



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,
clee@milwaukee.gov**

Thursday, March 28, 2013

9:00 AM

Room 303, 3rd Floor, City Hall

Meeting convened at 9:08 a.m.

Present 4 - Manuel, Hollmon, Montgomery Baker and Matthews

Absent 1 - Verdin

Individuals also present:

*Deshea Agee, Department of City Development
Genyne Edwards, WOO Connections
Ald. Milele Coggs, 6th Aldermanic District
Mark Doremus, Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service
Joe Dahl, property and business owner*

1. **Call to Order.**
2. **Roll Call.**
3. **Review and Approval of the Previous Minutes of May 24, 2012.**

Ms. Montgomery Baker moved approval, seconded by Ms. Manuel, of the minutes of May 24, 2012. There were no objections.

4. **Update on the African American Cultural Center.**

Mr. Agee gave an update on the former Garfield Elementary School and African American Cultural Center development. The 52,000 square foot school building is owned by Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). There is still interest to make the former school into a cultural center. MPS and the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee (RACM) approved the sale of the school building to the City in September 2011. In October 2011, the Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee held a file on the sale due to questions regarding the ownership and management of the building. Since that time, the Department of City Development (DCD) has done a feasibility study to determine the estimated renovations and costs to rehabilitate the building. Areas to be addressed, upgraded, or brought up to code would include: electrical, mechanical, interior finish, deferred maintenance, HVAC, plumbing, fire

alarm, emergency lighting, and Americans with Disability Act (ADA) accessibility. The cultural center would occur through a phase approach starting with the first and second floors of the annex portion of the building and then extending into the main building from the first floor up. DCD feels that the 1962 addition to the building would be an easier first step to address due to its more modern components whereas the 1887 main building would require more work. Determining the ownership and management of the building are top priorities. The City will serve as the first step to acquire the building. Ms. Edwards was hired as a consultant to look at multiple facets of the district. Her stakeholder meetings will assist in moving the cultural center forward.

Mr. Dahl asked why the building couldn't be demolished?

Mr. Agee replied that the former school is historic in nature.

Mr. Hollmon said that dealing with a building of this age and scale cannot be done quickly due to the tremendous costs associated with rehabilitating and modernizing the building. Knocking the building down had been a question that had surfaced early on.

Mr. Dahl questioned if the cultural center would be tied to the Holocaust museum previously neighboring the former school building?

Mr. Matthews said that the former Holocaust museum is separate from the Bronzeville development and is nationally important.

Ald. Coggs said that the City acquired the physical building of the former museum. The museum board still exists and is looking to resurface again somewhere if not in the Bronzeville district. There is potential of the museum being part of the cultural center or district. The cultural center is a separate discussion.

5. Discussion with the Bronzeville Consultant.

Ms. Edwards gave an update on an amended scope of work and strategy moving forward. Since her last appearance in front of the Committee, she and DCD have been in a research and information gathering phase focused around benchmarking, local outreach for informal feedback, and launching of a Bronzeville survey. These activities were done to gain a broader net of responses from residents and those engaged. There will be key round of interviews done to gain visioning insights to the district. The goal is to complete the research and planning sessions by July 2013. The first planning session is April 19, 2013 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Committee members are invited to attend. The goal of this session is to take all the information gathered and have a group of key stakeholders put together a plan, do asset mapping, and identify those individuals who would actively support efforts going forward. Subsequent sessions could occur in May or June with the same group of stakeholders if necessary. An implementation phase of developing a plan and carrying out activities of that plan would follow the planning session.

Mr. Agee said that the planning session is a private meeting and not a public meeting.

Mr. Hollmon said that a notice of a quorum of Committee members attending this planning session would have to be posted by the Clerk's office, if necessary, to avoid violation of the open meetings law. If necessary, the notice can state that the gathering is for a private meeting.

Ms. Edwards said that an alternative can be to have only three members participate in the planning session.

Ms. Edwards proceeded with her update. The key interviews have already begun. These interviews are one to one between her and about 15 other individuals from the neighborhood as well as those in targeted areas who have businesses that are desired in the district. The stakeholders for the planning session will be diverse and will include members of the Committee, art leaders, cultural leaders, youth engagement leaders, residents from the area, and business development leaders. Feedback from the interviews will not be attributed to specific individuals but be in made into a general final report. Initial conversations have produced the following themes: need for a business development plan for businesses, addressing vacant and blighted buildings along the North Avenue corridor, inclusion of intergenerational leaders, and benchmarking other cities that have had successes. A final report was provided to the City in December 2012, and activity has been much higher since January 2013. The planning session will also include the cultural center in addition to the whole district. Overall, this process is a long term commitment through the year after the planning session. People have shown a long term commitment, and there are engagement opportunities for the Committee.

Mr. Hollmon said that he will defer his participation in the planning session to allow others the opportunity to participate.

Mr. Matthews, Ms. Montgomery Baker, and Ms. Manuel said that they will participate in the planning session.

6. Discussion on the Development at 2349 N. Martin L. King Jr. Dr. in the Bronzeville Cultural and Entertainment District.

Mr. Hollmon said that he has not received any update for this location and that discussion on this topic should be deferred until more information or accurate details are provided. The location is the former Walgreens building.

Ald. Coggs said that having the property owner, who is currently out of the country, present as part of the discussion would be beneficial.

Mr. Dahl inquired if the original proposal of a grocery store at the location has changed as referenced in an article in the "Journal/Sentinel?"

Ald. Coggs said that a grocery store was the only proposal that had been presented at the site.

7. Update on 7th West North Avenue RFP.

Mr. Agee said that the RFP is pending Clear Channel's approval of the discussions related to its parcel being included in the plan, which has not been resolved. Clear Channel's parcel is a significant piece of the site. As a result, the RFP has not been put out. The alternative would be to do a smaller parcel, but it would not have the same catalytic effect for the district.

Mr. Hollmon asked if the negotiations had a time frame or were open ended?

Mr. Agee replied that the negotiations are open ended. DCD has drafted the agreement and is waiting for Clear Channel to respond.

8. Discussion on Exposing the Bronzeville Advisory Committee, Activities, and Events to the Community.

Ms. Montgomery Baker said that there should be talk of branding sites within the Bronzeville district with activities despite spaces that haven't been fully developed. Some opportunities or events to hold include movie nights, garage sales, games for kids, public art display, outside band rehearsals, and car shows. These events can be held regularly. Questions to think about include incentives, event management, and funding sources.

Ald. Coggs said that the Committee should connect with neighborhood leaders to discuss taking leadership in bringing activities or events to the area. Many of these events may not have to be recreated since there are some groups already interested who have the funding sources. She added that she will share contacts with Mr. Hollmon's organization.

Ms. Edwards said that there is a need to brand, have activities, and make the area visible now in tandem with the cultural center and Bronzeville district planning process.

Mr. Hollmon said that getting the contact list, engaging the community, and maximizing resources make sense.

9. Discussion on Bronzeville Advisory Committee Meetings and Attendance.

Mr. Hollmon said that he was concerned with the Committee's attendance and meetings. He requested a summary from the Clerk's staff. The summary showed that out of seven meetings of the Committee, almost 50 percent were informal. Four meetings have been formal with a quorum while three have been informal without a quorum. Members should be mindful of the need for a quorum in order for the Committee to conduct effective business moving forward.

Mr. Hollmon asked for Ald. Coggs to discuss the future availability with members in order for the Committee to move forward in making appropriate changes or additions if necessary.

Ald. Coggs said that she is working to initiate more members to the Committee.

10. Items for the Next Meeting Agenda.

Ms. Montgomery Baker said that there should be a presentation about the models of other cities at the next meeting. The Committee should get research on similar activities done by other similar cities in relation to Milwaukee Bronzeville district development.

Ald. Coggs said that the Legislative Reference Bureau can be at the Committee's disposal to do research if necessary.

Ms. Manuel said that DCD has done some research and can provide that information.

Mr. Hollmon said that the update on 7th West North Avenue RFP should remain an agenda item at the next meeting.

11. Set Next Meeting Date and Time.

April 24 or 25, 2013 based on the majority of members' availability.

12. Adjournment.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:06 a.m.
Chris Lee, Staff Assistant**