



Richland County Council

COURTHOUSE AD HOC COMMITTEE
October 23, 2017 – 1:00 PM
4th Floor Conference Room
2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29202

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Seth Rose, Chair; Joyce Dickerson, Greg Pearce, Paul Livingston, and Dalhi Myers

OTHERS PRESENT: Michelle Onley, Chad Fosnight, Sandra Yudice, Jamelle Ellis, Gerald Seals, and Brandon Madden

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Mr. Rose called the meeting to order at approximately 1:01 PM.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

September 18, 2017 – Mr. Livingston moved, seconded by Mr. Pearce, to approve the minutes as distributed. The vote in favor was unanimous.

3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA** – Mr. Pearce moved, seconded by Mr. Livingston, to adopt the agenda as published. The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **OVERVIEW OF SEPTMBER AD HOC COMMITTEE MEETING** – Ms. Amy Stein stated MGA Partners Architects have been hired for a facility needs assessment of the existing Judicial Center at 1701 Main Street. Basically, MGA has been brought in to assist Council on what to do for the long-term. Ms. Stein stated she and Mr. Kelly have been planning courthouses for over 20 years. The closest courthouse they built is located in Lynchburg, Virginia. The study is drawing to a close.

- Began with an evaluation of the existing courthouse
- Developed a comprehensive program of space needs (courtrooms, chamber, offices)
- Space needs for long-term/short-term
- Presented alternatives to the ad hoc committee
- Ad Hoc committee selected an alternative to move forward with
- 2 Options were investigated: (1) Addition to the existing judicial center, which would be a 13 story annex to the building; and (2) new judicial center located at 2020 Hampton Street

5. **DESIGN DEVELOPMENT FOR A JUDICIAL CENTER**

Ms. Stein stated the developed options for the selected alternative are ready for review. The budgets for the options are also ready for review. MGA Partners will make a final report upon their return to Philadelphia.

The following were cited as reasons 2020 Hampton is a viable option for the construction of a new judicial center:

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- 2020 Hampton Street is a part of the County’s Master Plan to relocate all of the offices located at the site today
- 9 Acre site with parking garage which holds 540 cars
- Historic District; Allen University and Benedict College located nearby
- Central to the City
- There are zoning restrictions: cannot be a high rise due to proximity to Owens Airport.

Mr. Pearce questioned the FAA governing the airspace at 2020 Hampton Street.

Ms. Stein stated there is height restrictions, which means we would have to speak to the Airport to ensure a taller building would be permissible.

a. Option 2A

- Includes a new courthouse and an office building across the street
- Both would house judicial and court-related functions, but would be viewed as a campus
- Potentially built by developer and leased by County
- Various budget models to present to Council
- Office Building would house the Solicitor’s Office, Public Defender’s Office, DJJ, CASA, Register of Deeds, and SisterCare
- Allows for expansion
- 200,000 Square Feet – Courthouse (50% Expansion)
- 110,000 Square Feet – Office Building
- 17 Courtrooms
- Addition of Video Courtroom
- 8 Jury Suites
- 18 Chambers; 4 Visiting Chambers
- Over 1,000 parking spaces; 540 spaces in the employee parking garage
- Potentially lease present ambulance parking to attorneys
- Judge’s parking would be below the building
- Separate elevators for judges and inmates
- Both buildings are L-Shaped
- Garden located between parking garage and courthouse
- Public entrance will be on Harden Street
- Ceremonial Courtroom can be utilized for large scale criminal trials and appointment of judges
- Joint Use Conference Room overlooks the Courthouse
- Proposed holding cells will have no windows due to the way the site slopes
- Sheriff’s vehicles will be able to drive directly into the “Sally Port” and the detainees will be escorted via elevator to the courtrooms.
- Attorneys will be able to meet with their clients in interviews room near the holding cells.
- Café for staff and potentially general public

Ms. Dickerson inquired if the County currently owns the property the proposed office building is located on.

Ms. Stein stated the proposal is to purchase 9 – 10 parcels and have a developer build the office building.

Mr. Seals stated most of the businesses located on the proposed site have expressed an interest, but the County is trying to stay quiet until after the plan is brought to Council.

Mr. Pearce stated the County would own the land and either do a lease back or lease buy back.

Ms. Myers and Ms. McBride expressed concern with the proposed holding cells not having windows. Ms. Myers requested exploring other option for the holding cells.

Mr. Pearce suggested constructing a covered walkway for the employees.

Ms. Stein outlined a “Court Set” for the committee:

- Between the 2 courtrooms is attorney/client conference room.
- Courtroom Technology – Addition of screens in courtroom
- Potentially benches located overlooking the courtyard/garden for public
- 2 entrances into courtroom for judicial staff and judge
- Restrooms for court staff
- Closets for exhibits and AV equipment
- Holding cells for detainees

b. Option 2B – Demonstrates building out additional space:

- Addition of 6 courtrooms
- 250,000 Square Feet - Courthouse
- 130,000 Square Feet – Office Building
- Same programs would be housed in the buildings as Option 2A

Ms. Myers inquired if the Sheriff’s Department had raised any concerns about security at the public entrances to the building (i.e. concrete barricades, etc.)

Mr. Kelley stated they have not gotten to that level.

6. **AMERICAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

- **Their importance and design presence** – Mr. Dan Kelley stated a courthouse should be comfortable and welcoming for the taxpayers to enter. Mr. Kelley then gave an overview of courthouses over time and their various architectural styles.

Mr. Kelley stated this is a big investment for the County. The citizens will be better served by a better building and at the same time it is an opportunity for the Council to make something powerful and strong.

Ms. Dickerson stated she did not know why they had to show the present courthouse’s bad side.

Mr. Kelley stated it did so to make a point as to why the County is unhappy with the building. The urbanism of the backside of the courthouse is foreign. Citizens cannot come up to the backside of the building and use it. The courthouse is not approachable from all directions and does not support itself as a community building.

7. **SOUTH CAROLINA COUNTY COURTHOUSE PRECEDENTS** – Ms. Stein gave an overview of the SC courthouse precedents.

8. **JUDICIAL CENTER'S RELATIONSHIP TO RICHLAND COUNTY'S MASTERPLAN** – Ms. Stein stated that two of the building included in the “Richland Renaissance” are the ones that they are currently looking at. (i.e. current Judicial Center and 2020 Hampton Street).

Mr. Seals stated the plan is to look at all the blighted and revive those. Also included is an identification for Richland County. For example, entrance strategies, demarcation and identification of the County. Richland County is interesting in that it has several different types of entrances. There is the interstate, rural roads, water elements, and airports.

Ms. Stein stated the first thing that needs to be done to implement the projects is to complete studies of them. Then Council and community members’ at-large need to approve the master plan. We see the projects as a series of parallel events. Thirdly, the County will need to secure financing. At that point, the 2 larger scale projects, Columbia Mall and the new judicial campus, could start to work concurrently. Step four of the master plan will be the purchase of the land for both projects. Building a new judicial campus depends on an adequate relocation for the employees at 2020 Hampton Street; therefore, the first project needs to be the purchase of Columbia Mall to house County services/offices. Once completed, the employees would move into the Columbia Mall facility and free up 2020 Hampton Street for the judicial center campus. The proposal would be to package the demolition of the building, site preparation and selection of a contractor to construct the campus.

Once the new judicial center is completed, 1701 Main Street (existing courthouse) could be put on the market.

There are an additional 2 projects: the Start Center and the Lower Richland Center. Those projects could be done in parallel. Those could begin at any time.

Ms. Dickerson stated if she does not see the Start Center she will not be able to support the plan.

Mr. Seals stated the master plan occurs within a 3 ½ - 4 year time span. The Start Center can be done concurrently. The Start Center is where business can be incubated and started.

Mr. Rose inquired if the Start Center was going to be at Dutch Square.

Mr. Seals stated it will be located in the Dutch Square area.

The Lower Richland Center will include a range of services: (1) an aquatic center, which will allow for competitive competition; (2) magistrate; (3) library, (4) Critical Care; and (5) Sheriff.

Ms. McBride stated not to take anything away from the Start Center or Lower Richland Center, but the focus should be on Columbia Mall and begin building.

Mr. Seals stated they will be talking to Council in Executive Session regarding a land acquisition. He further stated he believes they have achieved the square footage needed to move forward.

Ms. McBride inquired if the judicial center could be constructed within 5 years.

Ms. Stein stated the schedule depends on when Columbia Mall is completed and the employees from 2020 Hampton Street are moved, but 5 years is achievable.

Mr. Seals stated this is intentionally legacy. Council has basically got to say this is your signature project and this begins to establish and shape your leadership for the County. It sets the tone for a long time, particularly as the County grows. If you remember in the biennium budget, attached were a variety of

things that Council talked about. For example, how do you begin to look at, present and celebrate the historic legacy with the special libraries, pocket parks, and beautification of the County,

Mr. Rose stated at one time the County was exploring co-locating offices with the City. The idea was if a citizen had an issue with City and/or County the staff member could direct them across the hall. He further stated he is not sure about relocating 2020 Hampton Street to Columbia Mall. He suggested the possibility of moving the employees from 2020 Hampton Street to the existing courthouse.

Ms. Stein stated the courthouse is the same size as 2020 Hampton Street.

Ms. Myers stated there were currently space issues at 2020 Hampton Street, so she does not know how that would solve the issue.

Mr. Seals stated the County is not only responsible for providing space County employees, but for the Health Department, DSS, etc. To adequately deal with the space issues we need at least 325,000 square feet.

Mr. Livingston stated there was a letter from the Mayor talking about the probability of a land swap or looking an opportunity to partner and work together on this.

Ms. Myers stated the Mayor would be interested in talking about any ways to collaborate.

Mr. Seals stated the challenge presented to him was how to provide for a judicial center and was it possible. He stated it is possible, but there are some limitations. One of which is that you have to have adequate space. The current courthouse site is 2 ½ acres and it is crunched; therefore, you have to have land. And if you want it to stay in downtown, you have to find a place where there is 8 – 9 acres of land. Otherwise, you are talking about moving it out of downtown, which I understand you do not want to do. Other than 2020 Hampton Street, if there is a 9 acre site in downtown it is further away, which causes a whole host of problems in terms of the legal and judicial community to be served and stay strategically and logistically congregated to do the things that it is doing now. Finding such a land mass is going to take your costs up because you will have to take buildings down, etc. You are not just buying land, you are also purchasing land that is generating income and they are going to price it accordingly.

Mr. Livingston inquired if the 8 – 9 acres is just for the courthouse.

Ms. Stein stated there is 9 acres on the 2020 Hampton site and 3 acres across the street. We are using 12 acres and we have to park over 1,000 cars (500 car garage and 500 surface spots).

Mr. Pearce inquired about how many cars the garage will currently hold.

Ms. Stein stated the garage can hold up to 540 cars.

Mr. Livingston stated they had a difficult time building this building. The thing they had the biggest fight about was the garage and if we choose this plan, that will be the only thing left.

Ms. Myers stated if the concern is some kind of collaboration with the City we clearly cannot accommodate the County's needs by co-locating with the City. Obviously we started out too small and then putting all of us together there is no space that accommodates it. But what about the same concept of a landing pad for the County in a City building.

Mr. Seals stated all of those things can be done.

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Ms. Myers stated she is inquiring if that means some of the concerns...

Mr. Livingston stated he is one that looks at all options. It may not be possible and he wants to find out what the Mayor is talking about. It may be something that is irrelevant and not possible, but he does not want to make a decision until he finds out what it is about.

Ms. Myers stated she thinks the City wants the County to give them the building or swap them for something else. And she feels that would be a big away. She feels like it needs to be put on the tax rolls and receive revenue from it.

Mr. Pearce stated he does not think talking to the Mayor precludes moving forward with everything else. He feels like we need to give him the courtesy of chatting.

Ms. Dickerson stated she was in favor of meeting with the Mayor and the sooner the better.

Mr. Seals stated his assignment was to see if there is a way to make it happen. And the answer to that is yes. We had a challenge in the sense that Council is visually oriented. Part of what we needed to do was to make sure we showed you visually what could be done. What we have been able to do with MGA is to show you that it is possible. Now the question becomes, at some point, you have to do final design. You are going to have to take the vision and start putting meat on the bones.

Mr. Seals stated he will provide that within 10 days. Once MGA does their final report, Mr. Seals will provide a report on where we are with regard to the properties. Then he will basically be done.

Ms. McBride stated she is glad to see a comprehensive approach with a master plan and not a hodgepodge of buildings.

Mr. Pearce stated conceptually the plan works. He still wants and needs to see the hard numbers. He stated we would have land acquisition, construction costs, and at least 2 projects going on at the same time. Additionally, you would not want to go through with finite design unless you were absolutely sure, but surely we can get some numbers.

9. **JUDICIAL CENTER BUDGET** – A nationally recognized cost estimator adjusted the numbers of other Southern courthouses to Richland County and the year of expected construction. The cost estimator came up with benchmarks (i.e. the amount of dollars expected to be spent on a courthouse on a per square foot basis). They used the number of \$350/sq. ft.

Ms. Stein stated courthouses are expensive. The County needs a range of options based on the size. There were 3 options presented. Option 2A allows for 50% growth and is what the consultants are recommending for the County.

Option 2A = \$85 million to construct building. Other costs associated with this option are purchase of sites, fees, furniture, etc. Total cost of project = \$104 million with the office building being leased. If the County would like to own both buildings the costs would be approximately \$144 million.

Mr. Livingston inquired if this option included the purchase of land.

Ms. Stein stated it does not include land on a new site. It includes the purchase of the property across the street from 2020 Hampton Street. If the County chooses somewhere else they will have purchase land.

Mr. Pearce inquired if it will cost \$10 million to purchase the property across the street from 2020 Hampton Street.

Ms. Stein stated \$10 million is primarily to renovate the land, which would include demolition of 2020 Hampton, prep the site, bring in utilities, and bring in fill to grade the site, etc.

Ms. Stein stated Option 2B is to build out for the long-term future and contains shell space, which is not what is being recommended. It is harder for the public to swallow building something and leaving empty space for 20 – 30 years.

Mr. Pearce stated the \$10.6 million on site does not sit well with him.

Mr. Seals stated he was provided with details and he will forward those to Mr. Pearce for review. He reminded the committee that the recommendation is to go underground.

Mr. Pearce inquired if we know we can go underground.

Mr. Seals stated we are reasonably sure. We are ready to go and get that done.

Ms. Stein stated the building across the street will be less expensive because it is an office building and does not have to be \$350/sq. ft.

Mr. Seals stated one option was to not do the building across the street and do everything on site, which can be done. However, it will cost \$350/sq. ft. for everything, including the office locations and do we need to do that.

Mr. Seals stated the cost for the office space is \$290/sq. ft., which saves \$60/sq. ft.

10. **EXPANSION OF THE EXISTING JUDICIAL CENTER**

11. **NEXT STEPS** – Mr. Livingston stated he wants to proceed with meeting with the Mayor.

Mr. Rose stated staff can reach out to the Mayor and Mr. Seals can work on the numbers prior to the next meeting.

Ms. Dickerson stated the committee needs to speak with the Mayor as a whole.

Mr. Pearce stated since we are no longer just talking about the courthouse, but the Renaissance plan, the next meeting full Council should be invited.

Mr. Rose stated he sees where this is tied into a much larger thing. He feels like supporting the courthouse is dovetailing into something much larger and much more expensive; therefore, that gives him pause to digest everything.

Ms. Dickerson suggested discussing this in more detail at the Priority Setting sessions.

12. **ADJOURNMENT** – The committee adjourned at 2:45 p.m.