

**STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2019 2:00 P.M.
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VERO BEACH, FLORIDA**

PRESENT: Vicky Gould, Chairwoman; Robbie Brackett, Vice Chairman; Members: Tony Young, Laura Moss, Rey Neville, Joe Graves, Mike Johansen, Alma Lee Loy, Richard Baker, Linda Moore and John Cotugno, Alternate Member **Also Present:** Monte Falls, City Manager; John Turner, City Attorney and Tammy Bursick, City Clerk

Excused Absence: Mark Tripson

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A) December 3, 2019

Mr. Young made a motion to approve the December 3, 2019 City Council minutes. Ms. Loy seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

- 3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

- 4. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:**

A) Update on Community Outreach

Mr. Jason Jeffries, Planning and Development Director, commented that since the project kick-off, DPZ has engaged the community to encourage residents to participate on speakupverobeach.com website and the January charrettes. He then turned the meeting over to Ms. Irina Woelfle.

Ms. Irina Woelfle, of DPZ, gave an overview of where they are today. She said that they have been engaging as many people as possible. So far there have been 6567 visitors to the website and 745 individuals have filled out the registration form. Of the 745 who registered, 697 people clicked on the “activation” email that allowed them to post their comments. She felt that this number would continue to grow especially after the tours of the Power Plant have been completed. There has been ongoing media outreach and press coverage. Marketing materials including cards, posters, flyers in the water bill and stickers have been circulating. There has been online and offline community outreach, as well as social media used mainly to drive people to the site to register. She said that Mr. Duany, President of DPZ, is very excited about this project and agrees with the approach being taken to reach the community. Upon completion of the Power Plant tours they will be asking the people attending if they want to “save Big Blue,” “demolish Big Blue,”

“mothball Big Blue for future generations to decide,” or if the answer is “save,” what do they want it to be.

Mr. Johansen asked what will the options be if they choose to save the building.

Ms. Woelfle could not answer that question.

Vice Mayor Moss recalled that when taking the tour of the Power Plant she asked Mr. Rob Bolton, Water and Sewer Director, if they were to re-purpose the Power Plant building, would it be feasible. She was told that the building is “structurally sound.” She commented that this is a unique building, just like the former diesel plant, which has been transformed successfully. She said perhaps the building could accommodate local businesses such as eateries, art galleries, performance spaces, etc., that are as distinctive as the building itself. She said that the Indian River Mall is failing. People here hunger for distinct destinations. Tourists do too. This has the potential to be one.

Mr. Monte Falls, City Manager, agreed that the building is structurally sound. If it is repurposed they would need to take a look at what the new use could be.

Ms. Woelfle went over the average age of participants so far. She said that the highest age range for participants is 60-69 with a percentage of 31.99% and an actual number of participants of 223. She is now focusing on getting people to go on the Power Plant tours.

Mr. Neville brought up the registration for taking the tour. He asked if someone has already registered, can they go back in and say that they are interested in taking the tour.

Ms. Woelfle explained that they cannot go back into the registration part of the website. She said it is not imperative that someone RSVP for the tour. They would just like to have an idea of how many people plan on attending the tour.

Ms. Woelfle went over some of the things that people want to see on this property. They are interested in environmental sensitivity, keep the property as a Waterfront Green Park only, Park and Open Space, economic development, tourism generation and youth programs. What people don't want to see is offices, residential units, and no development. She said they are able to show what people taking the survey are City residents versus out of the City residents.

Mr. Cotugno asked for the definition of Park and Open Space versus Environmental Sensitivity.

Ms. Woelfle explained that with Parks and Open Space they were trying to determine how important people think it is to have green space and nothing else.

Mr. Cotugno commented that unless they define what Park and Open Space is the need could be no development. There needs to be specific definition on each of these query points to get accurate data.

Ms. Woelfle suggested meeting with Mr. Cotugno after the meeting to answer some of the questions that he had.

Mr. Cotugno wanted to see the definitions defined clearer. He said when you do a survey like this that is going to have a huge impact on the City the definitions need to be clear.

Ms. Woelfle said that they could do some clarification and launch a new survey.

Mayor Young suggested just adding to what they already have.

Ms. Woelfle continued by saying that 54.94% of the people that have done the survey live in the City. She said 53.61% of the people live within a 1.5 mile radius of the Three Corners. A question was asked if they have attended a City Council meeting in the last year and the response was 68.58% said no. There connection to the area is 85.22% of the people said that they are a full time residents and 51.36% of the people who did the survey are currently working.

Ms. Woelfle expressed that going to speakupverobeach.com is the most efficient way to reach people and allow them to make comments and share their ideas.

Mrs. Moore commented that all the data she has seen so far has come from the survey questions. She said there are some amazing ideas out there.

Mr. Graves asked how are they making these different ideas known to people to go on the website.

Ms. Woelfle said that the responses are being looked at.

Mr. Graves was disappointed that there were not more young people engaged.

Ms. Woelfle commented that she has reached out to the local high schools with little response.

Ms. Gould felt that the survey questions were very good. She said that she looks at every response that comes through on the website.

Mr. Neville suggested that Ms. Woelfle speak with the new School Superintendent about this and maybe it could become an academic exercise.

Mayor Young wondered if they could take this site and link it with facebook. Ms. Woelfle explained that they could not collect data that way. She said the area on the site that says share your ideas and questions poses to cover all aspects of the site.

Ms. Woelfle briefly went through some of the benefits of having the website. She said that this site will be in use until November of this year. People are able to search ideas on the database.

Mrs. Moore brought up maybe having a band play on the day of the Power Plant tours.

Mr. Falls wanted to make it clear that this is not a developed site. They do not have public facilities to serve the public. They are just carefully trying to give people the opportunity to see the site. He said that port-o-lets would be available, but there are no public restrooms.

The Steering Committee offered their support on the day of the tours.

Mr. Neville suggested giving the attendees of the tour something to take back with them (flyer, etc.).

Ms. Woelfle agreed that this was not a community event, but an opportunity to serve. She felt that they needed to provide water and port-o-potties.

Mr. Falls explained that there will be a sign in and sign out table. There will be areas where people will be allowed to go. The goal is to get people to see the scale of the property and visualize the many things that could occur on the property.

Mayor Young asked how does the site convey the scale of the property.

Ms. Woelfle said that there is a map on the website showing this.

Mr. Johansen commented that if you don't walk the whole site you don't get a sense of how big it is.

Mr. Cotugno suggested having a drone fly over the site that would give the public a feel of how big the site really is.

Mr. Brackett asked if the tour would be for the site or the building.

Mr. Falls explained it would be for the public to see the Power Plant and the site all the way to the river, but not going over to the Water Plant.

Mr. Brackett recalled when the consultant first came to speak to the Council they mentioned having maps of the entire area. He suggested getting the maps blown up for the public to be able to visualize the entire area. He remembers when they were told that the site is about the same size as downtown St. Augustine (35 acres).

Mr. Jeffries commented that the map is currently on the website.

Vice Mayor Moss wanted to know how the Power Plant compares to the Indian River Mall. Is it equal to the Mall or is the Mall bigger.

Ms. Gould commented that she could not believe how big the site was until she walked it. Also, after seeing inside the Power Plant it changed the way that she views things.

Dr. Baker expressed how important it was that they capture the input on the history of this area. This is an important part of Vero Beach that needs to be presented to the public.

Mrs. Ruth Stanbridge, County Historian, hoped that the City would be working with the County on this site. She commented that where the Sewer Plant is located used to be the old Crab House. She hopes that the Historical Society would be a part of any planning that takes place on that site.

Ms. Gould thanked Mrs. Stanbridge for bringing that up. She said that everyone has a voice in this matter, whether they go to the website or not. She said that not everyone has a chance to vote, but they have a voice.

Mrs. Stanbridge stated that she has never lived in the City, but this is her hometown.

Ms. Loy commented that the numbers are showing that the people in this community are participating. She said that the history should be fairly easy.

The Steering Committee talked about having the Historical Society do a video for the Power Plant property using tourist tax dollars and then have the video posted on the website.

Mr. Falls reported that the square footage for the Power Plant is about 70,000 square feet and Dillard's Department Store is about 130,000 square feet (foot print).

At this time the Steering Commission answered the questions that they were given at their last meeting regarding their site visit to the Power Plant. The questions asked were what is your impression of the interior of the Power Plant; what, if anything, do you like about the exterior of the Power Plant and in your dreams, what could go in this building.

Vice Mayor Moss reiterated what she said earlier about being told that the building is structurally sound. She said that more people should be encouraged to view the interior space, which is quite majestic.

Mrs. Moore felt that the architectural design of the building is amazing.

Vice Mayor Moss suggested having a "Power Tour" starting at the old Diesel Plant then going to the Power Plant and then going to the Solar Fields. She said that could be fun and educational.

Mayor Young passed out a copy of his answers to these questions (on file in the City Clerk's office). He said that the building is mammoth. It gives the impression of a huge ship with differing level, access ways, etc. You are stuck by the vertical elevation of the west side. The enormous overhead lift is industrial. The interior mechanical working must be of value even as scrap metal. The control room is vintage 1960-1970's. The interior furnishings seem as if just abandoned. The effort to repurpose the structure would be an enormous undertaking. It appears as if it could withstand flooding and hurricane winds. The architecture is not found in later construction.

Mr. Neville agreed that there are many possible uses for the building. There are architectural embellishments in the front of the building that should be looked at. The structure from the side is magnificent. There are some grand ideas, but we don't have income to support them. One suggestion might be to turn this into a resort hotel and take the 3% Tourist Tax to be used for subsequent development of the rest of the site, if there is a market for this. He said they need to know if the structure is low bearing for an additional structure (like a hotel). They need an answer to this question.

Mr. Graves commented that whatever goes there it needs to generate income to support itself. He said repurposing a building is very expensive. He has always been told that renovating a building is more expensive than constructing a new building. They also don't know if there are contaminants in the ground if the Power Plant is removed. There are questions that need to be answered before we get to far down the road, such as would a developer want to come in and have a hotel on the property.

Mr. Brackett commented that he was amazed when he visited the Power Plant and the site. He agreed that refurbishing buildings are expensive. He said this may have to be part of the plan. It is a big question either/or situation.

Mr. Graves explained that his concern was going down a road that is not feasible. They don't want to have the public in favor of an idea that they come up with and then tell them that it can't be funded. If that happens then they have failed as a Committee.

Mr. Brackett agreed. He said that some people want to see waterfront dining on the site, but what does that mean. In terms of who is saying that it could be different from one person to the next.

Ms. Woelfle expressed that Mr. Duany is very concerned about money as well and has said so publically.

Ms. Gould expressed that the project can be done in phases. She said this is a big process and they don't have to do everything all at once.

Mr. Jeffries added that they are in the idea stages. He said that DPZ has a good sense of what is feasible and will be flushed out through the charrette process.

Mr. Brackett suggested maybe having a Master Plan like what they did for the Marina.

Mr. Jeffries agreed with that. He said that once they know what they are going to do with the property there will probably have to be some zoning and amendments made.

Mr. Graves stated that a decision has to be made to either keep or not keep the Power Plant.

Mr. Falls commented that there have been a couple scenarios offered, such as keeping the Power Plant or dismantling it. This will determine how much of the site will have to be clean.

Vice Mayor Moss addressed “Pop-Up Place” that is addressed in her thoughts on the Power Plant property. She said deliberately leave a designated place on the property for temporary uses. These uses might be any number of things. An art or craft show. A performance of dance, music, or theater. On occasion, an alternative venue for discussion of local political concerns including the hosting of an annual City Council candidate forum, as there is a City Council election every year. This use could serve to encourage people to become more involved. Perhaps, eventually improving voter turn-out during off-year elections, which historically is abysmally low. Use the space to reach-out to all. Make it inviting. It is not possible for us to know now what the future may wish to see on this property. Leave “Pop-Up Place” permanently available for temporary uses in order to allow the future to decide for themselves.

Mayor Young brought up the deep water port with channels going out into the river were not identified on the map.

Mr. Neville commented that they would need to have a civil engineer do an analysis to make sure all the standards are being met taking into consideration how much the property and building have aged.

Dr. Baker felt that they were getting ahead of themselves.

Vice Mayor Moss agreed that they don’t want to bias the public before they take tours at the end of the month. She said lets not color their point of view with any negativity.

Mr. Cotugno commented that they needed to take a look at the demographics of this area and where they are. He recalled an instance where a hotel was built in another City that he lived in, but the demographics were much different than here. They have to make sure that they would have the people to fill the rooms for a large hotel if that was the decision. He said they can’t falsely say something to their constituents and then take it back.

Vice Mayor Moss commented that it doesn’t have to be limited to just a hotel. There could be a hotel there and also a restaurant among other things.

Mr Cotugno agreed that it would have to be the scope of the project.

Mr. Graves would hate to promise something and then not be able to fulfill the promise and have to take it back.

Mr. Brackett commented that the Committee was here to convey ideas and will continue doing that without putting anything concrete on the table.

Vice Mayor Moss commented that they have to have a dream for a dream to come true.

Dr. Baker wanted to use this site in order to help with cleaning up the Lagoon.

Vice Mayor Moss referred to her memorandum regarding open space. She said that they could leave a significant portion of “open space”. Part of the property should provide “breathing room” for all to enjoy the Lagoon as passive recreation. Perhaps rain gardens and native plants for quiet enjoyment and educational purposes. Invite all visitors to play a role in preserving the Lagoon for future generations through education. Keep the parking lot across the street on the former Postal Annex land, if possible.

Ms. Gould commented that they have the room on this property to do so much of these things and they can be done in phases. She said that everyone sitting around this table have some great ideas. She leans towards the historical aspect of the property. She said that building is a part of their history and if there is a way that they can somehow incorporate it that would be great. She thanked Ms. Woelfle and Mrs. Fox for all of their help. She said it seems they have gotten a lot of response from the community.

Mr. Graves agreed that if there was a way to save the building then they should. He would like to see them do something with the Power Plant that is self-sustaining and then have a nice recreational space for their citizens to go as well. As future things arise future generations could continue to expand the property. As they move further down the road they will need to start talking about costs. He agreed that there are several different ways to utilize that space.

Ms. Woelfle announced that she would be speaking in front of the Taxpayer’s Association and the Realtor’s Association. Also, a story will be coming out in 32963.

Mr. Jeffries went over the charrette schedule. The charrettes start on January 27th and end on January 31st. There will be meetings taking place each day and the Steering Committee will meet on Monday, January 27th at 6:30 p.m., at the Community Center and on Friday, January 31st at 6:30 p.m., probably at the First Presbyterian Church. He said once DPZ has reviewed the material that comes out of the charrettes they will call their next meeting.

Mr. John Turner, City Attorney, cautioned any of the members that would be attending these meetings. He said that they are allowed to talk to other people, just not to each other unless it is at one (1) of their noticed meetings.

Mr. Brian Heady stated that the right answer is you can talk to anyone, but not to each other. He encouraged them to go to the charrettes and have interaction, just don’t talk to

anyone on the Committee. The technology that is changing in respect to water and electricity and they would be tar and feathered if anyone suggested that the City get back into the electric production. The game plan is move the Water Plant over to the Airport property. This Committee has the opportunity to do something to clean up the Lagoon and change the technology of what the Waste Water Treatment Plant is doing. No one could convince him that there is a lot of money from the State to do this. He recalled many years back that the County gave the Humane Society some property near the fairgrounds and the reason they gave them the property was because they demonstrated that the pollution plum had worked its way to the Humane Society's property impacting the health of animals at that facility. He said if you take a line from that dump site to the Human Society the next stop would be the supply for their water at the new site. He said before they decide they want to destroy the building they should have concrete proof that the pollution stream has stopped. Otherwise the building might be perfect to provide portable water to the community.

Mr. Ken Daige stated that he heard a lot of good ideas from the community today. He encouraged everyone to go out and walk the site. It is a beautiful site. Once you walk the property you get a sense of the openness. The two (2) sites are protected in their Charter and as long as the property stays in the Charter they have protection.

Mrs. Ruth Stanbridge commented that the Power Plant building may be a mid-central modern design and they might be able to have it on the National Register. She said having it on the National Register opens up a lot of grant opportunities.

Mrs. Julie Scotfizers (spelling may not be correct) was at today's meeting to speak about 3,000 children who have special needs. There is not a Park in this area that caters to children who have special needs. She asked that part of the property be designed for special needs children. She encouraged the Committee to go to Brevard County and observe what they have for special needs people. It is important for these people to have a place to go in this town.

B) Site Ideas from the Committee

This item was discussed earlier.

5. NEXT MEETING DATE

The Steering Committee will meet on January 27th at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Center and then on January 31st at 6:30 p.m. at a place to be determined.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

/tb

