

## Five Flags Civic Center Advisory Commission Public Input Session Assessment & Study Minutes Wednesday May 16, 2018

Approved by Commission 6/25/18

### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Rod Bakke, Bryce Parks, McKenzie Hill, Tyler Daugherty, Nicholas Huff

### COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

### STAFF PRESENT:

HR Cook

### OTHERS PRESENT:

Marie Ware and roughly 60 public, names of speakers collected and below

### NEW BUSINESS:

Commissioner Hill welcomed the crowd and opened the microphone to public.

#### **Penny Schwartz Director of Sales Holiday Inn - Speaking on behalf of Kinseth Hotels**

Support renovation and new construction, historic icon, bigger and better would go a long way to insure viability of property and downtown. Continue to reinvent the downtown core. Hotel sees a lot of traffic when there are events at Five Flags. Assets with attractors. Reinvesting new facilities attracts other assets to downtown.

#### **Peter Gale- Resident since 1991**

Avid concert goer. Last concert attended 2000 at Five Flags. Have been to 70 concerts since then elsewhere. This year have been to 3 already. I was detractor on Five Flags. HR invited me into his office and explained how the business works. Will be going to three more concerts here because of the success that is happening. Much prefer driving 10 min versus to Chicago, Moline or Cedar Rapids. Cedar Rapids as a concert venue was upgraded to compete with other cities, Dubuque needs to do the same thing. My fear is if do not do something in Dubuque we will lose entertainment because outgrows us and we will have an outdated facility, a basic band aid. Adding on or bigger adds entertainment but also helps hotels, bars, restaurants, Dubuque is revitalizing downtown. Let's revitalize this. Will make a statement to surrounding area. The concerts I have been to, I have sat by people from Chicago, St Paul and Madison. You will need more people to run it. Staff is going a fantastic job. I was biggest detractor and now extremely happy with what they are doing. If we back them up they will bring bigger things. I would love to see a lot more concerts here.

#### **Scott Thomas - Buzz Entertainment and Music and More.**

Individual and citizen of Dub. Have brought more entertainment to Dubuque than any other promoter including Five Flags. Have three offers in for shows in Five Flags. Have five proposals in to SMG now. I book for Sioux City, Des Moines, Toledo, New York, and Tucson AZ, they are now asking about Dubuque. If have sky boxes and more seats bring in more sponsorships and bigger shows that want to come. I can book have more entertainment in Dubuque. It has become outdated. 100% behind plan number 4.

**Keith Rahe - Travel Dubuque.**

Five Flags longtime vibrant entity in downtown Work closely with Five Flags to bring entertainment options. H.R. and staff do a great job at more than just concerts. Disney on ice, wrestling tournaments, family shows etc. Bookings are way up during times that hotel occupancy is normally down. A larger arena could bring more events, bigger events. Events that bring overnight guests that occupy hotel rooms in the winter months. Travel Dubuque could work with Five Flags staff to bring in additional collegiate sports tournaments. NCAA Division II and III finals, NAIA National Championships if there were enough seats per the sanctioning body requirements. Travel Dubuque staff, board, and partners are behind a bigger, new facility.

**Mark Wahlert – Executive Director Dubuque Symphony**

Played majority of concerts at FF for 40 years. Occupy 50-60 days though out the year. Few people are here more than we are. We see need for expansion and renovation, there is a lot lacking in facility. Things such as the lack of restrooms, small orchestra pit, outdated lighting, outdated sound, back of house - green room is the scene shop - storage. World class violinist only place soundproof was HR's office. When concert in arena then hear in theater. When on stage you can hear every car and motorcycle on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. In favor of 3 or 4. Expanded would allow symphony playing live with movies such as Harry Potter or Star Wars like other larger cities. Opportunity to present bigger productions Five Flags has huge economic impact on downtown businesses. Biggest night was Willie Nelson and Symphony. Impact for many organizations, jobs and economic impact.

**Justin Pergrande -Lived in Dubuque whole life.**

In favor of expansion especially 4. Might as well go with biggest picture. Do not want to look down the road and wish we had gone bigger. Economic impact. Work here but saw huge draw like for Disney on Ice. Usually not so busy downtown after 5. Met family from Green Bay for show, stayed at Grand Harbor went to River Museum. Have to be 21 to get into the casinos and we need entertainment for all ages. The issue of parking was brought -up at the Monday work session. We have many ramps downtown. After 5 they don't get used. To me that is revenue for the city to fill the ramps. Parking is not issue. Utilizing what we have to help a bigger building scenario #4 preferred.

**Lenore Howard - Fly By Night 35<sup>th</sup> season.**

35 year relationship with Five Flags. Wonderful relationship through the years. The night that came for symphony and Willie Nelson and have gone to the Shot Tower that night and they asked if have reservations. It was that full. Everything builds off everything else. Ruth and Russ Nash brought the original idea to the city as a cultural corridor. Friends come in and do river, museum, easy walking distance. We advertise in the cultural corridor of the city. Infrastructure is falling apart. Do something, it needs attention. Lighting alone and occupancy laws are changing. Love to stay here. Theater only place that does not have a performing group that runs it where public can rent. It is not an academic space. Is not a casino. Like to see that protected. Theater will stay viable if you do something. They need amenities for performing artists. Scene shop too small. Office space connected. Go big or go home. So exciting. Project can be connected to Art Museum and other great things to bring even more people downtown.

**Mathew Roddy - Housing Director of Catholic Charities.  
Representing Ecumenical tower.**

Don't speak for Archdiocese. Speaking on issues of residents. Relationship with Five Flags Center has been great. Residents love activities especially free ones. Noise has not been an issue. Development options look beautiful and great contribution for neighborhood. Plans look like they include places for our residents to come out and enjoy. Concern is issue of parking. Specifically, to residents and their caregivers. Something to accommodate their needs. 88 apartments for seniors and disabled adults. 60-101. Judy Perry is here and is Pres of Ecumenical tower tenant's association. On a weekly basis have over 300 caregiver visits per week to Ecumenical Towers. Nurses, bath aids, delivery from HyVee, cooks, family members that check on them on a daily basis usually after 5pm and on weekends. Caregiving tasks hugely important for residents to stay in the home. Need to figure out how to provide access to the building for caregivers for those that use Lot 10. Also about 12 residents rent spaces. Because lot is available after 6 or weekend that is when many caregivers come. Many residents need walkers or have limited mobility and even though ramp close, number of residents can't use it. Concern access that might be more difficult might limit drop ins. Catholic Charities does not provide the services but have many private caregivers that do.

**Mark Heiderscheit -Introduced himself as "Just regular tax paying citizen".**

6,000 seats is too small. Is it enough for 20 years down the road if we grow? Saying at John Deere "Do it right the first time". \$70 mil is a lot of money but I remember back when city wanted to build the ballpark for Yankees farm club. Got voted down. Believe \$20 extra on property tax bill and I thought that was a shame. Moved to Dubuque 85 and remember in mid 1970's remember when trying to pass five flags bond issue. The first one failed. Remember second one. It served its purpose. In same year Cedar Rapids passed one for double the cost and I thought it was a far superior facility. Now we have chance to redo it. Go big or go home. Build it and they will come. Let's do it right the second time. As far as the parking, I hate the cold and winter. When coming, was standing on 5<sup>th</sup> and Main. Could make climate controlled walkway to arena from parking ramp. If spend \$70 mil what is another million? I will pay the property taxes, will pay extra to build that and make 8000 seats. Let's be on high end of 6-8000 seats. Will come in to get tickets for Charlie Daniels Band. I will go to a concert 10 min from my house. I would rather not drive 1 ½ hr. If anything we should error on side of being a wee bit too big. If going to do this why not market Quad Cities and Cedar Rapids and have a partnership between the three.

**John Pregler -**

Serve on long range planning commission but not here in that capacity. The Long Range Planning Advisory Commission updated Comp Plan and there was a desire for more entertainment and the concept of bringing in more entertainment by H.R. Cook in the last two years has not gone unnoticed. First concert gone to at Five Flags was 1983, and last was Willie Nelson. Generally in favor renovations and expansion, but three things concerns. Concern about operational expense and discussion was if scenario #4 would decrease the operational expense. The real cost to taxpayer has to be discussed, annual costs. If we chose any other option have to take into account debt service, additional costs. Total cost to the taxpayer. From \$850K to \$471 annually is not right, it is \$1.3 up to 3.3M with debt service and annual operating costs. I am in favor of 3 or 4 we must look at apples to apples. So is important that we must know what those numbers mean as that is taxpayer money. Things missing in study is return on investment. We know they operate at a loss. I am okay with that. We know return on investment but are other quantifiable measures. Impact on sales tax revenue and comes into city treasury. Look at event

nights and downtown sales tax revenue of event night and non event nights. How much additional revenue as it is a direct return on investment. Jobs, how many employees have jobs because of increased activity. We can't trace revenue to center but jobs have economic impact. Also need to look at alternative uses to facility. Can't ask consultants as general. Can look at it based on community needs. Could be 2 floors of city office space if we need to build them in the next 15 years. We have a debt pay down structure in place but no way will if have other projects (South Port, Schmitt Island and others) that would add to that and compete with this. Would like to see this project win out though. 3. Impact of building a larger arena on other facilities in area. When developed ice arena and Grand River Center knew they would be competing with Five Flags and council knew that. We have Q, Diamond Jo, and others that would compete in some places. Grand, the Barn, Bell Tower and others that compete. The really large events are ones that do not compete. Idea of public/private partnership. Consultant shot it down. Long term lease for someone to construct 3 or 4 and offer them TIF. Low lease similar to River Bowl. Annual operating subsidy to a private partnership if we find someone that would take that deal. Like to see us go with 4 or 4.5. Look at true cost and balance with other items. Shout out to HR Cook and staff and see a noticeable difference.

**Joe Zaccaro -**

Thank you to commission and city staff. I have not been here in number of years but have been here several times in the last year. Not sure where I stand on the issue. Crazy numbers. Biggest concern is what happens if Mr. Cook leaves? Two years ago, it was dead. My concern is build big one and next person coming in is stagnant and not do a whole lot. Previous management didn't look for these things. My biggest concern.

**Keith Gutierrez; 7 Hills Brewing**

I have noticed a big difference since H.R. and his staff have come to town and we have partnered with Five Flags. I think brutal if we do not investing Five Flags. We are not done developing Millwork or Main Street, lets complete some of these projects before we look at South Port or the island. Entertainment will not go away. Everyone said we are crazy for going big and with our events we are busy. If it is a public run thing how do we make sure we get good person to run it if H.R. leaves? H.R. and his staff are go getters. I go to other venues and so do others- Madison, Quad Cities, Cedar Rapids to go for business. The quantity of life has outreached the quality. If time to euthanize it then focus on the next facility. There is plenty of office space and retail downtown, no need to look at other options. This building is here people want something.

**Bill Finn - DJ Scorpio Productions.**

Anecdote. I was here the day it opened in 1979. It was exciting day in my life I was 15-16. Eventually went to many big concerts and the air guitar dances. The speaker back then, who may have been the Mayor, ended his speech with "This is a great facility, now let's wear it out". Mission accomplished, we wore it out. We have done it and now look forward to see that excitement again with a new building and building smell.

**Rod Bakke - FFCC Commission member**

Over my 33 years on commission I have seen it all. Much more to come. All these comments tell me we have to look real close, be very careful, listen to everyone and make the best decision. Our community, our civic pride, our quality of life, extremely important, flowers, pools, parks all of the quality of life and this facility is a part of the quality of life. I have served with many great managers, staff, volunteers and now I

have seen it all. I have spent 15 years with the river museum. People come to shows here and take in River Museum or are at Rivers Museum and ask about shows for Five Flags. So much to work together. Thank public to serve this long.

**General Audience Questions:**

Is it possible to get AAU tournament to travel to Dubuque? It is something we are always open to the opportunity for. New arena would be conducive for multiple courts though. New facility could have opportunity for national championships.

Travel Dubuque: Have one coming up with 160 teams spread all of courts in Dubuque, a new arena could be part of that puzzle.

Arena football. Could it fit? Yes, with new facility with higher ceiling height. Other tenant options include NBA G League basketball and indoor soccer. Commission has discussed bigger options before.

Chairwoman Hill thanked everyone for coming and giving input. Asked for motion to adjourn.

**ADJURN;  
VOTE:**

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Parks, seconded by Commissioner Bakke. The motion passed unanimously, meeting adjourned.

**NEXT MEETING:**

Next bi-monthly meeting held July 30, 2018. Five Flags staff will place a reminder email 3-5 day before to remind commissioners of the meeting

