

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING REVIEW COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 17, 2014

Session 14-06 a Regular Meeting of the Public Safety Building Review Committee was called to order by Chair Ken Castner at 5:32 p.m. on June 17, 2014 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: COMMITTEE MEMBERS ROBL, MIOTKE, CRANE, CASTNER AND WYTHER

ABSENT: COMMITTEE MEMBER PAINTER (EXCUSED)

STAFF: CAREY MEYER, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR
DAN NELSEN, PROJECT MANAGER
RENEE KRAUSE, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

DESIGN: USKH - DALE SMYTHE, PROJECT MANAGER
MEREDITH NOBLE, PUBLIC RELATIONS/FUNDING
SARAH

AGENDA APPROVAL

The agenda was approved by consensus of the committee.

APPROVAL OF SYNOPSIS

A. Synopsis for May 22, 2014 Regular Meeting

Chair Castner requested a motion to approve the synopsis of May 22, 2014.

WYTHER/ROBL – SO MOVED.

The synopsis for the May 22, 2014 meeting was approved by consensus of the committee.

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORTS

There were no reports.

Before opening the Public Hearing Chair Castner stated for clarity of the record the purpose of the project and the tasks appointed the committee.

PUBLIC HEARING

A. Proposed Building Site Selections

Chair Castner opened the Public Hearing for public comments.

There were ten who testified against using the Homer Educational and Recreation Center (HERC) site as the future Police and Fire Department Complex. There were six written statements received from the public against using the HERC site.

Chair Castner closed the public hearing.

Chair Castner provided a brief identification and background of each committee member. He additionally provided assurance that there was no hard and fast decision on which location would be

selected. The committee will be discussing in depth each potential site and will be making a recommendation to Council. He stated that at the end of the meeting the committee members may address some of the questions that were posed by the public and invited the public to attend the remainder of the meeting.

PENDING BUSINESS

A. Proposed Building Site Selections

Chair Castner asked the committee where they would like to start. It was noted that the draft site selection criteria was not included in the laydowns received. Ms. Krause momentarily left the meeting to provide that document for the committee.

Mr. Smythe provided a brief summary of the document. He hit on the following items:

- Security
- Access – Street and Public, including parking for both staff and the public
- Utilities
- until the space needs is completed they will be unable to select the best site for the project.

Discussion and comments by the committee members were as followed:

Ken Castner stated:

- existing site is the best overall due to size, value to the buildings even if one came down
- the Wildberry site was a wildcard to show possibilities, the location was favorable
- the HERC site and existing site are the ones that have the most value to them in relation to the project

Mr. Crane stated that you can only make do with what you have for so long then you have to make plans. He also commented the following:

- not convinced that the existing site could not work however there is potential if a trade or purchase of the neighboring borough maintenance parcel can be done. This would expand the site.
- not sure the fire department building was at the place it needed to be replaced and would like to see more information on that option of remodel.
- understands the importance of a recreational component to the community and would be receptive to inclusion of the gym into the future use of the safety building on the HERC site.
- zoning with regard to jails and schools could be addressed through design

Chief Robl reported that he did not have concerns with any of the three sites. He stated the following:

- use of the existing site during construction would not pose a problem to his department however he was unsure how the Fire department would be able to work around that.
- parking is a major issue for fire department now with volunteers, maybe some alternatives can be address by Public Works for volunteer parking on Lee Drive.
- a highly visible, centrally located and easily accessible location was desired

Ms. Wythe commented on the following:

- the discussion on the HERC building has been continuing for 10 years, the tone never changes
- acknowledged the community uses the facilities provided by the HERC site
- there are issues with the gymnasium that do not meet the safety regulations in code
- if the city intends to continue the use the building it must be brought up to code.
- would defer to the people who are the experts on the existing site – the departments that are and have been using the existing buildings and location, they are the experts on the use of their facilities
- the two sites, HERC and existing are equally situated

- does not favor a land trade since part of what the city can bring to the table is that they own the property.

Dan Miotke stated the following:

- cannot understand the desire of the community to continually support the use of a building containing many hazards
- agreed that the use of the existing site during construction for the fire department would be tenuous at best
- any of the sites presented would be ideal as long as they were able to provide a building that contained the elements each department needed as previously stated by Chief Painter.

Mr. Castner further added that he has received a number of communications expressing the question do we really need a new public safety building? He went on to further note that is what this committee is to determine. Funding is another obstacle and it may come down to a bonding issue. Mr. Castner believed that there was still some utility to the existing buildings and while there were numerous issues with the Police building there were solutions. He was looking for the thriftiest solution. He had no qualms about tearing down the HERC buildings but believed there was some value to the gym portion. He agreed that there was and would be a benefit to performing more research and working together with the public. Mr. Castner made assurance that they needed to settle on site before too long or they will lose some of the momentum.

Mayor Wythe noted that at the last meeting it was determined that site selection was not as important as first presumed and requested clarification from Ms. Noble.

Ms. Noble responded that the needs assessment is not expected to be completed until middle of August or September and proposed that the site discussion be addressed in late August early September.

Mayor Wythe then stated that it was determined to focus on the public education of the project through the summer.

A discussion was entertained regarding the draft site matrix development criteria and the public involvement document. This negated the schedule being revised to coordinate the public involvement which was provided in the laydown documents. Further explanation from Mr. Smyth on the general processes regarding selecting the appropriate site for the project, providing an example of a similar project in Kodiak where time and funds were expended and then they had to start over since the two initial sites were not appropriate.

Ms. Noble proceeded to expound on the benefit to initiate the public involvement portion while they have momentum and encouraged the committee to review the draft Public Involvement Plan and provide feedback at the next meeting. This result from the recent input of staff and initial public interest received. Ms. Noble then introduced Sarah Doyle, who is familiar with Homer and will be developing the Open Houses and public involvement portion. She pointed out the list of suggested avenues that can be done to inform the public.

Mayor Wythe requested clarity on what actions the committee and or Council can do to assist the design team. Ms. Noble responded that this was a great opportunity to reach out this summer to the public how important this project is to the community. She referenced page 8-9 that showed the simple things that can be accomplished with very little effort. She did agree that it would be good to have not only the committee reach out to the public but even the staff who use those buildings.

Mayor Wythe was seeking whose role should be completing these recommendations whether it is committee or staff or the design team.

WYTHE/CRANE – MOVED TO INCLUDE THE DRAFT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN ON THE JUNE 24, 2014 AGENDA AND MAKING THAT THE FOCUS OF THE MEETING.

There was no discussion.

VOTE. YES. NON-OBJECTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

A brief discussion ensued on including Representative Seaton in this step. Ms. Noble will provide an outreach contact list for review at the next meeting.

B. On Site Visit Report - Committee Member Ralph Crane

Mr. Crane reported that viewing the existing site and working conditions of both departments and believed the Police Department working conditions were appalling; they were cramped and the layout was inefficient. He felt that what the officers worked with was amazing. The Fire Department was not much better off since there were many issues involving safety and general working conditions, standards for equipment storage, etc. He noticed that they have equipment stuffed in every nook and cranny in that building.

The HERC building at the time of the visit had numerous folks playing Pickleball and having fun. However, he had serious concerns over safety and egress let alone use of the building; whether it can be remodeled efficiently he is not sure. But advised that people should know where the exits are.

Chair Castner stated that he wanted to include in the record that he visited the Police Department today to see the conditions that Mr. Crane reported to him and he appreciates Mr. Crane making this report.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Scheduling the Next Steps in the Process – Development of a Case Statement

Chair Castner expressed he wanted to get this completed soon. He also wanted to include in the case statement that a co-location is desired not separate Fire and Police departments. This was something they required in order to promote the project. He asked if staff would be able to provide two paragraphs for the next meeting. Mr. Meyer responded favorably.

Chief Robl stated that while they are waiting for the results of the space needs study he would like to know if it would be possible to demolish all but the gym on the HERC site and what the cost would be to bring it up to code and the cost to include in the new building design.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

A. Resolution 14-36(A), Committee Creation Task Outline

B. Public Questionnaire created and distributed by Meredith Noble, Funding Specialist, USKH

C. Public Response – Completed Questionnaires Received

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Merlin Cordes, resident, commented on the value and benefits to the community to have a place to recreate and place for the young people to practice and hone their skills and if they dream big they may get big. It would also allow the police and fire to stay healthy and fit. He would like to recommend that they add the recreation facility to the project.

Ms. Lowney commented on the support she felt for the needs of the fire and police department but did not want to lose what they had until she was assured they had something to replace it. Ms. Lowney supported looking into the possible purchase of the parcel adjacent to the existing site. She also commented on the inappropriate location and zoning issues placing the public safety building in such close proximity of a junior high and recommended looking into any and all other possible options besides the HERC site. She strongly urged the committee to remove that site from the selection list to continue the discussion regarding the gym.

Ms. Lowe commented on the zoning and the impact that a public safety building may be on the HERC location. She recognized the Mayors comments regarding the current police station to the High School and that it was a much farther distance. Ms. Lowe then commented on ensuring that the public process was very transparent and that may have already been impacted with resolution put forth to change the conveyance agreement. She believes that the public was not adequately informed. Ms. Lowe suggested that the whole picture should be talked about during the public process including recreation.

COMMENTS OF CITY STAFF

Mr. Meyer informed the committee that they have submitted a change of use request for a Fire Marshall review which will allow them to get a cost perspective on upgrades and improvements that are required.

Dan Nelsen addressed the comments regarding the HERC building and he was tasked with looking into the requirements to bring it into compliance with code to make it a viable structure. He stated for the record that a building code is the very minimum requirements that are issued/implemented by states and governmental agencies that allow a building to be safe and inhabitable. He has visited that building and acknowledged Mr. Crane's recent visit to that building and he expressed was "WOW". He has a huge concern as a city resident and city employee regarding the use of that building by the public. He has the original plans for the building which were stamped in 1947. He is not aware of what the code was in that time but there are issues with egress, no fire sprinklers, lead base paint, no alarms, and asbestos. The structure is not a concrete structure. The roof is wood that is tongue and groove, built up membrane and the only way to shed snow is keeping the heat on. The boilers are not in the gym and have not been converted at this time to natural gas. If you do not keep the building heated the snow would collapse the roof. He responded that there is only one exit out of the gym into the foyer and the wall separating the boiler room and that he was not sure if there was any fire prevention and believed that none of the doors were fire rated either.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

Mayor Wythe has not been in that building in 35 years and appreciated the information. She is glad that they are moving forward on the public involvement on the project. She also noted the risk management for the building has been a nightmare for her.

Mayor Wythe departed the meeting at 7: 10 p.m. due to another engagement out on the spit.

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Castner commented on the limits to the committee, the actions of council regarding clearing items from the deed, and that it is in the hands of the borough and in pursuit of the Public Safety Building other discussions can be had. Any and every action by the committee is only advisory to the council.

COMMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr. Crane commented regarding the options and liability to the city by continued use of the HERC building in its current condition.

Mr. Miotke commented in regards to the hazardous working conditions at the fire department such as the carcinogens that they breathe every time they start up the vehicles; the time he has spent in the police department and those guys are in the same atmosphere with persons whose health conditions they have no real knowledge of; he appreciated being informed about the conditions of the building and hopes that it is included in the report on the building. He further commented on the unsafe issues such as trip hazards and egress issues. On another note having a gym for the staff may just be a worker comp case knowing his fellow employees and him as they may hurt themselves.

Chief Robl hopes that they will come through this process with a building that is functional and will last another 30 years. He wants this to work for their needs and the needs of the public.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Committee the meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m. The next regular meeting will be **TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2014 AT 5:30 P.M.** and will be at the City Hall Conference Room located upstairs at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, and Alaska.

RENEE KRAUSE, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK

Approved: _____