Creative Portland

Board Meeting Minutes

October 1st, 2014

3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

In Attendance: Alice Kornhauser, Peter Bass, Tim Honey, Patrick Costin, Genie O'Brien, Alex Jaegerman, Kristen Levesque, Arthur Fink, Penny Harris, Greg Mitchell, David Marshall, Robert Cote, Sondra Bogdonoff

Staff in attendance: Jennifer Hutchins and Jess Lauren Lipton

Guest: Bree LaCasse

Meeting Called to Order at 3:35pm.

Note: Backup materials not available for board during the meeting

Welcome and President's Comments

Ms. Hutchins and Ms. Kornhauser noted that Congress St was awarded by the American Planning Association as one of the top 10 streets in the country.

Ms. Harris stated that this award is evidence of the philanthropy of the arts and humanities organizations that live on Congress St.

Ms. Hutchins attended the city press conference at which the mayor suggested that a celebration of the street should be planned. Ms. Hutchins also noted that the arts are often the catalysts who are followed by those who contribute and invest in the arts.

Mr. Honey suggested inviting federal agencies to acknowledge their investment in the development.

Mr. Fink said that this is an opportunity to educate on what it means to be a great street.

Mr. Mitchell suggested recognition for other funders including the federal government, congress street delegation, and public money as a way to educate the city councilors about the use of public/private partnerships.

Ms. Kornhauser suggested creating a large infographic that illustrates the history of investments.

Mr. Marshall noted that a UDAC grant lead to the development of Congress Sq park.

Consent Agenda

Motion to accept the CA: 1st Mr. Fink. 2nd Ms. Levesque.

Mr. Honey noted that he would like to pull out the section on the World Affairs Council from the Executive Director's report.

There was no further discussion. The vote was unanimous.

Executive Director's Report

Ms. Hutchins gave the floor to Mr. Honey to update the board on the World Affairs Council.

Mr. Honey stated that the WAC will use funding from the city and the Cohen Foundation to develop programming around economic development in the immigrant community. Creative Portland will partner with WAC in looking at the arts as economic opportunities. This partnership has two parts: 1) data gathering as to who is doing what in the arts and identifying what they need to be successful, and 2) utilize the First Friday Art Walk in May to celebrate immigration. This would include working with the Portland schools and conducting workshops. This program will need a task force. Mr. Honey will head up the task force.

Ms. Kornhauser nominated Ms. Pottenger in absentia.

The board discussed various possible contacts for the WAC in the pursuit of this project.

Governance

Ms. Kornhauser introduced Dee Dee Germain and motioned to formally nominate her to the board. Ms. O'Brien seconded. Vote was unanimous.

The board was informed that Ms. McKeen would not be renewing her position with the board but will stay involved with Creative Space. The board publicly acknowledged and thanked her for her contributions past, present, and future, noting that she asked great questions and was a crucial part of the transition from PACA into CP.

A slate of officers was proposed to the board for a vote at the next meeting: Ms. Kornhauser as president, Ms. Bogdonoff as vice president, Mr. Bass as treasurer, and Mr. Graham as secretary.

Ms. Bogdonoff will be retiring from USM and is intended to assume the presidency in the 2015/2016 fiscal year.

Congress Square Redevelopment Committee Update and Discussion

The board welcomed Bree LaCasse as a guest on the issue.

Mr. Bass stated that the Congress Square redesign study group has had two meetings in the last few months and wanted feedback from the board to fully represent CP at these meetings. He provided a little history on the subject.

> The current standings on the matter such: after the referendum passed to protect the park, the Friends of Congress Square programmed the space through the summer with events, food, furniture, and free wifi. The group also worked with the Project for Public Spaces to develop an educational booklet about public spaces and the potential uses of Congress Square.
>
> The study group is considering two options. 1) redesigning the park as it currently stands or 2) look at an event center with Rockbridge Capital that would have a rooftop park. The study group went into meetings about the financial impact but there is a discrepancy in cost.
>
> The basic comparison of the two designs comes down to use. Working with the existing structure, a single level park would offer more flexibility, be highly visible, lower maintenance, and simple ownership model. The negative is the lack of active edges, grading the park is difficult, egress issues, and less money available for development.
>
> The proposed event center/elevated park could be a unique and bold statement that could alleviate some design challenges and re-proportion the park. There is an opportunity for programming and revenue from the event space. The challenges here include accessibility, privatization, safety, security, maintenance, management, and a potentially challenging partnership. (Submitted as an overview of the issue to frame out the following discussion.)

Mr. Bass added an editorial comment that he has not seen a deep enough commitment from either the council or the hotel.

Ms. Kornhauser asked for clarification on what decision needed to be made.

Mr. Bass responded that the council wants one of the two design ideas to be chosen and would like some direction from CP as to which one the board endorses.

Ms. Hutchins inquired about the costs.

Mr. Bass elaborated that the hotel was not interested in an elevated park. The city has offered to pay the differential for the structure and integration of the park.

Mr. Marshall wanted to clarify on behalf of the council. They want the recommendation of the best use of the park. And that the council has not offered to pay for anything extra. The Westin (Rockbridge) has not offered to pay anything more than initially discussed.

Mr. Jaegerman stated that the last redesign committee meeting came close to a choice but was hampered by the difference in opinion over costs. This will ideally be resolved by the end of the month as a recommendation is due on November 17th.

Mr. Honey suggested that Ms. LaCasse join the conversation as an advocate of the park.

MS. LaCasse says her group is committed to the park and have filed for 501(c)3 status. The Friends of Congress Square are continuing with programing and providing amenities. They are looking to hire full time staff. They acknowledge the physical and visual barriers to the park and the need for an ongoing management structure. FoCSq have begun conversations with the city and other parks organizations and are looking into becoming a membership organization.

Ms. Kornhauser thanked the FoCSq for their work.

Mr. Bass noted that CP has voted a few time to support the creation on an events center in the past but should consider what it is today.

Mr. Fink wanted to clarify that the proposal is for two separate levels.

Mr. Jaegerman said that the goal was to provide ADA access including ramps.

Mr. Fink asked if this would impact the types of programming provided.

Mr. Bass said that different programing would be anticipated based on the size of the park.

Ms. O'Brien noted the space needed a group paying attention to it at all times.

Ms. LaCasse stated that the current design has made organic use difficult and is looking to the redesign to solve some questions.

Mr. Costin asked about the relationship between the design effort for the plaza and the square is two separate initiatives.

Mr. Jaegerman said the council has instructed the redesign committee to view the square as a whole with the plaza so that all questions related to plaza should be considered within the larger square.

Mr. Costin noted that the committee needed design proposals that can be evaluated.

Ms. Kornhauser moved to close the conversation noting the excitement around visionary design.

A motion was made to authorize Mr. Bass to support the first design idea: a redesign of the current square without an event center. 1st Ms. Bogdonoff. 2nd Mr. Honey.

After more discussion, the motion was withdrawn, noting the board doesn't feel that it has enough information.

Mr. Fink stated he believes Mr. Bass has a sense of what the board is thinking.

Closing Remarks

Ms. Kornhauser thanked the board at their participation in the retreat. The issue of gentrification will be explored in future meetings and will be tied into the work plan over the next few years.

Minutes concluded at 5pm
- Jess Lauren Lipton