

2013-14 Repurposing Larrabee Think Tank

January 9, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Think Tank Members in Attendance: David King, Kristi Birkeland, Rick Benner, Terry Brown, Courtney Sawyer, Saralee Sky, Jim Tinner, Katie Franks, Kathy Hasenjaeger, Tanya Rowe, Rob McElroy, Mike Anderson, Ron Cowan

Observers: April Mahoney

Rob welcomed everyone and asked them to review the minutes from the Dec. 12 meeting. Katie Franks would like some minor changes to the minutes:

- Page 1, #4 – the next-to-last sentence should read “Adaptive Use would require listing on the Local Historic Register.”
- Page 3, #6 – the 5th sentence should read “She suggested using the example from the City as a framework, and also suggested that the building be added to the National Register of Historic Places.”

David King recalls that more than two members liked the Tier I/Tier II suggestion (page 3, #5, fourth-to-last paragraph). Ron commented that he agrees more than two members indicated they liked that suggestion after group discussion. It was agreed that the minutes would be changed so that the two paragraphs beginning “Two members indicated ...” and “Following the discussion ...” would be combined into one paragraph.

David King made a motion that the minutes be approved with the aforementioned changes. Terry Brown seconded that motion, and all were in favor.

Ron reviewed the next steps in the process. This group will continue to develop the criteria and establish the guidelines for the acceptance of ideas for proposed uses. The question was asked that if there is an intention for a district use, will there still be a proposal submitted to this group? Ron answered that this group will be reviewing all submissions for use.

Rob displayed the criteria notes that the table groups developed at the last Think Tank meeting. Jim Darling, who has had experience with the process of repurposing buildings, sent to Rob and Ron some criteria that were developed in those other situations. Ron passed out to the group what was received from Jim Darling, and Rob reviewed those with the group. Rob pointed out that, when he reviewed this group’s work from the last meeting, he found that most of what was developed was represented in Jim Darling’s criteria. Rob and Ron do not want to impose this rubric on the group, but wanted to share it for discussion purposes. Ron commented that he wasn’t sure if everyone was finished with their listing of criteria from the Dec. 12 meeting. Comments from the group included:

- I like the format.
- It is a good place to start.
- I like the color coding.

A question was raised to Katie and others who have been through a repurposing process before: Is this too broad, will it help to prioritize proposals?

Rob stated some of this group's charts had more detail than the broad descriptions in Jim Darling's example (e.g. traffic and parking – more detail for the categories). A committee member pointed out that tiers are not included in Jim Darling's example, and asked if we would use the same criteria for both tiers. Another member stated that the group needs to decide how important the Historic Register is - should it be a criterion in itself, or should it be included in the process? Jim Tinner stated that, having been involved before in this type of process, communities like to keep at least some of the historic feeling of older buildings. Katie added that including historic preservation may require some change to the criteria.

Ron stated that criteria 7 may require some modification to the facility but may not change the historic nature of the building. Ron suggested that the group find a way to incorporate a range of historic preservation when considering preserving the building. A committee member suggested that historic preservation be its own topic/criteria. One committee member asked if there should be a difference when looking at the two buildings - old building versus newer building (gym), and perhaps not being as concerned with preservation of the gym. Katie Franks suggested the group clarify what the intent is when talking about preservation.

Rob asked the group if they want to consider using Jim Darling's example as a draft, or go back to working on the original lists from the previous meeting. A committee member asked if there was anything from this group's notes that were not captured in Jim Darling's document. Another member pointed out that "community benefit" should be considered, as it seems like the facility could possibly accommodate more than just the close neighborhood. It was suggested that if the building were to be used for an educational purpose, perhaps a broader community use would be given more weight. A member stated that Jim Darling's draft is a great starting point.

Rob suggested joining into small groups for approximately 20 minutes, to take a deeper look at Jim Darling's rubric. The criteria was divided for the 4 table groups to work on.

The large group came back together, and each small group reviewed their discussions:

First Group: Criteria 1 (Financial Impact on District) and Criteria 2 (Financial Capacity of Proposed User): Some of the group's criteria fit into both of these categories. They noted that the following should be factored into Financial Impact:

- Length of lease
- Longevity of program
- Financial ability
- Percentage of building use (is the program substantial enough to occupy the entire building?)

When considering Financial Capacity, the following should be considered:

- Longevity of program
- Financial capacity
- Financial sustainability
- Economic support

They would like to prioritize the criteria, based on the 5-point rubric. A dilemma would be Tier I versus Tier II (e.g. a Tier I use, Options swing space may be of financial benefit to the district, but perhaps a Tier II proposal, such as a Montessori school, wants a 20 year lease). According to previous discussions, the Montessori school might score lower because it is a Tier II use, but a 20 year lease should carry some weight. How do you score that? Rob suggested that Tier I and Tier II could be scored differently. Montessori school likely would require very few changes, as the same age group of students would be using the building, whereas a use such as Options might require more changes. A member asked if Tier I will always take precedence. Could this produce an unintended result? It was suggested that there be a different process for each tier. Ron reminded the group that the district can declare the property as surplus only if there is no district use. Tier I and Tier II would be evaluated separately. The district will make it clear/transparent that district uses would need to be given priority over other uses. A member asked if a “Tier I proposals” process should precede a “Tier II proposals” process. David King recalls seeing a repurposing process with three different tiers – district educational, non-district educational, and non-district and non-educational. Ron stated that we may not want to do anything to preclude the generation of ideas. The question was asked how do you motivate those wishing to make a Tier II? Comments:

- Can we process Tier I proposals in a rather expedient way?
- If I have a private proposal, and the district has first right of use, as a private proposer I would like to know that.
- If it was decided that a temporary district proposal was approved, and you don’t make it clear that district uses take priority at the outset, will you be able to get those people to submit another proposal 2 years later?
- If both Tier I and Tier II ideas are generated, can you score the Tier IIs higher than the Tier Is?
- Another benefit to reviewing community use/Tier II proposals at the same time as Tier I proposals is that it’s possible that there could be a joint use.
- Keep in mind that this table group only looked at the financial criteria.

- Will the RFI process be structured to be able to collect as much input for options as possible? (Ron answered that this is why we are leaning toward a more informal process, rather than a process that might involve an applicant/proposer to go to a lot of expense in submitting a proposal).

Ron welcomed Dr. Baker to the meeting, and Dr. Baker asked if everyone would introduce themselves. He stated that the hope for this group is to bring together a group of smart people with different perspectives, and he thanked the members of the Think Tank for volunteering their time to help with this important work.

Second Group: Criteria 3 (Proponent Experience) and Criteria 4 (Alignment with District Goals-Bellingham Promise): This table group listed the following as being discussed within their group as it relates to Criterion 3:

- They would like to require a reference list of past experience.
- Request information on resources as far as staffing & management (who would be involved?).
- The five criteria listed for Proponent Experience were relatively appropriate and should not need much modification.

Criterion 4 comments:

- Regarding alignment with district goals – expand that to “district and community goals”. Reference to Bellingham Promise is a good, as it deals with whole child development.
- Lifelong learning – there is reference to K-12, but should be it Prek-12? Why limit it to 12th grade? Seniors/cross-generational activities should be given consideration.

Third Group: Criteria 5 (Compatibility with the Neighborhood). The group did not spend much time on the green sections. Highlights of their discussion included:

- Time of use – is this an increase or decrease for the neighborhood? School use is pretty predictable, how might that change?
- Age group served?
- Noise level – increase or decrease?
- Traffic flow?
- Neighborhood access hours – would that increase or decrease (e.g. playground use)?
- Safety – who is responsible for safety of the area?
- Parking – would an increase in the number of spaces in the front of the facility be necessary? Maybe diagonal parking?
- Neighborhood draw vs. community draw?
- Happy Valley neighborhood uses only?
- Lighting – more bright lights?
- Stop light?

Fourth Group: Criteria 6 (Land use compatibility) and Criteria 7 (Land use compatibility). The group crossed out the description of Criteria 6 and substituted the following description: "Is the proposed use compatible with Bellingham zoning regulations?" They also changed the first box to read "No changes in land use". For Criteria 7 they changed the title of the criteria to "Historic Use Preservation" and the description to read "Describe the changes necessary to put the facility in order to implement the proposed use. How would the proposed use impact the historical nature of the building?" There were changes made as follows:

- Dark green: "No changes to facility necessary".
- Light green: "Minimal changes to interior configuration necessary only".
- Yellow: "Significant interior configuration changes only".
- Pink: "Minor exterior façade changes".
- Red: "Current facility unable to accommodate proposed use, significant exterior façade changes".

Ron stated that he would like to get the criteria work completed at the next meeting, and at the next meeting the same groups will continue to work on their same criteria. Sheri O'Day will collect the notes that each group made and update the document from Jim Darling with the changes the groups made. He would also like to work on clarifying the meaning of Tier I and Tier II proposals.

Ron also asked that the members take another look at the City Firehouse document to see if that document can be used as an example as we develop the framework for our process.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

**Next Meeting January 30, 2014 4:30-6:00 pm
Whatcom Middle School Library**