

COMMITTEE ON LANDS AND BUILDINGS

May 17, 2022 at 6:30 PM

Chairman Long called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Long, Fajardo, Levasseur, Trisciani

Absent: Alderman T. Sapienza

Messrs.: L. LaFreniere, P. Goucher

1. Communication from Leon LaFreniere, Planning & Community Development Director, submitting a draft Request for Proposals for the Hallsville School property.

Chairman Long asked are there any questions on the RFP. I know they are looking for a date. My understanding is six weeks is a normal length of time to get submissions in. Is that correct Leon?

Leon LaFreniere, Planning & Community Development Director, responded it is entirely up to the committee and the Board but certainly it takes time to be able to respond adequately to a request such as this. People need to put together their budgets and get design teams in place and do some analysis and due diligence. I think that 4-6 weeks would be a minimum.

Chairman Long asked is it normally a Friday that submissions are due on.

Mr. LaFreniere answered that wouldn't matter since they are being submitted to the Clerk unless the Clerk has any preference. I don't think it matters if we just pick a date certain.

Chairman Long stated I am thinking July 15 by 4 PM.

Pam Goucher, Deputy Planning & Community Development Director, asked what dates are you going to have available for people to go and view the property.

Chairman Long stated I was speaking with Kevin Sheppard. Would it be easier if...because we are going to get proposals in and some aren't going to be complete when the proposals we get that are complete can we offer some viewing dates? I am not sure if that should just be for the applicants or if it is better to include that in the RFP.

Alderman Trisciani stated it should be earlier and before they submit a proposal.

Ms. Goucher stated I feel like they are going to need to see the property to have the full input of what needs to be considered.

Alderman Trisciani stated I am also a little concerned about the July 15 date with the July 4 holiday. A lot of people go away and it might be difficult to align resources to get the design work that they need in time.

Chairman Long asked do you want to push it forward another week.

Alderman Trisciani answered maybe July 30 or whatever date falls at the end of July.

Chairman Long stated so that will give them two months.

Ms. Goucher stated I think that is reasonable.

Alderman Trisciani stated given the difficulty to find resources and trying to put...I know from experience that trying to put pricing and everything together right now is a real challenge.

Ms. Goucher asked Leon do you have a recommendation regarding the timeframe.

Mr. LaFreniere answered I think what has been talked about makes sense. We want to pay attention to the Clerk's agenda deadline. If you want to see these back to committee, we would want to have the deadline a minimum of two weeks ahead of the next committee meeting so there would be an opportunity to look at the proposals and then for the Clerk to be able to have those for the agenda.

Matthew Normand, City Clerk, stated the committee would meet on August 16 after the July deadline.

Chairman Long stated we have one meeting in August right.

Alderman Trisciani stated we could do a committee meeting at any time can't we.

Chairman Long replied yes we can call a special meeting.

City Clerk Normand stated we might be able to squeeze it in on August 2 which would like up with the BMA meeting.

Mr. LaFreniere stated I would suggest to you that if it is August 2 that the deadline for submittal would need to be in advance of that in order for the review committee to look at it as well as to get it to the Clerk in time for the agenda which is usually a week in advance.

Alderman Trisciani stated I still feel like the July 15 date crunches everything. I think it is in our best interest to do this the right way and get people time to do it the right way.

Chairman Long stated so July 29 would be the proposal due date at 4 PM. This would give a few weeks for the review committee to look them over and we could still meet on August 16. Matt does that work?

City Clerk Normand responded you can meet whenever the committee wants to meet.

Ms. Goucher stated one of the questions I have is regarding the selection committee. Do you want these proposals reviewed before they come to this committee or do you want them coming to the committee as they are received?

Chairman Long stated a selection committee is okay with me.

Alderman Trisciani asked do we have to select an alderman to be on that.

Ms. Goucher answered that would be up to you.

Chairman Long stated we could just nominate an alderman to sit on this selection committee. Alderman Heath may want to be on it. We can take care of that prior to the review.

Mr. LaFreniere stated our department will be prepared to report back to the Board if for some reason there is more time needed after the submittal deadline and report back to the committee after reviewing the applications. If it turns out there are enough applications where it is going to take more time or if the committee feels it wants to interview, for example, the applicants then that would obviously take more time. We probably wouldn't be able to do that in a week. If that were the case, then what the department would do is report back to the committee and say that we would come back at the August L&B meeting to report our recommendation.

Chairman Long stated the only other question is the City may have funding from multiple sources. Do we put that in there because I don't want anybody to be angry if they don't qualify for any of the multiple sources that we have?

Mr. LaFreniere responded it is going to depend on the uses proposed. If it is for affordable housing, for example, there will be some potential opportunities for HOME funds to be used but until we know what the proposals are, we really can't make any commitments as to funding that would be available. I think it is appropriate to let people know that there may be opportunities there for the right application.

Alderman Trisciani asked can we just say may be available for qualified applicants. Maybe we can clarify that so everyone knows we have money available.

Mr. LaFreniere answered perhaps we can say qualified proposals as opposed to applicants.

Chairman Long asked do we want to add the gym for continued public use.

Alderman Fajardo stated I think we heard that loudly and clearly. I will state that we did hear that feedback from the community but at the same time we are asking people to submit their ideas as well.

Mr. LaFreniere stated I think that could definitely be an evaluation criterion. You may receive a proposal that doesn't meet all of the goals of the committee but provides for public access so that may rate a little higher or vice versa you might receive a proposal

that strongly meets the goals but doesn't include that utilization. I think that adding it as one of the criteria by which the proposals will be evaluated is a good idea and then obviously it would be the committee and full Board's decision.

Ms. Goucher stated if I might add, if you wanted to go that far and make a statement about community use, on page 3 under the evaluation criteria we could add another bullet. It depends on how flexible you want to leave it.

Chairman Long asked which page is that.

Ms. Goucher responded page 3 under criteria. If you felt that what was important was the continued use of the gymnasium for the community, you could insert that but I think what Leon was saying is someone might have a totally different idea that may be something you would be amenable to and it might cramp their style if we include it.

Chairman Long stated I am just thinking that if someone proposes a lease, the public benefit plays into that.

Mr. LaFreniere stated I think that putting an additional bullet point as Pam stated to suggest continued public access to the facility would be criteria that would be considered in the evaluation would be good.

Alderman Trisciani stated maybe we should ask Alderman Heath since it is her ward and she was at that meeting.

Alderman Heath stated that would be good.

Mr. LaFreniere stated okay we can put that in.

Chairman Long stated that is all I had. Everything else looked good. Pam is there anything else you have?

Ms. Goucher responded I just want to confirm that you are okay under the proposal consent for price offer or long-term lease. Is that something you still want to consider?

Chairman Long replied yes that is fine. I thought that was pretty self-explanatory.

Alderman Trisciani stated the only other thing is we probably want to do the access to the property as soon as possible.

Mr. LaFreniere stated we can coordinate that with Facilities.

Chairman Long asked so the committee wants to add dates to the RFP.

Alderman Trisciani responded well if we are saying that proposals have to be in at the end of July maybe we need to have that viewing period really quickly. We want to make sure they have enough time.

Chairman Long stated I was thinking of one day time slot for two or three hours and also an evening for two or three hours. Do we think that is enough time or do we need more dates?

Mr. LaFreniere answered I would suspect that for anyone who is serious about submitting a proposal, there may be more than one visit desired and the reason being you may have an entity or agency interested in making a proposal but they might need to bring in their design team or consultants for part of the due diligence to be incorporated into their proposal. I would suggest that we set a specific date and time for the initial appointments and perhaps we can put in additional language that would suggest there could be additional opportunities as necessary. We can leave it loose in the RFP but make everyone aware that the facility would be made available for that due diligence.

Chairman Long stated I should call Facilities to check their availability. I know that they don't work at night so they would have to hang out for three hours to see if anyone came to view it.

Mr. LaFreniere stated I am sure we can sort that out with them. We can certainly come up with some dates and times with Facilities and email the committee to let you know.

Chairman Long asked so Planning could pick a day and evening initially and add that upon request there will be additional viewing times by appointment or what have you.

Mr. LaFreniere answered yes.

Alderman Levasseur asked what restrictions are you putting on this RFP. That the gym remains open to the community?

Mr. LaFreniere responded I think what has been discussed is we would introduce that under the evaluation criteria and that would be one of the criteria on which all of the applications would be reviewed. If you had two proposals that were of equal weight for example, you could potentially rank the proposal that wants to continue public access higher but that would be up to the committee.

Alderman Levasseur stated I don't think we should put any restrictions on this. If we want senior housing in there and then you want the open gym for the community to come in, we won't get any serious proposals.

Chairman Long asked what if somebody wants to redo the façade.

Alderman Levasseur stated I didn't say that when it gets to Planning they wouldn't put any restrictions on it. Planning would decide what the outside would look like but when we are looking at potential property buyers or property owners, I don't think that any serious developer who wants to build there is going to want to leave the cafeteria or gym open for the public to come in. That is going to kill a lot of these proposals. Maybe we will get a non-profit that will come in and do what the original intent was but they want to pay for it. That may be one project. Another proposal may come in that says they want to use that space for the seniors themselves because it is a wide open area.

I don't think the restriction of opening that gym up to the public is going to get us any serious investors in my opinion.

Ms. Goucher responded I don't think it is a restriction. It is just a criterion.

Alderman Levasseur replied well a criterion is a box that gets checked off. Have you had restrictions put on buildings before or criteria where people still come in and give you an offer that doesn't include that or are they okay with that?

Mr. LaFreniere stated most of the RFP's that we have sent out have included criteria upon which these proposals will be evaluated. The intent is to give respondents some guidance as to the nature of the things that the city is looking for and would consider to be a benefit.

Alderman Levasseur asked do you think this is a good criterion to put on a property.

Ms. Goucher answered it is just one. In other words, there are a number of criteria outlined. That doesn't mean that someone who has a great proposal but doesn't propose using the gymnasium for community use will not be considered. It just means...

Alderman Levasseur interjected I am not worried about whether they will be considered. Do you think there will still be bids on the property if that is in there?

Ms. Goucher replied yes because it is just a criterion. It doesn't say that they have to do that.

Alderman Levasseur asked so you think there will be bids on it. I know that we put out the Pearl Street Lot and some other lot for an RFP maybe six months ago. I haven't heard anything about what is coming in. Nothing. I think you have a restriction on this for two months. That is a short window. The last recommendation that I believe Alderman T. Sapienza made is we leave this as open as we could to see what we get and then we could make the decision as a Board. I don't like the idea of criteria restrictions being put on this property. I want to see who is willing to do something with it. Nobody would have ever expected that the police building would be torn to the ground and then have what is going in there going in. Somebody may decide to come in and say we have a great lot and we can put in a high rise for seniors there but with criteria and restrictions, we are handcuffing ourselves and I am afraid of that because I really see a lot of potential there.

Ms. Goucher answered I agree that we want to see what people's imaginations come up with and we want to see all of the possibilities. I think it is phrased in a way where it says these are things the city would consider favorable but is not phrased in a way that says check this box.

Alderman Levasseur stated as long as the language is included in there that these criteria are something we would like but will not kill your project.

Mr. LaFreniere replied that is accurate. None of these are requirements. This is all based on feedback from the neighborhood meeting and is an effort to reflect what the neighborhood suggested would be a good outcome for the property.

Chairman Long stated the RFP says that inquiries should be referred to the Clerk. I would assume he would just forward those to Planning. Is there someone in Planning that should get these inquiries?

Ms. Goucher stated Matt is chomping at the bit. He doesn't want them coming to him.

Chairman Long stated he would just forward that to Planning correct.

Mr. LaFreniere answered typically, and we have already this discussion, an RFP of this nature would be put out by the Economic Development Director. In recognition of the Economic Development Director being pretty overwhelmed at this point trying to get the office up and running, we are ready to help in any way we can. In this case, once the Clerk receives the proposals and stamps them in, they can forward them to us. We will schedule meetings with the selection committee and see what comes out of that and report to this committee.

Chairman Long stated well if somebody calls and says can I view the property next Wednesday then Matt would refer them to Planning. I am thinking about people who are doing their proposals and may have questions. This says to call the Clerk to get information when they should really be calling Planning.

Mr. LaFreniere responded I don't think that was the intent. The intent was just for the Clerk to be a repository for receiving the proposals. We can change that to Planning if the Clerk feels that is a burden.

Chairman Long stated so if anyone needs information while filling out their proposal, they should contact Planning.

Mr. LaFreniere replied we will take the point on that.

*On motion of **Alderman Trisciani**, duly seconded by **Alderman Fajardo**, it was voted to approve the Request for Proposals for the Hallsville School property with an additional evaluation criteria regarding maintaining public access to the building, and a due date of Friday, July 29, 2022 by 4 PM.*

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Fajardo**, duly seconded by **Alderman Trisciani**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Harmond".

City Clerk