

New Cultural Center (NCC) Workgroup
Meeting Summary
COLUMBIA DOWNTOWN HOUSING CORPORATION
July 30, 2020 at 3 p.m.
WebEx

Workgroup Members Present

Jeryl Baker
Paul Casey
Carl DeLorenzo
Bob DeSantis
Peter Engel
Greg Fitchitt
Colette Gelwicks
Opel Jones- Staff
Deb Jung
Sameer Sidh
Mary Kay Sigaty
Alastair Smith
Pat Sylvester
Liz Walsh- Staff
David Yungmann

Workgroup Members Absent

Guests (Page 5)

I. Welcome & Introductions

- The meeting began at 3:05 pm.
- Pat Sylvester welcomed workgroup members and guests.
- The NCC Workgroup meeting [agenda](#), [presentation](#), [Examples of Other Arts & Cultural Centers](#), and [Webb Market Study](#) are posted on CDHC’s website: www.howardcountymd.gov/CDHC.

II. NCC Program Background

- Pat Sylvester noted that the Webb Market Study showed a strong demand for an Arts and Cultural Center in Howard County and found that existing facilities in the County were limited in size, availability and function.
- Carl DeLorenzo shared the vision for the NCC, which is included in the Downtown Columbia Plan. The Plan proposes a new arts and cultural center—to be located in downtown Columbia—offering multi-purpose theaters, gallery/studio space, classrooms, etc.
- He explained that the original partnership for the NCC included the Columbia Center for the Theatrical Arts (CCTA) and the Howard County Arts Council (HCAC). However, when the County analyzed the cost proposal for the

project, it determined that HCAC would not be able to support its share through revenue/fundraising and that additional financing would be required to construct the project.

- The County identified the Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP) as an ideal tenant for the NCC due to its capacity to achieve revenue targets.

III. NCC Programming & Operations

- Matt Madera, *DRP*, shared an overview of *DRP*'s program highlights: fine art, trips & tours, studios, theater & dance, music and adult/active aging programs.
- Supplemental programming (camps, preschool activities, health & wellness, permitting of spaces for private use) will ensure that spaces are in use 7 days a week.
- Mark Minnick, *CCTA*, shared information about the history and success of Toby's Dinner Theater and its current programming.
- Toby Ornstein shared information about the importance of *CCTA*'s theatrical arts programming and its ability to inspire thought, action, creativity and change.
- The NCC will allow *CCTA*/Toby's to centralize operations and expand classes and offerings.

Member Discussion

- Pat Sylvester invited questions from the Workgroup members about programming. Questions related to risk mitigation and Toby's transfer to *CCTA* were deferred until after Section IV of the agenda.

IV. NCC Operational Budgets & Risks

a. CCTA

- Hal Ornstein shared an overview of Toby's current operations.
- Toby's attendance and gross revenue over the past 3 years were discussed.
- Toby's gross revenue in 2019 was \$5,086,000. The total revenue is projected to grow by at least 10-15%.
- *CCTA*'s gross revenue in FY2019 was \$518,414.
- The current net revenue from Toby's and *CCTA*'s programs is sufficient to cover its NCC lease payments.
- The main theater and black boxes offer flexible spaces that can be used for other types of theater or performances.
- *CCTA* leadership transition was discussed. Mark Minnick will lead *CCTA* operations when Toby retires.

b. Department of Recreation & Parks

- Matt Madera, *DRP*, gave an overview of *DRP*'s operating projections.
- *DRP*'s annual operating revenue—generated through fees for classes, camps, membership, events, and fees for permitting spaces—is projected to be \$869,000.
- The operating budget includes expenses for staff and supplies and is

projected to be \$755,000.

- To reduce expenses, staff hours can be varied.

c. Facility Operations

- Mark Stromdahl, *DPW*, gave an overview of the Department of Public Works' (DPW) facility operations.
- DPW will provide facility management services for mechanical/electrical systems, communications/security systems, building envelope maintenance, custodial services, building security, grounds management & parking garage maintenance.
- DPW will manage the lease with CCTA.
- The projected NCC facility budget is projected to be \$641,856.

d. Other Risk Mitigation Measures

- Due to a shortage of meeting space in the County, there will likely be a higher demand for space in the NCC.
- DRP has a proven formula for income & expenses used at other facilities.
- Classes offered can be adjusted to meet demand & revenue.

e. Member Discussion

- Questions were raised about the number of classrooms necessary and classroom design/flexibility. The possibilities of downsizing the project to lower costs and/or increasing fees for permitting space to help increase revenue were discussed.
- The importance of allowing for future programming growth was mentioned as a reason not to downsize the space.
- The DRP programming plan was complimented as being robust and thorough but concern was raised that it moved the center away from being a Regional Arts Center and toward a more locally focused activity space. How do we ensure that the ancillary spaces don't overtake/overwhelm the Arts aspects of the Center? CCTA noted that the Center will be very arts focused in décor and appearance and it is unlikely that the upper floor classrooms will overwhelm the main lobby, gallery and theater spaces.
- It was requested that the workgroup be provided with information on comparable rental rates in the county, including for Columbia Association space because it was noted that CA's rates are higher than those proposed by DRP. The importance of keeping rental rates affordable was also discussed.

V. Follow up from July 16 Meeting

a. Building Delivery

- Nick Mansperger, *Design Collective*, addressed design issues like the lobby size and number/size of classrooms.
- The developer will provide a completed, move-in ready building.

b. NCC FF&E Budget

- The FF&E budget for CCTA is projected to be \$3,685,000, which includes an allowance in the Capital Budget of \$595,000. The remainder will be paid by CCTA and fundraising is part of their plan for covering these costs.
- The FF&E includes furniture, equipment, kitchen appliances, café & dinner buffet furnishings and decorating.

c. Debt & Operational Reserves

- Carl DeLorenzo shared information about the NCC’s debt and operational reserves.
- Bonds secured by tax increment revenues would require a reserve fund (included in TIF financing). The bonds secured by program revenues will not require a reserve fund but will be backed by the county’s general fund.
- The budget includes a 5% construction contingency for hard costs.

d. Spending Affordability Committee Review

- The Committee only reviews bonds that are expected to be primarily supported by the general fund; NCC bonds will be supported by TIF/project revenue.

e. Potential for Sale of Rockland Property

- Currently, there are multiple tenants, including HCAC, at Rockland.
- A sale will require a County process to dispose of the asset.
- Redevelopment uses/ potential value may be limited due to site constraints (school, traffic and parking).

VI. Opportunity for Public Comments

1. Joan Driessen, *ACS*, emphasized the need for a facility with flexible/affordable space in a central location for the use of nonprofits.
2. Dr. Caroline Harper, *DHCD/HOTF*, agreed that the demand for affordable rental space in the County is high. Suggested the Workgroup review comparables.
3. Joel Hurwitz, *HC Resident*, shared concerns regarding high construction costs/ location for the project.
4. Hiruy Hadgu, *HC Resident*, shared concerns about spending County funds on this project with regard to other budget shortfalls. Suggested the County consider other alternatives.
5. Mary Ka Kanahan, *PATH*, praised DRP for its leadership and programming. Commented on the need for cost-accessible space for residents.
6. Coleen West, *HCAC*, commented on space availability for the Arts Council if the Rockland property is sold. The Council would require a similar space to continue providing the current level of art programming.

VII. Future Meetings & Topics

- Meeting #3—Housing & compliance issues and general oversight—[August 11 from 3-5 pm](#)
- Pat Sylvester noted that the second hour of the 8/11 meeting will be planned for

member discussion about proposed revisions to the NCC as discussed at the 7/16 and 7/30 meetings. It is not expected that additional workgroup meetings will be planned, although one can be added if members request one.

- Public Forum —September 2020 – sponsored by Housing Affordability Coalition and others – Date and time TBD

Member Discussion – Following the opportunity for Public Comment, the members agreed to continue the meeting for further discussion about program design and operations

- Cost saving measures including value-engineering and reducing enhancements such as lifts/traps were discussed.
- Questions about the value of maintaining a dinner theater were discussed and it was noted that Toby’s Dinner Theater is one of a kind in the region and people travel from the region and beyond to enjoy it.
- The architect provided information about how the current size of the facility was determined and the changes made to accommodate the change from HCAC and DRP
- Succession planning by CCTA for Hal Ornstein’s retirement was also discussed
- The meeting ended at 5:27 pm

**NCC Workgroup Meeting #2 Guests
7-30-2020**

Angela Price	Josh Manley	Nick Mansperger
Ashley Alston	Kelly Cimino	Nicole Dvorak
Dr. Caroline Harper	Kelly McLaughlin	Nikki
China Williams	Ken H.	Phillip Dodge
Cindy Skalny	Laura Wetherald	Quanita Kareem
Coleen West	Linda Wengel	Raul Delerme
Craig Glendenning	Mark Minnick	Roy Appletree
Emily Metzler	Mark Stromdahl	Scott Armiger
Felix Facchine	Mary Ka Kanahan	Sharon Lee Vogel
Grace Kubofcik	Mary Peitz	Tina Narr
Hiruy Hadgu	Matt Herbert	Toby & Hal Ornstein
Jackie Eng	Matt Madera	Tracy Deik
Joan Driessen	Max Levee	
Joel Hurwitz	Michael Harris	