



Town of Carrboro

Town Hall
301 W. Main St.
Carrboro, NC 27510

Meeting Minutes Board of Aldermen

Tuesday, January 20, 2015

7:30 PM

Board Chambers - Room 110

Present: Mayor Lydia Lavelle, Alderman Damon Seils, Alderman Michelle Johnson, Alderman Jacquelyn Gist, Alderman Randee Haven-O'Donnell, Alderman Bethany Chaney and Alderman Sammy Slade

Also Present: David Andrews, Town Manager, Cathy Wilson, Town Clerk, Mike Brough, Town Attorney

PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED CARRBORO ARTS AND INNOVATION CENTER

The purpose of the agenda item was for the Board of Aldermen to hear public comments on a proposal for a new Arts and Innovation Center that would replace the current ArtsCenter and bring Kidzu to Carrboro.

Annette Stone, the Town's Community and Economic Development Director, introduced the item.

Jay Miller, representing the ArtsCenter presented the project on behalf of the ArtsCenter.

Jonathan Mills, representing Kidzu, presented information on Kidzu.

Phil Szostak, a Board Member with the ArtsCenter and architect with the project, presented the project renderings and design options. He asked for the Town to provide \$7.5 million in funding, financed over the next 25 years and for the partners to provide \$7.5 upfront from donations, for a total project cost of \$15 million.

Betsy Bennett, Kidzu Board of Directors, presented the economic impact of the project.

Betsy Bertram, a Carrboro resident and second generation owner of Townsend Bertram and Company, stated that she is excited for the opportunity and spoke in favor of the proposed project.

Christine Council, a resident of Maple Avenue, stated that she does not support the allocation of public funds for the project. She stated that there are drainage, flooding, and overflow issues that the Town should deal with.

Brad Bonneville, a resident and business owner in Carrboro, stated that the Board should proceed with caution. He stated that it is a risky project for Carrboro and Carrboro's existing infrastructure and hardscape issues could use an upgrade before spending the money on this project.

Dick Bircher, a resident of Maple Avenue and business owner in Carrboro, stated that there are costs to being cool such as parking and noise. He stated that he feels that the Town is being rushed into making a decision. He asked that the Board consider the residents in the neighborhood first and spoke against the project as presented.

Pam Zornick, a resident of Carrboro, member of the Kidzu Board, and friend of the ArtsCenter, spoke in favor of the proposed project. She is also an early childhood educator in the County and spoke about a field trip from New Hope Elementary to the ArtsCenter and how much the children loved the experience.

Robert Schantz, spoke against using the Town funding for the project at this time. He stated that it was a financial risk to the Town and not an appropriate use of Town funds. He stated that the organizations should seek funding for themselves prior to seeking the use of public funds.

Liz Dyer, a resident of Carrboro, expressed concern with the Town turning into a city. She stated that she supports the ArtsCenter but the project needs to be scaled down. She stated that the rendering looks like Durham and not the Town of Carrboro.

Nathan Milian, representing Carr Mill Mall, stated that he is pleased to have the ArtsCenter as a neighbor. He stated that the plan does not make a provision for parking and it is unacceptable. He asked for the project to be placed on hold until after the Town's parking study. He asked the Board not to rush to judgment based on the partners' proposed timeline.

Wendy Smith, a Carrboro resident and part-owner of Cameron's, spoke in support of the project and stated that the collaboration between the partners makes the project better.

Deborah Usinger, a resident of Maple Avenue, expressed concern with the proposed project. She stated that it seems to be a rushed project. She is concerned with parking and the increased traffic that will be brought to the area. She stated that parking and pedestrian infrastructure needs to be addressed. She also stated that Maple Avenue is parked along during the Carrboro Music Festival to where residents can't even get out. She also stated that there are problems walking by the new Fleet Feet building and that those safety issues need to be looked into.

Braxton Foushee, a resident of Williams Street, stated that he loves the arts but does not agree that the Town should pay for the project. He stated that the Town has a need for workforce housing and asked the Board to spend the money for that need.

Charles Sune, a resident of Carrboro, stated that he supports the project but asked the Board to look into some transparency issues. He asked for the Town to look into the use plan and for additional information on the proposed hotel. He asked for a contingency plan for shortfalls and if the taxpayers are on the hold for it. He asked for the Cat's Cradle needs to be considered as a high priority.

Phaedra Kelly, a resident of Carrboro, employee of the ArtsCenter, and chair of the Tourism Development Authority, spoke in favor of the project. She stated that it supports local artists and businesses. She urged the Board to support the project. She stated that the ArtsCenter has a mortgage with huge overhead costs. She stated that the building is old and too small and with a new building, they could offer support to more low income artists.

Greg Andeck, a resident of South Greensboro Street, stated that there are great nuggets of opportunity in the proposal but also a lot of concerns. He asked who would own and operate the building. He expressed concern with the ArtsCenter's past financial position and asked if they could be a viable tenant in a Town owned building. He also expressed concern with a deal with land and cash for the move of the ArtsCenter and asked where the cash would go. He suggested that the cash be used to fund the buildings costs. He asked if the Town would have the opportunity to renegotiate the lease in the future to consider alternative organizations. He asked the Board to look into those concerns and stated that this project needs to be on the Town's schedule and not the developer's schedule.

Monica Nees, a resident of Carrboro, stated that there is more that needs to be known about the proposed new hotel. She asked if the Town can support the new hotel and asked what the occupancy rate is for the existing Hampton Inn. She also expressed support for the Orange County Library that would be located in Carrboro. She stated that there has been no discussion of the library but that it is proposed to be on the same site as the proposed project.

Ellen O'Brien, a resident of Maple Avenue, stated that she loves the idea of the ArtsCenter and Kidzu getting better, but that the location and site is ill-advised. She also stated that the rendering looks to be the size of DPAC and the proposed site is very small. She stated that the Board needs to get into the weeds before making any decisions about this project. She asked everyone to keep the project in perspective and to make sure what it being promised it what we will get.

Tim Quinn, a graduate student in City and Regional Planning at UNC and Carrboro resident, stated that he is curious about the financial plan that has been presented. He asked if a TIF could be used to finance more affordable housing in addition to the project. He stated that the building doesn't reflect the current architecture of the Town and that he would like more information on the hotel.

Dana Mochel, a Carrboro resident, expressed concern with increased traffic and parking. She also asked where the money is really going to come from because it sounds overly optimistic. She stated that the projects that she has been involved with have taken much longer than the proposed timeline presented. She stated that the ArtsCenter has a long history of coming to the Town and requesting financial help and stated that she does not want the Town to get stuck with a building.

Ellie Kinnaird, a property owner in Carrboro, spoke in support of the proposal and expressed excitement. She stated that the Hampton Inn is at 95% occupancy and expressed support for the second hotel. She stated that the parking garage has ample parking available and that the second hotel would provide ample additional property taxes. She stated that this is the essence of Carrboro and that the library is going to be a part of it.

Allen Spalt, a resident of 300 James Street, stated that he has been very excited for the 300 Main Street proposal since the beginning. He stated that he has also worried about the essence of that area, being the ArtsCenter and Cats Cradle would be squeezed out by the project. He stated that the moving of those businesses worry him and especially the idea that the ArtsCenter would close before the new building is built. He stated that Cats Cradle can survive anywhere but that he wants it to be in Carrboro. He stated that the Town needs more parking if there will be additional venues.

Peter Lee, a resident of Carrboro, stated that he can't support the current proposal because of the financial cost on other community priorities and the economic risks to the Town. He stated that the partners could set aside assets to guarantee their portion of the project and continuing operating and maintenance costs.

Nancy Smith, a resident of Carrboro, stated that she loves the ArtsCenter and would pay higher taxes to encourage the process and encouraged the Town to help the ArtsCenter obtain a new space.

Jack Haggerty, a Carrboro resident and business owner, stated that he does not support the project as presented. He stated that the building is not the correct design for the site. He also stated that the partners can't financially build the Center on their own and that the Town shouldn't take on the risk of supporting them. He stated that he does not understand how the hotel and the Arts Center can't do their deal without asking the Town to foot a portion of the bill.

Benjamin Filene, a resident of Carrboro, expressed concern with the project. He asked whether a hotel is the main priority of the Town if that should be the driving force of the project. He expressed concern with the parking and traffic impact. He also stated that the higher priority of the Town should be the library and asked that energy be focused on that instead.

Suzanne Valdivia, asked that whatever is decided that the Town continue to support the ArtsCenter. She asked that Kidzu and the ArtsCenter receive support whatever is decided.

Joal Broun, a resident of Carrboro, asked the Town how it would pay for the project as presented. She stated that is the main question and what would happen to the Town's ongoing Capital Improvement Plan. She stated that the Town has to have enough money to maintain the current facilities. She also asked what would happen to the new public works facility.

Mark Dorison, a resident of Carrboro and County Commissioner, stated that the Cat's Cradle can't be forgotten and that the area is already an Arts and Innovation Center. He stated that the developers of 300 East Main used the Cat's Cradle to get approval of the project and now they are now being pushed to the bottom of the list and that the Board has a responsibility to address that.

Robert Joyner, a resident of Carrboro, stated that his neighborhood will be directly affected by this project. He stated that he would like to see a detailed outline plan of how it intends to be paid for, agreements that are needed to put this project into place, how loss of revenues are dealt with, and what would happen if the hotel isn't built. He stated that this project does not address the infrastructure needs for this project. He asked the Board to look into what was promised with the 300 East Main

Development and see what didn't happen. He asked the Board to look into how the proposed programming will occur and affect the traffic patterns at Roberson Place.

Roy Campbell, a resident of Carrboro, stated that the proposal is very forthright and open. He spoke in favor of the project. He stated that it is a vision that will move the community forward and succeed. He asked for folks to look at Betsy Bennett and Phil Szostak's former work and how much they have accomplished. He stated that he thinks it is unbelievable how much parking has been brought up.

Emily Kreutzer, a Carrboro resident and business owner, expressed concern with the proposed project and the cost that it will take by the Town and who will end up bearing the costs of the project. She stated that certain businesses will benefit from it but businesses like hers, plumbing, won't directly benefit from the cost that they may be asked to bear.

Robert Olinger, a Durham resident, stated that he works at the business school at Duke and in performing arts. He stated that this plan is being thoroughly considered by the community. He stated that there are very few projects that help the local arts. He stated that all of the issues should be considered but that this is an incredible opportunity and asked the Board to consider to work on the project.

Pam Wall, the executive director of Kidzu Museum, spoke in support of the project and the economic impact that it will have on the Town. She asked the Board to consider asking questions but to not be shortsighted by the issues.

Melanie Levinson, an Orange County resident and Arts Curator, spoke in favor of the project and how it will support the next generations. She stated that there is a synergy of innovation around interactive arts based learning between the two partners. She stated that the community dialogue is needed and asked that the community allow the process to continue.

Gorden Jameson, an Orange County resident, professional artist, and founding member of Frank Gallery in Chapel Hill, spoke in favor of the project and asked the Board to dream bravely.

John Bowman, a business owner in Carrboro, stated that he feels that someone is holding strings over the Town and what can or can't be done. He stated that the architect will get paid and that he wants the project to work because of that. He also stated that the Cat's Cradle needs to be worked into this project and that it can work exactly where it is. He stated that another hotel does not fit in Carrboro and that it also doesn't make sense to complain about parking. He spoke in favor of the arts but asked the Board not allow someone that designed Durham to tell people what Carrboro is supposed to be.

Barbara Barnes, a local live sketch artist stated that she hopes the new Arts Center would have a place to have live art. She stated that businesses are making money off of artists and artists aren't making the money. She asked how much of this money will really go back to the artists. She also stated that the town needs low-income and more Section 8 housing.

Shannon O'Connor, a teacher at the Waldorf Emerson School, stated that the design looks like big city come to town and that this project shouldn't be based on just money. She stated that the visionaries

should be talked to. She asked for the project to include the Cat's Cradle and Frank Heath should be asked what he wants. She also said that kids should be brought into the environment and not just the museum.

Mark Chilton, a Carrboro resident, stated that this is a significant opportunity for downtown Carrboro but that the questions presented by the proponents should be addressed. He added that while they are difficult to finance, that it can be done. He stated that taxpayers are being asked to take a look at a particular method of financing and that it doesn't come from property taxes. He asked when the next opportunity like this will come along.

Mayor Lavelle stated that this hearing will be continued to February 3rd.

Alderman Haven-O'Donnell asked for the Board to set aside a work session to discuss and for Frank Heath to be asked to speak if he would like.

Alderman Slade asked that the hotel be asked to present on February 3rd.

Alderman Gist asked for folks to not spin the idea to just be about parking.

MOTION WAS MADE BY ALDERMAN CHANEY, SECONDED BY ALDERMAN JOHNSON TO CONTINUE THE PUBLIC HEARING UNTIL FEBRUARY 3, 2015. VOTE: AFFIRMATIVE ALL