

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Leawood, Kansas, met for a Special Call Meeting at City Hall, 4800 Town Center Drive, at 6:00 P.M., on Monday, August 18, 2008. Mayor Peggy Dunn presided.

Councilmembers present: Gary Bussing, Jim Rawlings, James Azeltine, Julie Cain, Gregory Peppes, Lou Rasmussen, Debra Filla, and Mike Gill.

Councilmembers absent: None.

Staff present: Scott Lambers, City Administrator
Patty Bennett, City Attorney
Brian Anderson, Parks Superintendent
Mark Klein, Asst. to the Planning Dir.
Deb Mansfield, City Clerk
Chris Claxton, P&R Director
April Bishop, Cult. Arts Coordinator
Richard Coleman, Comm. Dev. Dir.
Pam Gregory, Deputy City Clerk

Leawood Amphitheater Steering Committee Present: Bill Elwood, Chair
Mary Tearney
Dick Cooper
Alice Hawk

Others Present: Kevin Cowan, Kevin Cowan Architects
Greg Hasselwander, Kevin Cowan Architects
Kevin Jeffries, President, Leawood Chamber of Commerce
Jill Sederstrom, Kansas City Star

Opening Remarks

Mayor Dunn called the meeting to order at 6:15 P.M. Introductions were made by those present.

Bill Elwood, Chair, Leawood Amphitheater Steering Committee, noted the current amphitheater doesn't meet all of the expectations some people may have of Leawood; however, they come to the events, as is, without restrooms or concessions. Mr. Elwood noted there seemed to be a demand for this type of venue and there have been crowds of well over 1,000 at many performances. The committee has worked hard to find who they felt was the best architects for the proposed theater.

Greg Hasselwander, Kevin Cowan Architects, stated they had visited several different amphitheatres for comparisons.

1. Booth Amphitheater – Carey, North Carolina
Opened in 2001

Likes:

A very dynamic/contemporary amphitheater and was designed primarily for the North Carolina Symphony, which is not intended for multi-use. Seats 5,000 – 7,000, construction costs were \$12.5 Million. There are multiple restrooms and concessions areas, along with concessions on a “cart.”

Dislikes:

It was recommended on numerous occasions to serve hot food; they had no way to prepare this. ADA parking was accessed through the back. The stage was a deck, similar to one in the back of a house.

2. Kirkwood Amphitheater – Louisville, Kentucky
Opened in 2003

Likes:

Seats 2,400 with some covered seats, construction costs were \$9.2 - \$10 Million, air conditioned stage with quality throughout, equal to “Starlight Theater.” Nice restroom facilities and dressing rooms.

Dislikes:

Birds perched overhead on covered area causing damage and maintenance, small ticket booth area, one concession area, lifts are needed to change light bulbs, no ability for concessions on a “cart.”

3. Theatre in the Park – Shawnee, Kansas
Opened in 1969

Likes:

Seats 5,000, construction costs unknown, ample parking, fully fenced, multiple restrooms.

Dislikes:

No air conditioning, one concession area, little storage space, concrete stage.

4. Jesse James Amphitheater – Kearney, Missouri
Opened in 2007

Likes:

Construction costs \$1.4 Million, seats 4,500, ability to control sound from the stage or audience, irrigated lawn, and enclosed stage for lock-down.

Dislikes:

Lack of overall spacing, small stage, no restrooms, and limited concessions.

5. Jewish Community Center – Shawnee Mission, Kansas

Likes:

Nice large green room (back of house) space with plenty of cabinets, sinks, vending machines, etc., seats 504, construction cost unknown, fully equipped for theater productions, covered orchestra pit for other functions, nice loading dock.

Dislikes:

Lack of overall storage space.

Mr. Hasselwander gave a presentation on the proposed amphitheater for Leawood.

The amphitheater will be “tucked in” tightly toward the lake to allow shading for most of the audience from the trees. Features include: a drop-off area located at the front entrance, offices and first aid located in the main building with three windows for ticketing. Restrooms will be located on each side with concessions in the middle. A covered VIP area will be located in the back of the theater with catering available. There are approximately 1,700 seats throughout the entire facility, a lower concession and restroom area located within the trees, along with two family restrooms. There will also be concessions available on a “cart.” There will be a new parking lot located to the side; this will allow trucks to access the back of the theater, along with other multiple uses. There is a gentle consistent grass slope throughout the design.

The theater will be made from materials such as, cedar, limestone, and a new durable product called “hardy board.” Lighting will be clamped onto a grid to direct light onto the performers along with lighting systems located in the bottom of the theater cover. The front face is slanted to allow the sound to be driven down into the audience, rather than drifting out among the neighborhood. Seating will be located in the front with additional grass seating beyond.

Councilmember Azeltine confirmed with Mr. Hasselwander that the amplifiers will be used by the performers, as well as the orchestra. Mr. Azeltine noted the columns placed along the sides of the theater and confirmed there would be no obstruction of view.

Amphitheater Steering Committee Chair Bill Elwood noted there was an oversized garage door in the basement to be used for additional storage. Mr. Hasselwander stated that the dock area has a 12-foot tall door for unloading trucks.

Mr. Hasselwander stated they would be doing “point of sale” concessions.

Councilmember Filla asked what “point of sale” concessions were. Mr. Hasselwander stated it was similar to “*McDonald’s style*” where people stand in line at the registers and exit out. Some amphitheaters have “*cafeteria style*” concessions; this only allows two points of sale. The “*McDonald’s style*” allows six, with an additional three on the lower level, plus the “carts.” There is typically only 15 – 20 minutes to sell concessions at a theater, so this allows people to get to and from the concession areas quickly.

Councilmember Cain confirmed with Mr. Hasselwander that the events are free of charge and the only reason they would ticket an event is to not fill the seats over capacity. Mr. Elwood stated this could also be controlled with the number of cars at the event. There are no fences drawn in at this time; however, one could be added if needed. Mr. Hasselwander stated there was plenty of landscaping with only two or three access points located at the top of the theater that could be monitored for ticketed events.

City Administrator Scott Lambers and Councilmember Mike Gill temporarily left the meeting.

Amphitheater Steering Committee Member Mary Tearney noted there were doors to close off the stage area when not in use. Mr. Hasselwander stated this would allow use of the facility for many different events year around.

Councilmember Filla confirmed with Mr. Hasselwander the material used for the stage would be made of marine-grade plywood, painted black. She also confirmed that the enclosed stage area was 30 – 35 feet from front to back and the front opening was 50 feet wide with a large side stage area. There are dressing rooms along with a separate “star” room, green room, and restrooms all located within the enclosed stage area. Mr. Elwood noted it was not unusual for guest artists or orchestra conductors to request a separate dressing room.

Mr. Lambers rejoined the meeting at 7:04 P.M.

Ms. Claxton noted the stage area was large enough to accommodate the ballet or symphony.

Cultural Arts Coordinator April Bishop stated this space was equal to the size of Yardley Hall.

Mr. Hasselwander noted they would have the ability to cover the orchestra pit, if needed. The area directly outside of the orchestra pit will seat approximately 250 people, which would allow a nice size wedding.

Councilmember Filla confirmed with Mr. Hasselwander they intend to install a full basement. Mr. Elwood noted the orchestra instruments could be brought in through the basement and this area could be used for storage of the cases. Mr. Hasselwander noted the basement could also be used for shelter in bad weather.

Masterplan Budget:

Seating Bowl	\$1.2 Million
North Parking Lot	\$630,000
Landscaping	\$266,000
Stage	\$2.3 Million
Lower Level Restrooms/Concessions	\$157,000
Upper Level Restrooms/Concessions	\$796,000
Contingency	\$543,000

Estimated complete project cost is \$5,975,000.

Mayor Dunn confirmed with Mr. Hasselwander these costs were calculated with 2008 estimates.

Councilmember Bussing confirmed with Kevin Cowan, Kevin Cowan Architects that the projected cost estimate did not include the lighting and sound system. Mr. Cowan stated the estimated cost for this would be \$350,000.

Councilmember Peppes confirmed with Ms. Claxton this would replace the existing temporary theater, with exception that the transformer would stay.

Dr. Peppes noted previous concern of the neighbors of Steeple Chase and asked if they were aware of the ticket area and concessions being located so close to their subdivision. He asked how many feet from the property line they would be. Mr. Hasselwander noted it was over 120 feet from the parking lot, with another 500 feet from the ticket booth to the property line. Berms will be placed 3 – 5 feet tall with heavy plantings for a nice buffer.

Mayor Dunn noted there were also some previous soccer issues with the neighbors.

Ms. Tearney stated she didn't anticipate many complaints.

Dr. Peppes asked what happened with the money that was allocated to the current amphitheater for restrooms and concessions. Ms. Claxton stated this money was on hold and they needed to discuss where it could be distributed at a future meeting.

Dr. Peppes asked if this project was going to be City funded. Mr. Lambers stated it would be identified as a Capital Improvement Project [CIP] and discussed as to what funding sources may be available. Most people are going to expect the City to fund at least 50% of the project, and possibly solicit funds and grants for the remainder. There is, currently, no money in the CIP for this funding, with the exception of \$500,000 for this year.

Mayor Dunn noted it was a beautiful plan and thanked the architects and the Amphitheater Steering Committee for their work.

Mayor Dunn stated she was a board member of the Starlight Theater, which is owned by the City of Kansas City, Missouri. The \$25 Million worth of recent work that was done at the theater was all from private money. It is not assumed that the residents will pay for it through tax dollars or bonding. Mayor Dunn noted the City needed the residents input regarding the project.

Ms. Tearney stated she was waiting to see what was available in tax credits from the State, in case a donor was found. In Missouri, the cost is .20 cents on the dollar for a large donation, due to the tax write-off from the State.

Ms. Claxton stated they should have a future meeting to discuss other questions and what monies are available.

Mr. Lambers stated there needed to be a preliminary meeting at the lodge for the residents as soon as possible to prevent misinformation.

Mayor Dunn noted if this was a bonded project, at some point in the future all of the residents of Leawood would need to vote on it.

Mr. Hasselwander noted they were not trying to create another Starlight Theater and the proposed amphitheater was on a much smaller scale. Mayor Dunn noted it would also be smaller than the "Theater in the Park."

Councilmember Gill rejoined the meeting at 7:24 P.M.

Special Call Meeting

August 18, 2008

Mayor Dunn noted appreciation to everyone involved with the project.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 P.M.

Pam Gregory, Recording Deputy City Clerk