

Space Needs & Location Committee
Minutes
Wednesday, December 10, 2003
Tompkins County Courthouse Conference Room
2:00 PM

Members Present: Frank Proto (Chair), Kathy Luz Herrera, Dooley Kiefer, Martha Robertson

Member Excused: Tom Todd

Others Present: Crystal Buck (TC Planning), Alice Cole (TC Health), Arel LeMaro (TC Facilities), Ed Marx (TC Planning/Administration), Nancy Schuler (TC Legislature), Wendy Skinner (TC Public Information), Kathy Wilsea (TC Planning)

Chair Frank Proto called the meeting to order at 2:07 PM.

Item 1: Additions to or Deletions from the Agenda: There were no changes to the agenda.

Item 2: Approval of Minutes from November 12, 2003: Draft minutes were not available due to the illness of Heather Stewart.

Item 3: Resolution: Space Needs Standardization: Kathy Luz Herrera made a motion to adopt the resolution, which was seconded by Martha Robertson. Ed Marx distributed an amended version that had a note added to the bottom of the attached table based on a request from the Facilities & Infrastructure Committee. Martha Robertson pointed out that the language differed from Whereas clause #5, and the resolution was amended to read “approval by the Legislative committee that has oversight of the Facilities Division.” Dooley Kiefer asked if the master plan was modified or the standards were modified. Wording was changed to refer to the “attached standards as modified by . . .” Dooley pointed out that the resolution only refers to new County construction projects, so renovation projects were included in the reference. Frank pointed out the table is part of the resolution. Kathy Luz Herrera said she will be at the Government Operations Committee meeting and can answer questions. Ed Marx said he is also going to GO next week.

Frank asked what the procedure will be if it is necessary to make changes. Ed said changes will require a resolution passed by the Legislature. Martha Robertson asked if that would happen with reclass changes. Ed said it probably wouldn't apply for reclasses, but might for promotions. This is not intended to make departments renovate whenever they make staff reassignments.

Resolution passed by vote of 4:0.

Item 4: Discussion: Continued Review of Alternatives: Crystal Buck distributed a memo that outlines changes based on comments at the last meeting of this committee. The attachments reflect the changes mentioned in the memo.

Frank Proto asked for more information in the report to support the figure being added in memo item 2c, renovations costs for HSB if Justice Center moves there. Martha Robertson questioned value of land being retained if the County keeps part of the parcel while selling Biggs B. Crystal explained how she arrived at the figure by using Assessment Department information.

Regarding memo item 3, Crystal has discussed with Bart DeLuca the possibility of moving drug courts to the Mental Health building. He said it would not require outside approval.

Regarding memo item 4, Kathy Luz Herrera said Assigned Counsel does not want to share space with Probation. Assigned Counsel should be as close to the Courthouse as possible. Ed noted AC uses a small amount of office space.

Martha Robertson said Irene Stein thinks it would not be good to move COFA to the Human Services Building. Some senior citizens have a stereotype about “accepting services”, and the aged population might not go to HSB.

Regarding memo item 5, Dooley Kiefer asked about accommodating another department in space vacated by the DeWitt Historical Society. Crystal said they had not considered that, rather they had looked at the reverse situation. Kathy Luz Herrera said discussion at IDA has been that if DeWitt Historical Society is willing to move, IDA will happily help find a place for them and thus get them out of that commercial building.

Regarding the tables, Crystal said “Personnel” interns actually work in other departments, so that is why square feet for personnel decreased. Other departments’ needs are based on current payroll information. Ed Marx said he reviewed the Assessment Department by doing a walkthrough with Valeria Coggin. Assessment is not in the alternatives because it is not deficient. It was noted that they may need additional staff.

Ed Marx said the possibility exists that a new building for the Health Department would be smaller than previously examined, thus even more cost effective than the earlier comparison to renovation of Biggs B. Ed felt a reasonable outcome of this committee’s work for 2003 would be to narrow the alternatives down to two options for the Health Department and two options for the downtown needs.

Martha Robertson made a motion to eliminate renovation of Biggs B. Discussion followed about selling the entire parcel or retaining part of the vacant land. Ed Marx said the County Administrator probably would not recommend keeping vacant land there. Crystal Buck pointed out the other scenarios are calculated based on sale of the whole parcel, and members need to consider that when looking at the finances.

Dooley Kiefer said we should not assume sale, but rather lease, since land is not being made anymore. Ed Marx noted Tompkins County has no person to manage land. Dooley Kiefer said leasing provides long-term income.

Frank asked Kathy Luz Herrera and Nancy Schuler if they thought the City would oppose having the Health Department in the Route 13 corridor (alt. 3) or State Street (alt. 2). Nancy suggested contacting Doug McDonald at the City. Ed Marx said the Planning staff has been going by the City plan for development. Members mentioned sites they are aware of as being available, and Ed Marx said they should not pick specific sites, but should choose the general area first. Martha Robertson sought comments from Alice Cole, who said parking remains important.

Martha Robertson made a motion to ask Planning Department staff to consider the next set of analysis for alternatives 3 (Route 13 corridor) and 4 (sell/lease Biggs B and build on retained parcel), which was seconded by Kathy Luz Herrera. Other options will remain on the back burner. Motion carried by vote of 4:0.

Discussion moved to downtown departments. COFA is interested in having offices in the Old Library, which might be possible if the drug courts moved. That would place COFA near the senior citizen's center on W. Court Street. Assigned Counsel does not want to be by probation, and Steve Whicher does not like alternative 6 since he believes Personnel should not be separated from County Administration. *Dooley Kiefer asked Ed Marx to find out how tall a building could be put on the site of the Old Library, since it is in a historic district.* Ed noted all the possibilities discussed require preliminary architectural and conceptual work. By consensus, it was agreed to pursue alternatives 2 and 4, with certain adaptations to 2 for a new building at the Old Library site instead of renovating. *Crystal Buck will provide clean copies of the replacement charts.* Ed Marx noted this concludes this report, and the next step is preliminary design study.

Item 5: Other Business: Members and staff agreed to meet January 14th, tentative location is the Courthouse Conference Room. *Please check you agenda carefully for location!*

Item 6: Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department