

TOWN of RIDGEFIELD CITIZENS COMMITTEE

MARCH 28, 2016

TOWN HALL/LARGE CONFERENCE ROOM – 7:30 P.M.

APPROVED MINUTES

Present: R. Larson, A. Behymer, E. Burns, D. Daughters, L. Hanley, J. Zawacki,
Rebecca Augur by telephone

Absent: T. O'Connor, M. Miller, E. Tyrrell

Agenda

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comments
3. Review Timeline to Complete Project
4. Cultural Destination
5. Overview of April 28 Presentation
6. Recommendations Discussion
7. Approval of Minutes for February 22, February 27 and February 29
8. Next Steps
9. Adjourn

R. Larson called the Citizens Committee meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. There were no comments from the public.

Timeline to Complete Project –

R. Larson stated how the Committee now has enough information to bring our project to a close. We need to finalize our recommendations and can discuss and vote on them one at a time. Most of the Committee are in agreement with the direction we are going. Once we finalize the wording of the recommendations, Rebecca will work on the presentation.

April 28 is the scheduled date for the Public Workshop to be held at the Rec Center. A map will be available to share with the public. The Committee will meet on Monday evening, April 25, to review the plans for the presentation on April 28 and the draft of the recommendations.

May 2nd is the target date to finalize and vote on our recommendations, and review the report for the BOS. The week of May 9 is the date for sending the report to the BOS. May 25 is the meeting date to discuss the Committee's recommendations with the Board of Selectmen.

E. Burns inquired as to what are we trying to get from the public during this second charrette (presentation)? All the details will be pretty much finalized by that meeting

date. R. Larson replied how the goal of the Public Workshop is to get a final set of feedback from the public. Even though we had a good rate of return, most people in town did not attend the first charrette and some did not take the first survey either. The purpose of the Public Workshop on April 28th is to get people engaged in what our recommendations really are.

J. Zawacki stated how we want to get in front of the people of the town. We want to share the consensus for the cultural aspect, show a map where everything is to be located, and “make it exciting”! L. Hanley stated the importance of sharing how we consulted many individuals as we researched and gathered information. D. Daughters stressed the importance of sharing how we arrived at our decision to promote the cultural option. He feels the descriptions of Ives Concert Park, Grace Farms, and the Levitt Pavilion for the Performing Arts all help to “sell” the cultural option. They all have the 501c3 designation and were mainly funded thru private donations and sponsorships rather than primarily thru public town funding. All of these facilities utilize the beauty of their surroundings. The Cultural Vision write-up describes how this Cultural Destination will contain three primary elements –

- A Philip Johnson Building repurposed into a new kind of American Luxury Company which encompasses architectural projects and interiors as well as impeccably-crafted furniture.
- An existing indoor auditorium which would be renovated as avenue for live, professional theater promoting and presenting Broadway plays and musicals.
- And the creation of a park for picnicking with walking and biking trails and an outdoor stage/amphitheater. This amphitheater would become the centerpiece for all varieties of outdoor entertainment.

There will be no breakout sessions at the Public Workshop but instead a PowerPoint presentation.

Dave Scott, an architect who has lived in Ridgefield for a long time, stated how a group in town had previously hoped to create an amphitheater for boys and girls but “hit a wall” with regard to financing in 2008. There was no way to do anything at that financially bad-time. We now have people who are interested in redoing two of the buildings – the Philip Johnson Building and the Auditorium without a cost to the Town. R. Larson stated how has spoken with both the furniture people and Act One. Another option is what to do with the SkyDome? We are not recommending anything for this structure at this time, but it could also be demolished which would open up more open space.

E. Burns stated how we need to get input from a landscape architect. How much property should be set aside for parking? We cannot put the proposed Charter Group additional sale on the table until we know for sure what land needs to be set aside for what use. One decision depends on another. This is called “planning”. Our focus is to create a cultural destination and thus we need to hold off on Charter for now. There is no value for any of the buildings without parking.

Andy Behymer stated how nothing can be done until we receive an “all clear” from the DEEP. R. Larson shared the comments forwarded by T. O’Connor in his absence from the meeting this evening. The Charter Group thinks they have “their hands on” the property. We need to get all the land use designated before any additional sale can be discussed. The Charter Group is pricing their town houses at about \$770,000, which is more expensive than what they first proposed.

R. Larson stated how the Committee needs to review our presentation for the April 28 Public Workshop, our recommendations, and the report (which Rebecca is working on) to be presented to the BOS.

Recommendations Discussion

The Committee reviewed a write-up titled “Cost Notes” and comments on such were made as follows:

Financial Implications/Potential Funding: To date, the Town has recovered \$5.6 million of its total investment of \$7.6 million and tax revenues from the Charter Development will generate in excess of \$500k annually.

- A majority in the January survey did not believe additional income was necessary.
- But a significant percent of residents (**this percent needs to be more specific**) believe that it’s important to recover more cost in both surveys.

Cost avoidance: Sale or lease of the 3 buildings on the site allows to Town to avoid

- On-going maintenance and possibly expensive repair of these buildings
- The high cost of renovating these buildings if roofs, etc. begin to fail.

Potential for additional cost recovery: **List of possible cost recovery elements – it doesn’t hurt to show these ideas.**

- Selling a small parcel for a limited number of townhouses next to the Charter development.
- Sale or lease of the Philip Johnson Building
- Potential sale or lease of the SkyDome building
- Subdividing a parcel(s) for uses complimentary to the Cultural Destination

Funding of further development: **We are \$2 million short of recouping our investment.**

The \$2 million is not too big a problem, The Committee believes that the cost of development of the Cultural Center can be funded by:

- Tax revenues from parcels sold from the original 45 acres or from the current 30 acres.
- Funding may be generated through a combination of corporate sponsorships or naming rights, public grants or private donations.

The Committee then reviewed the various pages of the Recommendations for the Schlumberger Citizens Committee Workshop scheduled for April 28, 2016:

- Meeting Objectives – OK as is

- Meeting Agenda – Discussion of Cultural Option – build up some excitement when discussing this item – bring this subject “to life”.
- Citizens Committee Charge from the Board of Selectmen – OK as is.
- Overview of Property – This info was available in the 1st survey – show the buildings and how they are related to one another
- Results from the September Survey – Rebecca to prepare the report on this. Per E. Burns and D. Daughters, this page is confusing. Make instead into two or three slides. This chart and/or charts is to show the voice of the residents of the Town of Ridgefield.
- Results from September Survey – Rebecca commented on this page – we received a tremendous turnout for the first survey; this page shows the number of responses to potential use preferences; cultural uses received high ratings. D. Daughters commented on confusion between “passive open space” and “active open space”. E. Burns pointed out how these terms are used in the Town’s Conservation Plan.
- Results from the October Workshop – this page shows what the participants in the workshop told us they wanted. We learned what people are concerned about.
- Any Questions, Concerns or Issues? Nothing listed on this page to date
- Research Conducted Following the September Survey – OK as is
- Ridgefield Plan of Conservation and Development – R. Larson stated how this page is “too wordy”. Again, this page plays into what the Citizens Committee is suggesting.
- Results from Public Meetings – 2014 – put in the months of the 2014 meetings. Some of this info is earlier in the presentation. The art dealer sale was turned down; Holbrook was turned down; public hearings were held (put in the dates for these meetings and events). This page is to show why the Citizens Committee was formed.
- Conclusions Made by the Committee – September Survey, October Workshop, Additional Research – this page is “too wordy”. This page shows how the Committee developed the three options for the January survey and why not doing recreational development of the Schlumberger property per the Parks & Rec Department.
- Opportunities Following Committee Research and First Survey – Per D. Daughters, this page should show how we ended up with the three options.

- Issues or Concerns? Nothing listed to date.
- Results from the January Survey – It is important to build on the three options. 1400 did the first survey and 900 did the second survey. The three options are the result of these two surveys and the Charrette. E. Burns suggested the use of more vibrant colors in the bar graph.
- Results from the January Survey – Positive responses (Yes) to this option
- Committee Actions from the Second Survey – under explored options for Sky Dome Building, indicate possible art storage and tax deduction.
- Overview – Cultural Destination– Under the second item listing how the Cultural Center would contain three basic elements – discuss each one of these elements individually.
- Overview of Cultural Center – Visual Design – Show how the cultural option provides what the public wants as it includes the top 12 requests.
- Open Space – OK as is.
- Multi-Use Trail, Picnic Area and Sidewalks – OK as is
- Auditorium – OK as is
- Philip Johnson Building – OK as is
- Outdoor State/Amphitheater – don't need all the bullet points under the second subject – This is for an Implementation Committee
- Sky Dome Building – Not for this audience – involves an Implementation Committee

Approval of Minutes for February 22, February 27 and February 29 -

D. Daughters moved and L. Hanley seconded with a motion to approve as amended the minutes of the February 22, 2016 Citizens Committee Meeting. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

E. Burns moved and D. Daughters seconded a motion to approve as written the minutes of the February 27, 2016, Schlumberger Citizens Committee Special Meeting and the minutes of the February 29, 2016, Citizens Committee Meeting. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

Next Steps –

- a) Incorporate results of this meeting into the Committee's final recommendations
- b) Completion of a report for the BOS in the first half of May.
- c) Discuss the Committee's report with the BOS on May 25.

The Citizens Committee reviewed a "Summary" –

- a) The Committee believes that the Cultural Center will enhance Ridgefield's reputation as a Cultural Destination and provide economic value to the Town.
- b) The elements of the Cultural Center are supported:
 - 2014 Public Meetings held by the BOS.
 - The September survey, the October workshop, and the January survey
 - Committee research
- c) The elements of the Cultural Center support the principles of the 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development
- d) If approved by the BOS, initial phases of work could be including:
 - Negotiations for the Auditorium and Philip Johnson Building as soon as possible.
 - Formation of an Implementation Committee to develop the plan for the Outdoor Stage/Amphitheater.

Adjourn -

J. Zawacki moved and D. Daughters seconded with a motion to adjourn the Citizens Committee Meeting at 9:25 p.m. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet L. Johnson