



MEETING SYNOPSIS

October 3, 2019

The following is a summary of the second meeting of the Elevate Advisory Council Cultural Arts and Tourism Subcommittee. The meeting attendance sheet is attached to this summary. The agenda and other meeting materials can be found on the Elevate Tuscaloosa website under Advisory Council > Meetings.

A discussion was held on the following topics:

Process Updates

Brendan Moore (City of Tuscaloosa) provided an update and review of the Elevate accountability process. He also discussed the subcommittee members' roles and responsibilities.

Mayor Walt Maddox (City of Tuscaloosa) thanked the subcommittee for volunteering their time to provide input, advice, and counsel towards the Elevate process. He recognized that the subcommittee members are advocates in the community and asked them to continue to be ambassadors. Mayor Maddox emphasized that Elevate Tuscaloosa was not passed to maintain status quo, but to take the City of Tuscaloosa to the next level.

Mr. Moore encouraged subcommittee members to provide ideas and input for process improvements. He provided an example from the Elevate Parks and Recreation Subcommittee. Members expressed their desire to master plan all the parks, and this recommendation will be implemented. Mr. Moore also acknowledged that new projects could be added to the process as opportunities arise. All topics are up for discussion, even if they are not on the current agenda.

Bama Theatre

Brendan Moore updated subcommittee members that the City Council approved Ellis Architects to begin design work on the Bama Theatre on October 1.

Mike Ellis (Ellis Architects) expressed thanks for the opportunity to work on the historical Bama Theatre. The first phase of design work will begin in October and will include investigating existing conditions to see what needs improvement in order to bring the Bama Theatre to elite status. The investigation will include both the interior and exterior of the theatre. Examples included: theatrical aspects (lighting, rigging, and sound), backstage, ticket booths, seats, restrooms, and concessions. Consultants from Atlanta will evaluate the acoustics of the theatre. Construction will

need to be phased due to scheduled events and PARA offices located in the building.

Sandra Wolfe (subcommittee member), who is also the director of the Arts and Humanities Council, stated that, through their membership in the League of Historic American Theatres, she can engage with other venues that have undergone renovations. The Alabama Theatre and the Lyric Theatre, both located in Birmingham, are examples. Ms. Wolfe noted that plumbing is a major concern at the Bama Theatre. She referenced the current performance “Annie”, and the thousands of children and adults who are using the facility and restrooms. Ms. Wolfe also informed members that renters, some of which have recurring annual events, are concerned about the future renovation and its effects on scheduling.

Mayor Maddox noted that the original budget provided by PARA was incorrect and under budgeted, and inquired about the opportunity for the Arts and Humanities Council to use the design work by Ellis Architects to fundraise and attract community partners. Ms. Wolfe agreed with the Mayor that fundraising would be essential for the improvement of the Bama Theatre. She noted that, although plumbing is a priority, it is not a change that the community will be able to physically see. The Bama Theatre was originally built as a film house, and in the 1970s the Arts Council changed it to a performing arts venue, which is why the plumbing and restrooms are not adequate.

Gene Poole (subcommittee member) noted that the Bama Theatre is reserved throughout the year. He inquired about the possibility of moving scheduled events to another facility in order to complete construction projects and afford a reasonable length of time to the renovations. Mr. Poole also mentioned the idea of increasing the price of renting the theatre in order to bring in more revenue. Ms. Wolfe agreed that finding an alternative space would be ideal, but did not want to interfere with non-profit organizations and their opportunity to fundraise.

Mayor Maddox discussed the pros and cons of closing the Bama Theatre for an extended period to renovate. He noted that each month construction is delayed, there is an increase in cost. A cost analysis could be completed to determine whether phased construction or closing the theatre would be best.

Jimmy Warren (subcommittee member) inquired if there are plans to provide additional events at the Bama Theatre. Mr. Ellis responded that was the intention and informed members that the consultants from Atlanta would evaluate the types of events and productions that could be implemented. Some theatres have been able to monetize by implementing VIP seating, sponsorships and advertising. Sarah Patterson (subcommittee member) suggested the idea of selling seats that would include a plaque with the donor’s name. Members also discussed the importance of not losing seating capacity in the renovations.

Tuscaloosa Public Library (TPL)

TPL-CHOM Partnership

Brendan Moore updated members that the City Council approved the City of Tuscaloosa to finalize the purchase of The Tuscaloosa News building on October 1.

Mayor Maddox thanked Elevate team members, especially Brendan Moore and Glenda Webb, for their dedication to the project. He also thanked City Council for allowing the purchase of the building while the details of the agreement between the Tuscaloosa Public Library (TPL) and the Children's Hands-on Museum (CHOM) are finalized.

Mr. Poole asked what would happen to the Tuscaloosa News building if the agreement between TPL and CHOM does not go through. Mayor Maddox responded that the city has been approached by other non-profit organizations that would be interested in the space.

Rick Freemon (subcommittee member) who also serves as the executive director of the Tuscaloosa Public Library, provided insight that acquiring the property has been the first priority. He noted that there have been discussions about the partnership but not an opportunity to formally discuss details in these early stages.

Brendan Moore echoed Mr. Freemon. Once the building is purchased, phase two will address the agreement between TPL and CHOM. This process will involve board members, multiple meetings, and discussions.

Joseph Brown (subcommittee member) asked if the space will be solely used for CHOM and TPL. Brendan Moore responded that it would; there is currently 90,000 square feet of usable space and the possibility of adding square footage, restaurant components, or other features on the site.

Mayor Maddox explained the importance of programming. He used the McWane Center in Birmingham as an example. Due to the incredible programming offered at the facility, parking and other logistical concerns become a nonissue.

Jimmy Warren stated that he has received community feedback that this site would be ideal for a conference center. Mayor Maddox responded that the city has yet to receive responses to its Request for Proposals for a convention center feasibility study. A conference center will require new construction. The Tuscaloosa News building is in good condition, and due to its size and layout, it is a good fit for TPL and CHOM. Mayor Maddox also noted that, despite rumors, the conference center will not be built at the current McFarland Mall site. The conference center will need to be integrated into the downtown-riverfront area to maximize connectivity between the venue and other assets like hotels, restaurants, and attractions.

Conference Center and Athletic and Events Center Feasibility Study RFP

Glenda Webb (City of Tuscaloosa) updated subcommittee members that the Request for Proposals (RFPs) issued for a feasibility study to address a conference center and/or athletic and events center are due November 1. About 100 firms were solicited both directly and online. The city has received questions and comments from interested firms. For example: a firm inquired if there was a budget set for the study. She responded that the City of Tuscaloosa wants the best result, and, therefore, wants each responding firm to submit their best proposal.

Jimmy Warren inquired about the details of the feasibility study. Ms. Webb informed members that venue size, location, operations, maintenance, programming, and many other aspects will be analyzed in the study.

Brendan Moore reminded members that the feasibility study includes both a conference center and an athletic and events center.

Ms. Webb updated members that Don Staley and Heather Dill are meeting with city staff on November 4 to review the RFPs. Mr. Moore asked subcommittee members how they want to be updated on the RFP review process since the next subcommittee meeting will be held in early 2020. Mr. Warren suggested that the subcommittee meet in November in order to discuss the most qualified firms who respond to the RFP. Subcommittee members agreed that November 7 will be the most optimal date to meet.

Joseph Brown inquired if the study would take into account Coleman Coliseum. Ms. Webb responded that Coleman Coliseum would be taken into consideration generally as an athletic facility already located in the Tuscaloosa market; however, it is a University of Alabama facility and not generally available for public use.

Mayor Maddox noted that the University of Alabama (UA) Chancellor has agreed to collaborate with the city on the feasibility study, to the extent necessary. The city does not wish to compete with the UA and its existing meeting spaces and athletic venues, but instead to supplement what they provide and make it available to the larger community. Ms. Webb echoed that the UA and the city work well together, citing the Bryant-Denny Stadium expansion as an example. She also noted that UA's success directly affects the city's revenues (lodging tax, sales tax, etc.).

Mr. Brown also inquired if a traffic study would be done at the same time as the feasibility study. Ms. Webb informed members that current Lurleen Wallace Blvd construction and future Martin Luther King Blvd road improvements will increase traffic counts in the area where a conference center could be built.

Group Discussion

Jimmy Warren inquired if there are missing arts or cultural opportunities in the community that have not been taken into consideration.

Sandra Wolfe replied that there are needs for workshop and office space. She referred to the Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center, which is owned by Christ Episcopal Church. Ms. Wolfe described her vision of a potential downtown “arts corridor” from the Cultural Arts Center to the Bama Theatre. Mr. Warren asked Ms. Wolfe and Don Staley (subcommittee member) to brainstorm the features Tuscaloosa is missing in the cultural arts and tourism arena and bring their ideas back to this body for discussion by the group in a future meeting.

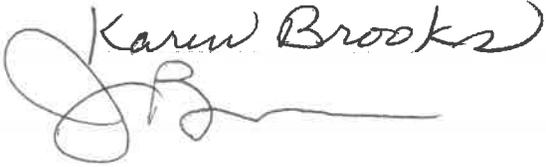
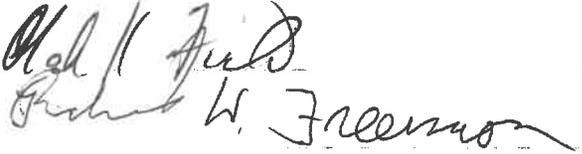
Mayor Maddox mentioned the PARA offices on the second floor of the Bama Theatre and the need to provide them with a better location. The offices could be used for the Arts Council and included in the Bama Theatre renovation process.

Next Steps

The Elevate Cultural Arts and Tourism subcommittee will meet November 7 to review the feasibility study RFP responses selected by Don Staley, Heather Dill and city staff.

Gene Poole was selected to address the full Elevate Advisory Council on October 24 on behalf of the Cultural Arts and Tourism subcommittee.

Cultural Arts and Tourism
 Meeting 2
 October 3, 2019

First Name	Last Name	Signature
Karen	BROOKS	
Joseph	BROWN	
Heather	DILL	
Chris	ENGLAND	
Mark	FIELDS	
Rick	FREEMON	
Tyshawn	GARDNER	
Jim	PAGE	
Sarah	PATTERSON	
Gene	POOLE	
Don	STALEY	
Jimmy	WARREN	
Glenda	WEBB	
Sandra	WOLFE	

Meeting 2
October 3, 2019

First Name

Last Name

Signature

Eddie
JASON

Pugh
WALKER

E. Pugh
J. Walker
MIKE
Carl

MIKE
John

ELLS
Carl