

MINUTES

SELECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM

THE MEETING WAS HELD IN THE AV ROOM #308 IN CITY HALL.

4:00 P. M., APRIL 4, 2024

Sam Minardi, Co-Chair, called the meeting of the Select Advisory Committee On The Municipal Auditorium to order at 4:00p.m., April 4, 2024.

Committee Members Present:

Sam Minardi

Carrie Fenwick* (over Zoom but was unable to participate)

Caitlin Cook

John Gianola

Bernie Layne

Members Absent:

Andrew Jordan

Other Councilmember Present:

A roll call was taken, and it was determined that a quorum was present.

1. BACKGROUND / HISTORY

Mayor Goodwin stated that the Select Committee is made up from members of the Facilities Committee and the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center Board. They will be discussing the challenges of the Municipal Auditorium, as well as possible solutions. After hiring OVG and after the pandemic, both facilities started to see a significant turnaround. ZMM Architects & Engineers was hired to assess the Municipal Auditorium for short- and long-term solutions to the decades of disrepair. The facility had to be shut down due to significant health and safety issues.

Adam Krason, from ZMM Architects & Engineers, added that the Municipal Auditorium is 85 years old, built by the City. Other than the art deco façade, the building is considered conservative modern in its architecture. The original seating capacity was reduced to 3,400 due to prior modifications.

Krason added that the building is in poor condition, adding that it was designed in a manner that supports a positive visitor experience or for generating revenue. Every building system requires work (mechanical, electrical, plumbing, etc.) if it is going to be salvaged. They looked at two options: full renovation and a new building. The full renovation would include a pre-function gathering space, restrooms, dressing rooms, etc. He added that even the building would still have many of the operation challenges if fully renovated.

The building is approximately 53,000 feet of space, with a main level with a large stage, mezzanine balcony and a basement that contains all of the support spaces for the facility. There is also a basement below the stage area, which houses a lot of the life-safety issues that were discovered. Krason added that the only part of the building that is out of the flood plain is the front entrance, so a lot of improvements would have to be made to keep the building safe from future flooding.

Krason added that the distinctive color of the building is not original, and was probably added in the 1960s. Challenges were identified not long after the building was completed that included poor acoustics and inadequate heating.

Per the assessment, significant challenges were identified:

- Electrical service and water damage – risk of explosion. A replacement would have to be built above the stage and out of the flood plain.
- Extensive masonry damage.
- Lack of fire water service to the building.
- Insufficient fire alarm system/lack of automatic smoke detection system.
- Inadequate roof drainage/damage to roof.
- Lack of automatic fire suppression system.
- Accessibility is almost non-existent.
- Unsafe dressing rooms/ deficit of restrooms

The Municipal Auditorium cannot operate until many of these issues are addressed. Krason added that State Code states that when a certain percentage of repairs are

done to a building, that building must be fully brought up to code. Krason added that the City would need to invest additional hundreds of thousands into an investigation of the façade. ZMM recommends that the use of the basement be abandoned except for storage, and that a 7,500 square foot addition be added to the facility with a full renovation. The second option would be to construct a new (approximately) 50,000 square foot auditorium. The cost of the two options is essentially the same.

2. DISCUSSION

Councilmember Gianola asked what prompted the initial inspection. Mayor Goodwin replied that the City requested it as they were repeatedly spending money on small fixes. There is a need for this type of venue, and it can be fully booked.

Councilmember Minardi added that OVG has said that the Auditorium hits the “sweet spot” of a venue that isn’t too big or too small. Krason added that they wouldn’t want to keep the size the size no matter which option they chose. The Mayor added that they have been getting requests from performers with the seating number that the Auditorium can provide.

Layne added that other facilities of the same type are also able to adjust the size of their venue to accommodate a wider variety of events. Krason recommended a feasibility study for the size needed based on community and performer need.

Chief of Staff, Matthew Sutton, added that this type of venue is an economic drive for the City, and decisions on its future should not be delayed.

Mayor Goodwin asked that the Committee send them any questions they may have so the information can be ready by the time they meet again in the next few weeks.

Councilmember Gianola motioned to adjourn the meeting.
Meeting adjourned.