

PROJECT

Robert Crown Center  
Evanston, Illinois

MEETING MINUTES

SUBJECT

Public Meeting 01

MEETING DATE

03.21.17

MEETING LOCATION

Robert Crown Center, Gymnasium

PARTICIPANTS

Andy Tinucci, WTA  
Martin Lyons (ML), City of Evanston  
Lawrence Hemingway (LH), City of Evanston  
Don Wilson (DW), Alderman, 4th Ward  
Pete Giangreco (PG), Friends of Crown

The following constitute a record of the comments and questions made by the attendees and our understanding of matters discussed and information gathered. Other participants are requested to review these items and advise the originator of any errors or omissions.

## General Comments

- Project should recognize and respond to Evanston's mixed language population.
- Love the library being there.
- What is the Grand Design Idea behind this project?
  - WTA: social network/hub. Hallways are not just hallways. Interactivity/connector.
- Programming? What else can we add?
  - City (LH): looked at current use of RCC and looked to address those programs so we can improve/grow/expand to meet current/future demand.
  - City (ML): wants existing RCC to be the baseline. We don't want to lose anything, but need to consider it in the grand, city-wide context.
- Accessibility is critically important. Perhaps work with people with disabilities during the design.
  - WTA: Great suggestion.
  - WTA: 100% of the space will be accessible, with universal design standards.
  - Friends of Crown (PG): One of the reasons for the Olympic rink is so we can have skate-in skate-off sled hockey. It would be the only one in the state of Illinois. JJ O'Connor is helping us with design.
- We should try to fit in as much as feasible!
- What about an indoor/outdoor swimming pool?
- Is there a requirement to spend a certain percentage of the budget for public art? Will there be a priority on Evanston-based artists?
  - City (ML): Yes. Yes.
- Neighbor: Glad to hear about tennis courts and traffic study. Great idea to have indoor track. Older people need an indoor place to go in winter.

# WTA+MJMA

- Neighbor: We would love to see a brewery within the building. It would be reflective of the progression of Evanston. And local restaurants as vendors in the space. Will you be reaching out to high school kids since they are a primary user of the space? Perhaps with an online survey? How will this data be analyzed and used?
  - WTA: All data gathered will first be documented. This will be put into a program verification/summary document. How it will be evaluated is not fully known yet, but it is always a balance of space/budget/need.
  - City (ML): The final decision maker is City Council.
- Washington School employee: Would really like there to be collaboration between these two. Lunch café for employees would be nice!
- RCC is one of the most affordable for ice time. People come from all over the area. HEALTHY café! Not junk food. Hot chocolate.

## Community Comments

- It would be good to coordinate with the schools in the area, and if there was outdoor space for them too.
- Concern of increased traffic on Main – would prefer emphasis on Dodge. Kids cross Main to get to Washington School.
- Rooftop Gardens/Green space would be nice.
- Community Garden.
- Washington School does use the fields quite a bit, so need to take that use into consideration.
- Will this be an Evanston Community Center or a WEST Evanston Community Center? Neighborhood center or larger. Traffic concerns?
  - City (LH): We want a center that is for all of us. We draw currently from all over the City. Enhance the larger public services.
  - City (ML): Traffic study needs to happen. 1 at beginning and 1 again once the design is better determined.
- Traffic concerns – especially during events. Main will become very congested. Having a solution that has flex to it would be a great.
- Lee St neighbor: Lee is already full all day, every day. Very concerned about the increased programming. Like green, open fields, family focused. Do not make this the entry/service entrance/parking lot. (Strong support for this comment)
- Sidewalk on northside of property would be great. From Dodge to Lawrence!
  - City (ML): Good Idea.
  - WTA: Potential for this to be more than just a sidewalk. Could become programmed.
- Arts/Library are great ideas.
- Concerned - Construction time/trucks. Where will the go? It might affect the neighborhood.
- Public art, interactive art would be nice.
- More parkland – trees/flowers/etc. Outdoor quiet space.
- Concerns about it becoming a large parking lot. Would encourage access by foot, bike, bus on Dodge could be highlighted to reduce parking impact.

- Library is underfunded compared to other community library systems. Would like to consider making this library KIDS focused instead of a more wide ranged branch. Kids need a library here. (clapping)
- Is the main event the Ice Rink or the Community Center? What is the driver of the project? I don't use the RCC much because it doesn't meet my kids age range and don't skate? Will we actually get more community programming with the new center?
  - City (LH) – we want to expand on our programming offerings with the new spaces. Partnering with the library and collaborate to focus on school aged children. Will ensure not just ICE.
- Affordability. Don't pay for the programming on the backs of working parents.
- What are the hours of operation? Park security issues?
  - City (LH): Tennis courts are the only lit courts in the city. New facility will have programmed lighting to ensure lights get turned off. Times/specifics are for a later date.
  - City (ML): Plan is to also improve other parks concurrently.
- Dog run?
- What if traffic study were to recommend widening the street?
  - Alderman: Would not support that. Separately looking to improve traffic between Dodge and McCormick.
- Will you be researching the city/street infrastructure? Will it be limiting factor to the project?
  - WTA: yes.
  - City (ML): The City will review all proposed plans. May use the opportunity to make upgrades at the same time. Part of bigger picture.
- Impact on urban wildlife/birds.
- Parking structure but charge money, makes people park on the street, means people need stickers.
  - City (ML): Parking ticket revenue down, technology makes parking meter fees go up.
  - City (ML): Have not envisioned charging for a parking space at RCC. But technology can help. Goal is to not put parking burden on the neighborhood. Committed to using technology. Partnership with other places – schools. Want to avoid lots of paved areas.
- Has anyone approached west-end business district about being involved/contributing?
  - City (ML): The Landscaping company in that area are partners for the City. Will try to use local companies if/where we can.
  - Friends of Crown (PG): Community Solar is a possibility here. ComEd. Would like to use solar on the roof. Could take some for the building and supply the rest to the community. Looking into grant opportunities.
- Friends of Crown (PG): FOC is looking for a volunteer Grant Writer to help us pursue these opportunities.

## Budget/Schedule/Process Comments

- A Mayoral candidate said TIF money may be available?
  - City (ML) noted this project is not in TIF district and can't use TIF money for this or City projects. May use TIF for development around the area though.
- Where will the building be located? What is the project construction Sequencing?
  - WTA: Nothing determined yet.
- Question about finances/fundraising – what is the estimate on overall cost, goals, and percentage of City contributions.
  - City (ML): 2014 costs estimated \$30m for new project. \$12.5m City bond + \$17.5m fundraising. Potential other ways to raise funds – user fees, parking fees, etc. We will look at all the revenue available. We will be getting a cost estimate as part of the design to understand where we go next.
- Financing follow up – have to borrow \$12.5? Why not borrow \$20m? How will we ensure maintenance of new facility and operation will be better than current RCC – since it has not been maintained.
  - City (ML): Long-term maintenance is a key concern of private fundraisers. City/Council to make commitments to do that. Tennis program pays for itself. Which is great. But there is a commitment that the facility will be open to all, and community is not priced out. City does not have a cap on how much we can borrow but the Council will determine how much to allocate/prioritize.
  - Alderman: Goals include working on the City debt. Past concepts were too much. Fundraising efforts have helped a lot. And this helps put our debt amount within our comfort range.
- Is remodeling the current RCC still on the table?
  - City (ML): Everyone wants a new building. That is the plan. It's possible that rehabbing could still happen, but that is moving backwards.
  - Alderman: Fundraising response makes a new building possible in our minds.
  - Friends of Crown (PG): Sports-turf people want better fields. Location of the building hurts efficiency. Two sheets of Ice is very critical. Rehab would shut down the building for too long. All those reasons are why the gut-rehab is not really a good option.
- What happens if you don't get all the \$\$? Who prioritizes what happens?
  - Alderman: City Council will make decisions. Design in components in case we need to phase.

## Building Program Comments

- There is an Arts Community that meets at Crown. Ceramics currently shares with preschool, which is not ideal. There used to be more arts programming here. A re-expansion of the arts program might be valued by the community/kids.
  - kilns, racks, durable, sinks
- City (LH) confirmed that preschool/afterschool will have dedicated space in new RCC
- Advocate for separate arts/crafts and early childhood/afterschool/summer camps space.
- Noted that summer camp and preschool workers often have no more than a locker – really need SEPARATE employee space.

- Indoor tennis courts? Love that you are keeping the outdoor. But nowhere in Evanston to play indoor. Indoors seems to have the other indoor sports. Could pay for itself through memberships.
- Larger Arts space – costumes/set design for the ice shows. Storage, scenic work, sewing. Currently packed into small space.
- Maker Space! A neighbor would like to get involved with this programming.
- Love idea of indoor tennis courts. A climbing wall would be fun too.
- Like the idea of 2nd story to reduce the building footprint. How about 2-tier parking structure? Open air, not garage. Low and unobtrusive.
  - WTA: Structured parking would save space, but very expensive.
- Locker room design and noise concerns. Enter from the back? Would prefer to see warm side entry.
- Larger costume changing rooms.
- Weight room? Overlook the rinks?
- Need a good Pro-shop and refreshment stand for the hockey arena.
- Glad to see MJMA involved – with experience mixing libraries and hockey rinks. Because sound will be an issue. Sounds of hockey vs library don't always mix.
- A great hockey rink is made with a good concession/bar/restaurant for mixing after the games. Limited liquor licenses? Overlooking the rink?
- City stated that leasing out concessions to Evanston restaurant is definitely an idea. RCC would prefer to not be in the concession business.
- Changing tables in all of the bathrooms! Also in favor of adding a weight room. Must consider areas where any skater – especially figure skaters – will be walking and to ensure there is proper rubber flooring.
- Preschool parents – there is a need for sunny areas. But also window darkening (naps). Like the idea of a maker space and kids areas for the library. Preschool could use those areas too. Would love to see a four-season facility for kids to get their energy out.
- Could there be a Café space within the library?
  - WTA: Food is being considered.
- Fitness/yoga space would also be nice.
- There are two ice shows a year. Sound system/acoustic improvements would be great.
- Seating for people in the rink. Bleachers are fine. Temp control. Rubber floor. More and sharper skates in rental area.
- Music that kids who are skating can control within the Ice Arena.
  - WTA: good idea.
- Performing Arts. Stage in the gym maybe? Acoustics are a concern.
- Architects should consult submarine/airline designers for their experience with multi-use space.
- Rinks often have a huge wall with trophy case – would love a bigger display for all the awards
- Display for artwork – in social space. Kids work, etc.
- Living walls. Check out Boka Restaurant in Chicago for example.
- There could be a dividing wall comes down to separate full size rink into two smaller studio space.
- The Current RCC gym is locked off because of pre-school access. The new RCC gym would be accessible during the day – which allows for increased programming.

## Exterior Program Comments

- Tennis courts should remain.
  - WTA noted that they have heard similar comments from many members of the community
  - City (ML) noted their goal to ensure that none of the current programming will be lost by this project.
- Outdoor track around the outside ball field would be nice.
- Do turf fields equal fencing?
  - City: Not currently planned to fence the fields.
- Some of the images provided indicated Skateparks, Splashpads, etc. Are those part of the project?
  - City: Images are just ideas. Nothing determined.
- Outdoor and indoor track would be great. Outdoor tracks are great because they are for all ages – youth, kids, HS, old people. Indoor is great because of weather.
- Good idea for outside running track.
- Outdoor activities do not currently have easy access to facilities (either indoor or outdoor).
- Outdoor lighting concerns. Will a lighting study be done? No exterior loudspeakers please.
  - WTA: Yes fields will be lit. But we need to be mindful about that. Will have lighting consultants and sportsfield consultants to ensure the design is the least impactful to the neighborhood.
- Concerned neighbor. Would encourage everyone to look at the design plans and listen close. Synthetic turf fields not natural green and may not look like what it does today.
- Having trouble visualizing turf fields. So many different things happen in the field, would hate for it to be TOO predetermined.
  - City (LH): The current fields are multisport fields. Future fields planned for the same.