



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes BRONZEVILLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RALPH HOLLMON, CHAIR

Rhonda Manuel, Vice-Chair

**Jayme Montgomery Baker, Radolph Matthews, and Fidel
Verdin**

**Staff Assistant, Chris Lee, 286-2232, Fax: 286-3456,
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Thursday, May 24, 2012

9:00 AM

Room 301-B, City Hall

Meeting convened at 9:06 a.m.

1. Call to Order.

2. Roll Call.

Present 5 - Manuel, Hollmon, Montgomery Baker, Matthews and Verdin

Individuals also present:

Melanie Swank, Assistant City Attorney

Ald. Milele Coggs, 6th Aldermanic District

Genyne Edwards, WOO Connections

Paul Bachowski, resident

3. Review and Approval of the Previous Minutes of April 25, 2012.

Mr. Verdin moved approval, seconded by Mr. Matthews, of the previous minutes of April 25, 2012. There were no objections.

4. Discussion Regarding Community Meetings and Engagement with the Bronzeville Cultural and Entertainment District Community.

Ms. Swank gave an explanation of the open meetings law. There are two triggers or components of the law. They are a numbers test and a purpose test. If a quorum of members is gathered together at any one location at any given time, there is a rebuttable presumption that the members are conducting the business of the committee. Such a gathering must be preceded by a public notice. State statute requires at least 24 hours public notice and city ordinance requires at least 48 hours public notice. Social gatherings, conferences, or chance gatherings may possibly be exceptions.

Ms. Swank said that the committee should do a public notice for any outside public event, neighborhood meeting, or gathering for any time when a quorum of members is present. The notice should state that a quorum of the committee will be present at the event for informational gathering only and not be engaged in any business of the

body. The notice must give time, date, and location of the meeting or event. For times when members are present at an outside gathering in a more formal role, the committee should plan ahead of time and notify the Clerk's office for public noticing of the gathering. The notice should state that the members will gather input from and respond to the community, which information gained can be brought back to the committee as a whole. An alternative for the committee is to send a representative to the outside meeting and come back to committee to relay the information gained from that meeting. This would not require public notice.

Mr. Hollmon said that members should attend Bronzeville neighborhood meetings and public notice should be done to prevent violation of the open meetings law.

5. Discussion and Presentation from Ms. Genyne Edwards, WOO Connections, Pertaining to the Bronzeville Cultural Center.

Ms. Edwards gave an update on the Bronzeville Cultural Center project. The old Garfield Avenue School building will be the base of the center. Planning is taking place, but the Common Council needs to accept the sale of the building by the City of Milwaukee. The main focus at the moment is to develop strategic and sustainability plans for cultural arts and entertainment and bring in key stakeholders to the center. Work is divided in two phases.

Ms. Edwards said that the project is in phase one, which is a visioning stage to obtain more information. The goal is to identify and bring a whole new group of people to develop a detailed plan and shared vision with fresh eyes and innovative ideas. A four hour visioning session will be conducted. Ald. Coggs and Department of City Development staff will assist in identifying participants. One to one interviews of thirty to forty individuals will be done. Stakeholders and those who have perspective on culture, arts, and creativity will be targeted. A report of the interviews will be generated for the committee and visioning session. An inventory of assets that currently exists in the community will be put together.

Ms. Edwards requested for the committee to help identify a date for the visioning session and to think of ideas for arts and entertainment community events for the summer and fall.

Mr. Hollmon said possible dates can be sent to the Clerk's staff, and then forwarded to the members for feedback.

Ms. Edwards said phase two will entail the development of the sustainability plan. The right occupants and a financial study will be looked at. The desire is for a three to five year lookout for long term sustainability. The sustainability plan should line up with the feasibility plan for the center and be based on what the building will allow.

Ald. Coggs gave an overview on the formal process to acquire Garfield Avenue School. Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) passed in committee and full board to permit sale of the school to the City for one dollar. The Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee approved the acquiring of the building. A file on the matter appeared at a Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee meeting five or six months ago. Questions were raised at this meeting about feasibility, financing, mothballing, the end user, the responsible party, and the tenant. The file was held for those questions to be addressed. Mr. Agee is working on a feasibility study.

Mr. Agee said he has been looking at the electrical system, fire safety, and Americans with Disabilities Act compliance since January. The plan is phased, and the building next to the school will be phase one first since it is more ready to be

occupied. This building is 12,000 sq. ft. with 6000 sq. ft. on each floor. Upgrades are needed, and the school will be next. The school is 52,000 sq. ft. Also being investigated are a preliminary site plan, reconfiguration of the parking lot in the rear, reconfiguration of the entrance to the rear, gym area, and sprinkling system at the school building. A full plan will be brought to the committee when completed.

Mr. Hollmon said that the cultural center should proceed carefully and not quickly. The school is from 1887, has gone through many code changes, and has been vacant for seven years. Substantial improvements need to occur to bring it up to code.

Ald. Coggs said that the building on the side of the school was built in 1967 and will need the least amount of work. It will go to phase one first. Rents from this building will help with the mothballing of the school building. Despite its vacancy, minimal maintenance has been done at the school by MPS.

Mr. Matthews inquired about the number of artistic entities who are interested to become occupants and the process for an organization to become an occupant of the cultural center?

Ms. Edwards replied that a broadened definition of entities possible will be considered, such as art organizations and other entrepreneurs or businesses who are supportive of the arts. The process is early. It is not known yet of how the center looks like and what exact entities should operate the space.

Mr. Hollmon said that the project is very early in the process. As the project progresses, there will be an opportunity for the committee and community to have input and be involved.

Ald. Coggs said for members to inform her, Ms. Edwards, and Mr. Agee of any parties interested in becoming tenants of the cultural center. Once the project becomes a formal process, those interested will be informed.

6. Update on 6th West North Avenue RFP.

Mr. Verdin left the committee at 9:48 a.m.

Mr. Agee gave an update on the 6th West North Avenue Request for Proposal (RFP). The RFP is close to being final and has new items of an environmental section, asking price of \$30,000 compared to the original \$15,000 price, the Office of Small Business Development changes, and new dates. DCD Real Estate recommended an increased asking price to reflect the real estate in the area. Agreements were incorporated for Emerging Business Enterprise (EBE) participation. Site visits will occur June 6 and 7, 2012. August 3, 2012 is the deadline date. An information session on the RFP is scheduled for Monday, June 11, 2012 from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. at 809 N. Broadway in the first floor conference room following the release of the RFP, which will be occur next week. Clerk staff should be notified by the committee if members will be attending the session. After the deadline, the committee will review proposals.

Mr. Hollmon asked if Mr. Agee has preliminary been contacted by any interested parties?

Mr. Agee said the plan is to have the information session to connect developers and business operators.

Mr. Agee spoke on a conceptual parking plan. All parking is at the rear of the building with 28 spaces. Parking is included in the RFP. There will be no curb cut allowed on North Avenue.

Ms. Montgomery Baker said that the parking lot and height of a building at the site should not expect the exposure of North Avenue to a resident's house north of the site.

Mr. Agee said that a driveway between the site and the neighbor provides a good buffer for the building to not abut that resident's property.

7. Considerations for Redevelopment Regarding RFP.

Mr. Agee said that in addition to the guidelines within the 6th West North Avenue RFP, there is an additional handout that provides considerations for the committee to aide them in making decisions and a recommendation. It is an addendum to the RFP and reflects considerations that the planning staff has in advance. The considerations breaks down the following facets: site layout, building placement, mass, form, facades, first floor, street level facades, and site details. Some specifics are no curb cuts, no one story or high rise building, and desire for a restaurant or a commerce oriented business.

Mr. Hollmon asked how much flexibility there is for an applicant to stray away from the considerations and how much opportunity there is for negotiation or meeting of the minds?

Mr. Agee replied that flexibility and negotiation may likely occur at different levels, particularly during the planning stage and at the Bronzeville Advisory Committee level.

8. Items for the Next Meeting Agenda.

Mr. Hollmon requested that Ms. Manuel and Mr. Agee think about agenda items and suggestions for the next meeting.

9. Set Next Meeting Date and Time.

Mr. Hollmon suggested June 21 or 28, 2012 as the next possible meeting date with staff coordination.

10. Adjournment.

Before adjournment, Mr. Bachowski said he was concerned with the word "Bronzeville" being used to identify the district. There has been no explanation as to its definition. There has been no open involvement or discussion from the community to determine this name as the community's identity. Use of this name to reflect the Bronzeville community in Chicago is not good since that community has not been successful. The cultural district may not necessary reflect African American culture anymore.

Mr. Agee said that the use of "Bronzeville" was determined from a redevelopment plan about seven years ago. There were a number of people involved and many

meetings occurred over time. This name was granted as the district's label through the Common Council process. A name change will not likely occur.

Mr. Matthews said that "Bronzeville" reflects the exodus of African Americans from the South. The name also reflects skin color, light, and treasure. These qualities are what are desired to identify this community despite any change that has occurred. This identification will help the community regain its culture and teach its residents about its history.

Ms. Montgomery Baker said that "Bronzeville" reflects the rich African American history, commerce, culture, arts, and entertainment that were previously in the community during the 1940s and 1950s.

Mr. Hollmon said that the idea to use "Bronzeville" as the district's name now was evolved from the community during the years of former mayor, John Norquist. This was the late 1990s and early 2000s. After a decade, the Bronzeville idea is finally progressing and coming together. The name was not something that was chosen with no purpose or reason.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:28 a.m.
Chris Lee, Staff Assistant**