

2013-14 Repurposing Larrabee Think Tank

January 30, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Think Tank Members in Attendance: Mike Anderson, Kate Baehr, Rick Benner, Alex Brede, Terry Brown, Ron Cowan, Jim Darling, Katie Franks, Kathy Hasenjaeger, David King, Rob McElroy, Pete Nelson, Barbara Perry, Courtney Sawyer, Saralee Sky, Jim Tinner

Rob McElroy and Ron Cowan welcomed everyone at 4:35 p.m. and asked that they take a moment to review the minutes from the last meeting (Jan. 9, 2014). Ron asked if there were any changes to be made. Kathy Hasenjaeger noted that she is not listed as having attended the meeting. That change will be made. A motion was made to approve the minutes with that change. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Ron talked about what is needed as far as next steps. He would like to make sure the titles for each of the criteria are accurate, the content of the colored sections for each criteria captures all that we need to capture, and that we also review the bulleted items listed below the colored boxes to make sure they are accurate as well. He noted that the group needs to talk about what will happen once we receive proposals back - what will we do with them? There was a handout from the first meeting (buff color) that outlined the purpose/goals for this group, as well as the timeline for the work.

A group member noted that Brian Sullivan wrote a letter to the Superintendent, asking that Larrabee remain open as a K-5 school until the construction is complete at Lowell and Happy Valley. She would appreciate Dr. Baker responding to that letter. Ron stated that Dr. Baker did write a response to Mr. Sullivan, and Mr. Sullivan then communicated his request to Dr. Smith, the president of the school board. Dr. Smith did respond to Mr. Sullivan's letter. There is no intention for Larrabee to remain open as a K-5 after the end of the current school year. Ron indicated that the emails from Mr. Sullivan and Dr. Baker and Dr. Smith's responses would be provided to the group.

Ron asked for comments about the Pros/Cons:

- A group member stated that a numerical scoring system would be easier to defend.
- There was a discussion about different ways to assign a numerical scoring system.
- Rob talked about the fact that this group's task is not necessarily to make a recommendation to the Superintendent, but to put in place a system to gather ideas and proposals for potential uses, and then to identify pros and cons of those proposals.

A group member asked why we would ask for Tier II proposals if a Tier I proposal would always trump a Tier II proposal. Ron answered that we are curious to know what's out there, and we won't know what those potential uses could be if we don't ask. Ron stated that we don't want

the process to submit proposals to be so rigorous that it would be an obstruction to receiving genuine ideas for potential uses. A member recalled a conversation from the last meeting that it's possible that the district may only have a use for part of the building, or the district may only want to use the building for a short period of time.

A comment was made that, if there is red in any area, perhaps it would drop that potential use down to the bottom of the list.

Terry Brown noted that the Port of Bellingham recently created a short questionnaire to find potential uses for the Granary Building. That same type of an initial process could be used to screen ideas for the Larrabee facility, so that a developer or company wouldn't need to go to a large expense initially in order to be considered. If it was found to be a viable option, then they could follow through with a more formal, detailed proposal.

A group member remarked that it's possible we may not get many proposals in the current market.

The question was asked if the district would entertain any proposals that could have a potential cost to the district associated with it. Rob responded that, if the proposal was supportive of the Bellingham Promise, there is a possibility that it could be considered.

A member stated that there should possibly be another tier that considers proposals for children in need, as that was the original intent of the building. Ron stated he believes that is reflected in number 4 of the criteria document.

A committee member noted that the building should be looked at from a disabled person's viewpoint. The stairs are an issue, and it would not be expensive to install ramps. Ron responded that we may receive a proposal that asks for that, but we have been pretty clear that the district does not intend to invest funds to upgrade the building.

A member recalls a previous discussion that the district is not able to declare the building as surplus unless there is no district use for the building. It is possible that, while it may not work as a K-5 school, there might be another educational use.

A group member mentioned that he had reviewed the fire station proposal from the City of Bellingham, and he assumes we will have some similar documentation that will go out to the public that outlines the district's hopes for the project.

One member stated that he would be somewhat cautious about setting too many rules before receiving the proposals - what if the best proposal is just short of the minimum when the scoring is applied?

Another group member stated that he likes the idea of a small scale proposal/interest statement prior to asking for a full-scale proposal.

Ron stated that we want to be clear about what information we would like included in a proposal. For instance, if we want to know how long a tenant might want to lease the building, we need to ask for that information at the outset.

Ron asked what everyone thinks about the idea to not bind ourselves to a strict scoring system prior to seeing what types of proposals are received (while still setting the criteria). It was the group consensus that we should gather proposals and leave some room for looking at them before putting a strict scoring process into place.

Rob stated that the first step is to finalize the criteria. He asked that everyone divide into the same small groups as the last meeting, so the criteria that each group worked on can be finalized.

The large group reconvened and reviewed the criteria.

The question was asked why the district does not want to sell the building. The City sold the Firehouse, which in the long run would be easier than having to lease the building, and the district may not want to be in the business of leasing a facility. Ron noted that the district quasi leases parts of its facilities all the time (gyms, etc.). A committee member noted that perhaps down the road the district would want to sell, after potential uses are exhausted.

A committee member stated that, as a business person, he would not be interested in making a use proposal if it's too limiting. He also noted that if we aren't careful about verbiage, the proposals may not be sustainable.

There was a comment that the neighborhood needs to have a predictable use for the building, and we shouldn't limit proposals.

Ron stated that we need to be careful that we don't have a proposal document that is so onerous that we don't receive any proposals, but also that the district's criteria are outlined.

It was noted that if we make it clear what the costs would be to lease and operate the building, we will be more apt to receive genuine proposals.

A group member noted the impact on parking within the neighborhood when several WWU students help at Larrabee.

Rob asked if we need to schedule additional meetings. Should we meet on February 3rd in order to finalize the request for proposals document, and then not meet until February 27th, at which time we would review any proposals that were received? This would mean cancelling the February 13th meeting. A group member noted that we need to keep in mind that two or three weeks may not be long enough to allow for proposals to be received (what if a non-profit wanted to make a proposal and needs to run it past their Board of Directors first, but their board only meets once a month).

Rob pointed out that it would be best to try to stick with the timeline initially set, in order for the district to consider any possible uses as it develops its budget for 2014-15.

It was decided that the next step would be for Ron and Rob to draft a questionnaire for the group to look at, and the group will reconvene on Monday, Feb. 3, 2014 to review that document and finalize the next steps in the process.

A group member asked that this be a transparent process and to not waste peoples' time. Ron responded that it has been and will continue to be a transparent process.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm.

**Next Meeting February 3, 2014, 4:30-6:00 pm
District Office Board Room**