



City Commission Work Session Minutes

May 23, 2024 at 1:00 PM

City Hall Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue

Present

Mayor Sheila DeCiccio, Commissioners Marty Sullivan, Craig Russell (virtual), Kris Cruzada, and Todd Weaver, City Manager Randy Knight; Assistant City Manager Michelle del Valle and Deputy City Clerk Kim Breland.

1. Meeting Called to Order

Mayor DeCiccio called the work session to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. Discussion Item (s)

a. Old Library

Mayor DeCiccio said the purpose of the work session is to allow presentations of ideas for uses on at the old library site. She noted that previous attempts to determine a use for the building have been unsuccessful and spoke about the condition of the building and much needed repairs. She said most residents she's heard from would like to see a museum on the site. She approached Rollins College in the past to consider building a museum on the site and invited Rollins to this work session to present plans for a Rollins Art Museum. She noted that Blue Bamboo and Opera Orlando have also expressed interest in presenting plans for the building use.

President of Rollins College Grant Cornwall said Rollins has been developing plans for the Rollins Art Museum for several years. Plans for a museum the current site of the Crummer School have been approved by the city. Potential use of the old library would result in a less costly development than the projected \$30M cost to build a new facility. The college has been fundraising toward a goal of \$30m for a new museum and received commitments between \$17M - \$18M. If approved, those funds could be used toward repurposing the old library.

Mr. Ginsburg, former trustee of Rollins, said he met with some of the trustees he suggested to them that they consider the old library site as a possible location for the museum. At the trustees' direction, he and architects David Lamm and Robert Schaefer prepared plans and renderings for repurposing the building. He feels it is important to move quickly in order to preserve the present donations. If the college moves forward with a new building, it would take at least three years before opening. Mr. Ginsburg said he believes Rollins would like to buy it but would be agreeable to a long-term lease.

Commissioner Weaver arrived at 1:26 p.m.

Rollins Art Museum Director Ena Heller spoke about the consideration given to Mr. Ginsburg's concept and the commonalities of the art museum and old library being

educations spaces for the community. She noted that the museum has served almost 55,000 people and said the property would provide a larger platform and allow them to serve twice as many visitors. She is hopeful that Mr. Ginsburg's concept will be large enough to showcase their large art collection. She is confident that a partnership with the city and Mr. Ginsburg can result in the development of the Rollins Museum of Art.

Mr. Ginsburg noted the only challenge with the current building is the ceiling pad which is 13 ft. Some of the gallery space requires at least 16-17 ft. He said a 5,000 sq. ft. freestanding but attached building has been added to the renderings for discussion. He added that if Rollins and the city are able to come to an agreement, part of Rollins' requirement would be approval of a 5,000 square foot one-story structure that would provide the needed ceiling height for exhibits.

Mr. Schaefer reviewed the proposed site plan and potential changes to the ceiling height and addition of an atrium. He acknowledged the building needs to be brought up to code and made ADA compliant. He presented renderings of the exterior of the building and outlined the proposed changes/enhancements.

Mr. Cornwall clarified for the purposes of discussion, there are three parties participating: Rollins College, Mr. Ginsburg's team and the commission. He stressed that these plans are only conceptual.

Ms. Heller responded to questions about windows/lighting and protection of artwork and discussion followed on lighting in gallery areas. She added that the proposed building would allow for 3 to 4 more times the space for art displays and would like to have a space that could fit 100 to 125 people for lectures.

Commissioner Weaver feels the museum would be an excellent use for the building. He expressed concerns from residents regarding the traffic on 426. He said one of DOT's concepts is to put a roundabout at Ollie, Fairbanks and Osceola. He feels the roundabout is a great idea, but the lack of a traffic light would cause a problem with crosswalks. He said a bridge to the parking lot would be a nice addition.

Commissioner Weaver addressed parking issues and challenges with Rollins' valet parking and the proposed entry/exit on Lyman Avenue. He is amenable to most of what is being proposed however the commission has already granted entitlements for the Lawrence Center for both an art museum and business school. He said a better parking plan is needed and he would appeal to Rollins to revert the entitlements for the approved museum to parking lot for the sole purpose of valet and Alford Inn parking. With regard to the traffic pattern, Commissioner Weaver suggested the addition be on the second floor to provide parking and access from New England and covered parking under the addition.

Commissioner Russell agrees the traffic patterns are concerning and feels any entity looking to use the property should be mindful of the options FDOT is proposing for 426. In response to questions by Commissioner Russell, Ms. Heller provided information on the educational component and programs of the museum.

Mr. Knight said Blue Bamboo Center of the Arts is interested in using the property as well. He spoke about the process for moving forward and said legal counsel has advised

that the commission can direct staff to negotiate directly with Rollins or any other interested party to see if an agreement can be reached.

Jeff Flowers, representing Blue Bamboo, noted that the city has been funding Blue Bamboo for a number of years. He said the vision for the property would be to turn the bottom floor into a performance venue with evening shows and rehearsals on non-show days. He said the space is adequate for housing audiences along with a small concession area. There are plans to produce a recording studio/music school on the third floor that could be offered to Rollins and other area performers. He spoke about the benefits of bringing live performance art to the area and providing space for music lessons and other services. He said his group expects to make minimal changes to get the building functional at no cost to the city. The changes would be done incrementally, using the bottom floor initially with other renovations over time. He feels the Blue Bamboo's concept would be an economic benefit to the city.

Discussion followed on the financial viability of the Blue Bamboo proposal. Mr. Flowers said he is confident with the volume of shows, ticket pricing and sold out attendance, the Blue Bamboo will be able to make the needed changes to the property. Additional discussion was held on the history of Blue Bamboo and its impact on the community, the proposed recording studio and music school and potential collaborations with Rollins and/or other performing arts companies.

In response to questions, Mr. Flowers said the larger space would provide the opportunities for symphony or chamber orchestra and for children's programs.

Mayor DeCiccio noted that minimal renovations to the building, air condition and roof repair will be costly. The building must be up to code. She said the commission needs to understand how the building would be maintained financially (interior and exterior, electric/water bill etc.).

Mayor DeCiccio suggested Mr. Knight meet with Blue Bamboo and Rollins and come back with plans on how they plan to renovate and maintain the space and show they have a solid economic base going forward. Agreed by consensus. Mr. Knight said he would begin the process and add the topic to the June 12 commission agenda to formalize.

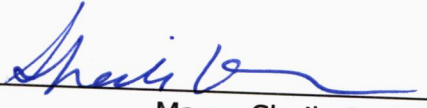
Commissioner Weaver said there two more entities interested in the property (Opera Orlando and an entrepreneurial company) that should be allowed to present to the commission. Discussion followed on the previous RFP process and lack of responsive bids. Mr. Knight said legal counsel has confirmed the city does not need to restart the RFP process. He asked for clarification that the commission is strictly looking for a cultural, non-profit use for the building, with no office or luxury condo space. Agreed by consensus.

Further discussion was held on negotiating sale of the property versus long-term lease. Mr. Ginsburg said Rollins' first choice would be to purchase the property, alternatively they would request a long-term lease. Mr. Flowers said the Blue Bamboo would be interested in a lease.

Commissioner Weaver will provide contact information for the two groups interested in the space and Mr. Knight will begin negotiations as directed.

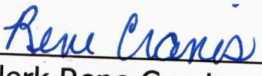
3. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:29 p.m.



Mayor Sheila DeCiccio

ATTEST:



City Clerk Rene Cranis