

Occidental Community Center Advisory Council
Meeting November 4, 2013 6:30 pm
Location: 14700 Second Street, Occidental

Attendees:

Benjamynn Gabriel, John Greaves, Courtney Meyer, Barbara Gonnella, Barbara Costa, Miriam Redstone, Diane Masura, Janet Foley, Terry McNulty, Alexander Laszlo, Dotty Joos, Colin Gabriel, Brian Grant, Jeff Tweddale, Debbie Klein, Lee Sandahl.

I. Welcoming new (and prior) attendees; Brief reiteration of purpose

Due to scheduling conflicts the group discussed and agreed to move the meeting time from the first Monday of the month at 6:30 to the first Tuesday at 6:30 with future meetings to be held at the OCC. The list of invitees remains broad with the intent of gathering the widest cross section of the community.

II. Changes to the agenda

None

III. Corrections to prior minutes

Requested revision to minutes regarding a comment Janet made pertaining to the Town Hall Committee. The requested revision was agreed upon and minutes approved with appropriate revision. General recommendations were made to simplify minutes to be a general representation of the discussion and less of a transcription.

IV. Discussion/ brainstorming re: Developing Mission Statement

- Meeting format: Flowing, open meetings vs. structured, workshop-type approach
- Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing
- Conversation for relationship, ...for learning, ...possibilities/strategic, ...for action/tactical

The group engaged in general discussion with the intent of establishing the breadth of consideration for the OCC and the grounds.

- Some members felt it very important to be as open as possible to big picture ideas and concepts for the OCC as well as the surrounding site.
- Other members voiced concerns about entertaining ideas that will have increased fiscal requirements for the operator and/or will be a source for drawing increased numbers of tourists into the community.

- The scheduling of process and decision making was also discussed as the County had originally indicated that another community meeting would be held in November.

- It was confirmed the County is willing to slow the process in the interest of gathering clear input from the Occidental community regarding the future of the OCC.

- Several individuals voiced interests in what program elements they would like to see installed on the site including; Interior and exterior community gathering spaces or “Living Rooms”, outdoor fire pit, children’s playground, gymnasium, public restrooms, breakout rooms for adult and senior classes, gallery/exhibit space for Occidental specific historical photographs/items, provision for use of building as emergency shelter, community garden, visitor orientation area, possible espresso service, room for farmers market

- General questions were raised regarding the County’s requirement for the facility to maintain “self-supporting” programming with the intent of revenues generated covering overall annual expenses. Who or what organization will be the lead for the programming of the use of the facility? A few years ago the YMCA was operating the building, is that still the case?

- The Economic Development Board (EDB) has been contacted to establish what revenues are generated and contributed to the county Transient Occupancy Tax as a result of Occidental’s tourist offerings. The EDB has agreed to assign a project officer to gather the information. A report will be made at an upcoming meeting.

- Several members voiced interest in rethinking the whole site as well as the building. There was a general discussion about improving the building’s appearance as well as it’s performance. There were concerns about acoustics, heating and the need for the stage. Questions were raised regarding the cost comparisons between demolishing the building and retrofitting the existing condition. There was a straw poll taken regarding demolition versus retrofit, not all voted, of those who did five voted to retrofit the building six voted to remove the building and start with a clean slate.

- The group discussed the pros and cons of considering the larger arena of the community and visitors versus focusing on improving the building to make the facility more attractive and comfortable to use. Some members felt it important to not think too big and to consider doing the improvements in phases that are achievable and to gather input along the way. Other members felt it important to dream big and look to the future 30 years out with the intent of establishing a working plan or road map that would inform the improvement process from a big picture perspective. General discussion focused on the consideration of future income and sustainability being of utmost importance. With any improvements and increased usage there will be increased expenses, the existing sewer system is at capacity and is also a global issue for the subject of improvements.

- The group generated a list of “Buzzwords” for the minutes in the interest of expressing the general interests of the group. The list included; playground, gymnasium,

bocce courts, public restroom, event space/wedding venue, acoustics, use of the north end of the property, expansion of indoor/outdoor spaces, passive and active recreation classes, educational classes, uses complimentary to local businesses, movie nights, workout space, community living room, no food offering to compete with existing restaurants, historical exhibits/photographs, green technology, after school programming, outdoor gardens, ecological education offerings.

- The group held general discussion regarding the issue of parking in the community. Some members voiced concerns about available parking at a community level specifically when the farmers market is being held. A few business owners expressed differing opinions regarding the impact of the market on adjacent parking areas. Some felt the lack of parking problematic others felt the market location generated walk in customers. Some members felt that parking can also be limited on weekends and that increased tourism facilities will generate more tourists visits. The existing infrastructure, especially the roadways, is already too small to accommodate existing usage.

- Some members felt change is inevitable, progress has been made and will continue to be made to make Occidental an attractive destination for visitors from out of town. The goal is to identify potential future issues and address them from the community's perspective not from the County's, nor the tourists. A recommendation was made to include a few user groups for the facility not currently in the group, perhaps someone representing the youth, the elderly, the tourists and the homeless should be attending the meetings.

- A recommendation was made to consider including historical society information regarding the history of Occidental and the outlying areas as exhibit space somewhere in the building. Consider contacting Harry Lapham and Heidi Schmidt regarding historical photographs.

- General discussion regarding how to proceed and gather as much community input as possible. Suggestions were made for surveys and where best to post the information. How best to have a community brainstorming session that is productive and inclusive. Postings for future meetings and surveys should be established in the newspaper, through mailings, local signage and a facebook page.

- Next meeting to be held Tuesday December 3, 2013, 6:30 pm at the Occidental Community Center, 3920 Bohemian Highway, Occidental, CA.