



Richland County Council

CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM AD HOC COMMITTEE

February 6, 2018 – 3:00 PM

4th Floor Conference Room

2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Livingston, Chair; Greg Pearce, Dalhi Myers, and Calvin “Chip” Jackson

OTHERS PRESENT: Yvonne McBride, Bill Malinowski, Gwen Kennedy, Nancy Stone-Collum, and Michelle Onley

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Mr. Livingston called the meeting to order at approximately 3:00 PM.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - a. November 16, 2017 - Mr. Pearce moved, seconded by Mr. C. Jackson, to approve the minutes as distributed. The vote in favor was unanimous.
3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
4. **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**
 - a. **Construction Budget Overview** – Ms. Mary Skinner-Jones stated they had another assessment done on the building on December 16, 2017. The costs has gone up by approximately \$300,000 from the original estimate. The total construction cost is \$5,336,891. The Renaissance Foundation will be able to bring \$2,355,000 to table from the available tax credits. They were knocked out of the New Mark Tax Credits because of the census track change. The request to the County is \$1.5 Million. The City is also being requested to provide \$1.5 Million.

Mr. Pearce inquired as to what HTC Expenses were.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated those the Historic Tax Credit expenses are for specialists to assist with the preparation of the tax credits.
 - b. **Preconstruction Cost** – Ms. Skinner-Jones stated they will need a Director approximately a year before opening to collect artifacts and documents for the building. The preconstruction cost is \$333,860 and a breakdown of cost is available if requested.
 - c. **Project Pro Forma** – Ms. Skinner-Jones stated the pro forma was very conservative. She stated she talked with Aundrai Holloman at the Township, as well as a representative with the Koger Center, to determine what should be charged. Most of the individuals in the art community that would be utilizing the building are non-profits.

The idea of utilizing the Township’s staff has been bounced around.

- d. Projections and Potential Utilization** – In the first year the plan is to do 6 small events and the potential for the art community to use the facility at least 24 times. The pro forma looked at 5 years (contributions, corporations, memberships, and individuals). Hospitality Tax, State government and Federal government was also looked into.

Mr. Pearce inquired if the Hospitality Tax utilization would be from the County and the City.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated it would be both.

Mr. Pearce stated one of his concern is that in year 5 the County and City's contribution is \$1 Million.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated these are only projections. It is her belief that when the facility is completed it will generate more funds than anticipated. The museum in Washington, DC has encouraged other smaller museums, especially in the Southeast region. Additionally, there are trips to visit all of the civil rights sites that begins in Chicago and comes all the way South, which they plan to participate in. She further stated, in 2015, they participated in the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement and the mayor of Birmingham, Alabama came here.

The Foundation should do their own fundraising efforts and not depend solely on the City or County. There are grants in the Art Education and Ancient History program.

Mr. Pearce expressed concern since the County has a history of supporting endeavors wherein the operating plan was not thought out. For example, when EdVenture Children's Museum was built they did not plan very well on how to operate it and 12 years later they are still in significant financial trouble.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated there has been an uptick in heritage and cultural tourism. When they started the project they visited black and white cultural art centers across the country to see how they were set up. One of the things that was found was the product: What kind of product do you have? How will you sell the product? If you are the only civil rights museum in the State of South Carolina you have a unique product.

- e. Partnerships and Collaborations** – The plan is to implement a national 1921 Program, which is the year the building was constructed, that will honor Judge Ernest A. Finney. The goal is reach 100,000 people and bring in \$2 Million. Simultaneously with this, they will be working on generating additional funds. They are in the process of negotiating to have some events to bring artists here. In addition, they have been in discussions with Community Bank across the street from the building, which was started in 1921.

The Renaissance Foundation is working with USC since they do not have the capacity to handle the documents and the USC Civil Rights Library does. In addition, they have been working with Historic Columbia.

- f. Discussion/Questions** – Mr. Pearce stated for clarification that when the building is completed the sanctuary will be converted into an auditorium.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated the auditorium will seat 500-600 people. She provided letters of support she has received from the art community, the City, the County, and the churches over the years. Senator Lindsey Graham tried to get an appropriation, but was not successful. He is still very supportive of the project.

Mr. Pearce inquired about the square footage of the museum.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated there will be a permanent exhibition of the AME Church's History. They will also have the United Black Hall of Fame inductees. This is an ecumenical project; therefore, churches on a rotating basis will have an opportunity to exhibit their artifacts and documents.

Mr. Pearce inquired if there will be significant space in the building to accommodate the "welcome center" for the Historic Trail in the Renaissance Plan.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated the "Green Book" was started in approximately 1936 and listed safe haven places where African-Americans could come South and visit. Historic Bethel was one of the places listed and it has been suggested that it serve as the "anchor" where people could pick information and go out and visit other sites.

There has been discussions with the SC Dept. of Archives and History to allow cursory history research at Historic Bethel and to then direct persons to the archives for more in depth research.

In addition, there have been discussions with Newberry Opera House and the Harvey B. Gantt Center in Charlotte about cluster entertainment in the area.

Mr. Malinowski stated the letters provided are 10 – 15 years old.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated the reason she brought the letter was to show there was support and that she does not feel the Foundation did a good job of putting it out that there was support.

Mr. C. Jackson inquired about how much funding the County has committed/provided to this effort in last year's and/or this year's budget.

Mr. Livingston stated none, but there is \$1.5 million set aside.

Mr. C. Jackson stated he feels it would be helpful if the preconstruction dollars were raised by private donations and contributions. If the Renaissance Foundation were able to generate the \$333,000, which is about 6%, that would go a long way in terms of getting people excited and enthusiastic about making a contribution. He also would like to know what the City of Columbia's commitment is and is intact. Mr. C. Jackson further stated the plan is wonderful, the concept is great, the educational benefit is there for us to be able to have something unique, and the value is there for the facility to be able to do small concerts. The question is, how do we then move from this concept to actually having funds available to begin the project? He does not feel he has learned a lot of new information at today's meeting except that the costs have gone up a little bit. In terms of how it is going to be funded and financed, and projection for when, he knows you cannot request the federal tax credits anytime you want to. There is a cycle and schedule.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated Mr. C. Jackson is referring to the New Market Tax Credits, which they no longer qualify for because they only fund projects in depressed communities. The New Market Tax Credits would have been \$2.6 Million and they would have had enough to finish the building. The tax credits they are able to pull down are secure tax credits, which the bank buys. In addition, they will receive the SC Abandoned Building Tax Credit.

Mr. C. Jackson stated whatever level of commitment exists now, in terms of being able to access these funds, we should begin a process of accessing the funds.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated you cannot access these funds until all the funds are in place. The Foundation would provide the \$2.4 Million. The request is for the County and City to contribute \$1.5

Million, respectfully. This will equate to the total construction costs of \$5.3 Million. Additionally, the Foundation would bring in the \$333,860 in preconstruction cost funding from the private sector.

Mr. C. Jackson inquired at what point do we begin the process of saying here is the real money on the table and we are ready to begin the work. He stated he assumes an architect has designed...

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated the project is stick ready. The design is done. There has to be a Part I and a Part II application, which has to be approved by the Federal government. They did that years ago.

Mr. C. Jackson inquired as to what is holding up the process.

Mr. Livingston stated if the City and County commits their \$1.5 Million, respectfully. The Foundation could sign on the tax credits immediately.

Mr. C. Jackson stated he has been on Council for a year and it is his belief the County made a commitment last year.

Mr. Livingston stated the funding was set aside.

Ms. McBride stated the funding is there for this project.

Mr. Livingston stated we need to go back and look at the exact language.

Ms. McBride stated there were a lot of questions about this and it was said this is for the Civil Rights Museum.

Mr. Livingston suggested to go back and confirm the funding, contingent upon the tax credits and the City of Columbia.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated she cannot pull down the tax credits without the \$1.5 Million in funding from the County.

Mr. Livingston stated what he is saying if the City does not agree then the tax credit funding cannot be pulled down either. His suggestion is for the County to agree contingent upon the City agreeing to the funding plan. Once the County and City agree then the tax credit funding can be pulled down.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated her frustration is when she goes to the State they always inquired about what the City and County is doing.

Ms. Kennedy inquired as to who owns Historic Bethel.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated the Renaissance Foundation has a 99-year lease. At the end of the 99-year lease they have an opportunity to renew for an additional 99 years. In essence, they own the church for the next 200 years.

Ms. Myers stated Ms. Skinner-Jones has not mentioned the Charleston International African-American History Museum, which sees themselves as the hub.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated they have meet with Mayor Riley twice. Charleston's museum is focused on slavery and culture. The Renaissance Foundation's museum is focused on the civil rights era. Charleston and the Foundation have committed to market both of the museums because they are different.

Mr. Livingston stated we are talking about something for the County. There are some communities that are not fortunate enough to have a foundation to try to get it going. There are counties that do the whole thing on their own. At least we have someone at the table trying to make it work for us.

Ms. McBride stated she believes Ms. Skinner-Jones has done an excellent job, especially since it has been done on a voluntary basis. It is difficult to get out into the 2nd part of the plan without some type of other support. She suggested the County provide planning money for the next phase.

Mr. Malinowski stated Ms. Skinner-Jones provided a list of formal/informal partnerships. He requested Ms. Skinner-Jones and Mr. Coble attempt to secure commitments from those persons.

Ms. Skinner-Jones stated she has been fortunate to have individuals all over the country assisting her. Her godson assisted with rebranding the project, but it needs to be marketed. The Foundation wants to go national with the 1921 Program. The project is in need of a curator to assist Dr. Donaldson at USC.

The building itself cannot be renamed because it is a historical site. We can offer naming rights to rooms inside the building.

Mr. Livingston stated he has spoken with Dr. Donaldson and Robin Waites with Historic Columbia. Ms. Waites is extremely supportive of this endeavor. The Conservation Commission also would like to work with the Foundation on this project. He stated now is the time, if we are going to try to do something. We can add on later on, but unless we get started we are not going to get anything done. He is afraid if the effort dies the likelihood of someone else picking it up is not going to be that great.

Mr. Livingston stated the committee needs to move forward to clarify the fact we support the \$1.5 Million toward this particular project, so Ms. Skinner-Jones can move on and say she has a commitment from the County.

Ms. Kennedy commended Ms. Skinner-Jones on her work and stated it is something that has been long overlooked.

Mr. Pearce moved, seconded by Ms. Myers, to request Council to affirm its support of the \$1.5 Million, as shown in the budget. The vote in favor was unanimous.

Mr. Livingston requested Ms. Skinner-Jones to follow-up on a means to work toward start-up funding to keep the initiative going.

Mr. Malinowski stated there were some questions in the minutes from the last meeting that were not addressed. He requested those questioned be answered prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Livingston requested Council members to forward their questions to him.

Mr. C. Jackson stated the main question he has is there be a plan or strategy for raising money. How much that would be? Is there a target goal for the amount?

5. **ADJOURNMENT** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:51 PM.