which are a small kitchen, dressing rooms, elevators and bathrooms for performers. Phase IA shows the option of *no* stage at first. The lobby will also have elevators, ticket booth and stairwells. For the houses in front, they suggest that one might be a pub or sandwich shop or other such supporting business for Armory performances. The upper level of the north house is suggested for either performance space or dining, since that is also quite open. There were no suggestions or the use of the south house as yet. On the second floor of the drill shed, the plan is to tear out the mezzanine and to put in operations machinery and offices. At the far end of the second level, above the stage, will be the mechanicals. On the lower level of the drill shed, the proposal includes: gallery space, elevator, public toilets, boiler room, two rehearsal rooms, a workshop for making sets, a costume room, a full catering kitchen, a freight elevator, leasing space for arts incubator space, a conference room, audio visual storage, arts group storage, a dark room, and other auxiliary spaces for the arts. Phase IA includes a portion of this, but not all of it.

Mr. Szczypek indicated that the last two pages of the preliminary report were the financial proformas; and that Phase IA is estimated to cost \$1,250,000. Sources of income would be banquets and film series, among others. Questions from the Committee followed. G. Daley asked about the operating deficits. J. Milardo asked about the need for a fly space over the stage, which the architects suggested may not be economically feasible, and G. Daley questioned where the veterans lobby might be. Mr. Szczypek said that there will also be a museum for veterans memorabilia. There was considerable discussion from the many people in the audience representing the veterans and from Mr. Weitzman, who reiterated his guarantee that there will be meeting and gallery space for the vets. G. Daley agreed, and C. Gill commended the plans, as presented, noting that they reflect clearly the input of the arts organizations; and praised Mr. Weitzman and Tai Soo Kim Partners for their attention to these details. More discussion ensued from the public about such items as the

Armory, Inc.'s

501(c)(3) tax exempt status, notification of the veterans when this item comes before the Economic Development Committee again, coverage of the veterans' interests in the documents which will transfer the property, and whether mechanisms are in place for the City to be represented on the Board if it is to participate in the financial support of this project. These were followed by comments from the Committee who were generally pleased with the plans to make the Armory a magnet for the downtown where people can come and participate in cultural civic minded activities. G. Weitzman thanked the Committee and acknowledged his Board members who were there. G. Daley called a two minute recess.

EDC readjourned at 8:47 p.m. and deferred the St. Sebastian's Convent to the end of the Agenda.

Economic Development Fund Status Report - W. Kuehn noted that the report was for the information of the Committee members, and handed out a summary of REINVEST loans. He noted that the back page shows that there are more requests than money available. "In Good Taste" is paid back in full for appraisal services.

Appraisal Services - As mentioned earlier, this item is to reimburse the Mayor's Contingency Fund for appraisal services for the property where Shuck's service station is. The party is interested in acquiring the land plus improvements, and it may save the City some costs. There is a need to fix a proper value, so that the City can make a counter offer. A motion was made by R. Santangelo, seconded by J. Milardo and voted unanimously to reimburse the Mayor's Contingency Fund. J. Milardo questions why the money should come from the Economic Development Fund, however, G. Daley answered that the lease and the sale goes back to the Economic Development Fund so that is the logical source.

North End Industrial Area - G. Daley commented on the recent history on the former Meech & Stoddard property. He noted that Mr. Sweet and Rock acquired the property in the midst of the North End Industrial Area plan approval. They are expected to have a plan for their property which should conform to the N.E.I.A. plan. G. Daley and W. Kuehn met with them and found that they have a lease for the larger building, and are studying whether the other building has any potential. They want to come to the Economic Development Committee in April. The appearance of the property has deteriorated, mainly because of a court order for the tenant to vacate. He moved his junk onto public property, and now the police are involved with assuring its removal. The tenant had until last Friday to remove his vehicles and junk. The police will haul all of the vehicles away and charge the former tenant if he does not remove them himself. Structural report is due this Friday on the north building and the City reserves the right to condemn it. R. Santangelo asked about exterior work, and wanted to see some considerable improvement to the facades. Richard Bergan addressed the Committee noting that he is across the street and has to look at this deplorable landscape every day. He commented that he and other business owners in the area are getting fed up; and urged the Committee to get the North End Industrial Area plan moving. He expected to be looking across the street at brand new buildings when he bought his property. It was meant to be the "gateway to the

North End". He commented that he keeps his buildings neat, and does not want the price of this

property to go down. G. Daley responded that he totally understood Mr. Bergan's position, that the Committee would give Mr. Sweet and his people a chance- but not for long. Mr. Bergan replied that he has the backing of other business people there who want to see this property cleaned up and working. He, himself, put upgrades into his property every month. The CSO project is another unsightly situation; however, it is ahead of schedule, and J. Vinci reported that it should finish up this summer.

Goals: W. Kuehn commented that these were in the packet for the information of the Committee, which, in turn, decided it would like to discuss these at a future meeting.

St. Sebastian's Convent - C. Wilcox reported that there had been no "takers" as of Thursday afternoon. There is still one entity, if given an extension, which may have a proposal in one month. The Committee responded that June 1st is an absolute "drop dead" date and that it is willing to be patient - but only to a point. They set the date of March 31st for responses to the RFP.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Cynthia G. Wilcox

CGW/sh

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