

January 24, 2022

CITY OF CONWAY  
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP  
CONWAY CITY HALL  
229 MAIN STREET, CONWAY  
MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2022 - 6:00 P.M.

**PRESENT:** Mayor Barbara Blain-Bellamy, Alex Hyman, Mayor Pro Tem  
Council Members: Amanda Butler, William Goldfinch, Beth Helms, Justin Jordan, Larry White

**STAFF:** Adam Emrick, City Administrator; John Rogers, Deputy Administrator; Mary Catherine Hyman, Deputy Administrator; Jeff Leveille, Technology Services Director; June Wood, Public Information Officer; Wayne Calhoun, Police; Steven Pearce, Police; and Alicia Shelley, City Clerk (watched via YouTube).

**OTHERS:** Approximately 20 people in attendance.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Blain-Bellamy called the meeting to order. She gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The requirements for posting notice of this meeting under South Carolina's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) were met.

**DISCUSSION OF WHITTEMORE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:**

**Cheryl Moore Adamson** of the Whittemore Racepath Historical Society made opening remarks regarding the saving of the Whittemore Elementary School. She spoke about the Gullah Geechee Conference, solutions for lowering the cost estimate and the National Historical Registry. She said that the WRHS had partnered with an Architect. She stated that a community center would be an economic development generator that will allow for personal development, skills development, and work force development and provide on-site childcare. She said that the gains would outweigh the costs. She hopes to meet the mutual goals of the City of Conway. She then introduced others to speak.

**Michael Allen, CEO of MOA Architecture** from Greenville, SC who has worked on multiple historic projects presented several case studies, which included St. George Rosenwald School, Great Branch Teacherage, Old School High Springs, Perryville Elementary School, and Horse Spring Elementary School. He also stated that he came up with a cost estimate from the information that was presented to him of \$11 Million.

Blain-Bellamy asked if his cost estimate including the remediation for the asbestos and mold. Allen said no and that the unknowns may affect his estimate.

**Carolyn Dillian, Professor of Archeology at CCU** offered her expertise on this project as she said she would find it interesting and rewarding to have a community center to highlight the history of the African American culture. She said that she looked forward to a partnership between CCU and the community.

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**Victoria Smalls, Executive Director of Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission** informed council that she also could help with this project.

In closing remarks, Moore Adamson said that using these resources this project can be achieved by utilizing financial resources through the municipalities, County, State, and Federal grants, private sponsorships, and tax incentives. She encourages the City of Conway and community to make this a doable project. She stated that we are smart enough to figure this out because the community values it. She asked for a continuation of discussion and that the City of Conway consider arguing this matter from their place and on their behalf and then tell them what to do.

**Carlisle Dawsey, Vice President of the Horry County Historical Society** asked Council to take from both perspectives and do the right thing. He said that he worked to try to save Whittemore High School. He said that the right thing was done at the Main Street School but not at Conway High School, as it is no longer there. Blain-Bellamy said that she did not know if the City of Conway had anything to do with the taking down of Conway High School.

Blain-Bellamy asked staff to explain how the basis for the sum of monies was determined.

M. Hyman stated that a public bid through the RFQ process was awarded to Liollo Architecture out of Charleston, SC. She said that the cost estimate is not broken down line by line but the main costs in bringing up to code was in reinforcing the walls of the existing masonry construction. It also included a new roof, new windows, electrical upgrades, plumbing upgrades, mechanical upgrades, asbestos removal, underground tank removal, fire alarm system, and sprinkler system. This cost did come from similar projects that they had done across the state.

Blain-Bellamy asked if these costs could be divided in any sort of way. Hyman said that estimate of the costs was per square foot.

Emrick stated that it could lose its eligibility for the National Registry if done in phases.

Allen said that since this cost estimate was not broken down to understand all expenses, the wall structure was not known to him.

**Liz Gilland** said that there are three points of view: 1. Cost, does it make sense. 2. Heart, lots of community folks have vested interests in that school. 3. Vision for the future, once it is all done will it make a difference. She recommended the city taking care of the asbestos and challenging the community to work towards raising the funds.

**Larry Biddle** said that Tom Herron, Founder of Up With America worked in the brick industry for 6 years and he would be able to tell where and when the brick on the WES was built. He recommended continuing discussions. He then gave the information to Allen.

White asked about getting with the state representatives and local delegation for funding. Emrick said that we could do that but that we needed a plan in place.

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Blain-Bellamy asked for a timeline to be put in place. Emrick said that staff was on hold, waiting for direction from Council.

Blain-Bellamy stated that the asbestos and mold abatement had to take place whether it was renovated or not. Emrick said yes, but that we would have to remove the roof and then the building would be uncovered without the next plan.

There was more discussion about the roof.

Butler said that the examples of Rosenwald that were shown had been slightly altered and it was on the National Historic Register. Emrick stated that the more you change, the harder it is to get on the registry.

Butler asked about federal funds. Emrick said none were available at this time as the property has been defederalized.

Adamson said that they met with SHPO last Thursday. SHPO said that the building as is is a historical site. They do not have an application to be on the registry but can apply now. She said it is not often that buildings are taken off the registry. They are given specifications to meet code or standards without losing their place on the registry.

Blain-Bellamy said it would be beneficial to hear the same messages at the same time. Adamson said we should establish a work team to do feasibility studies.

Dillian said she could help to comply with the National Historical Registry and that this site is eligible through a. important events or c. type, period or method of construction. She said that if it is listed on the National Register that federal grants can be applied for and there are tax benefits available. She then said that renovation costs are higher if on the National Register.

Goldfinch asked if the City of Conway would be operating this site as a community center or would another group be operating.

Helms asked for total square feet. Emrick said just under 45,000.

Adamson asked if the whole site is eligible.

Butler asked how long the process would take to be listed on National Register. Emrick said approximately 1 year.

Goldfinch asked who would be running the community center. Blain-Bellamy stated possibly partnering agencies could staff.

There was more discussion about the asbestos and mold removal.

Emrick said we needed to have a comprehensive plan.

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Butler asked what the next steps should be.

Blain-Bellamy asked about issuing an RFP. She stated that complications are many and this looks to be a beginning of a long discussion.

**Priscilla Fuller** stated that she wants a subcommittee between the City and the Racepath Whittemore Historical Society.

Goldfinch asked staff to elaborate on the proposed RFP.

Rogers stated that the RFP gives a background on the site and then asks for an objective and a purpose. Submissions will be accepted until Tuesday, December 31, 2024. Proposals will be opened in an open council session at the second regularly scheduled council meeting following receipt of the submission package by the City. At the next scheduled meeting, a workshop will be held to openly discuss the applications and give direction to staff for future negotiations with any of the proposal submitters.

Rogers said also prior to submission of any proposal, submitters must complete a site visit.

Adamson stated that she thinks the RFP is too short of window and needs a MOU or other agreement for funding.

There was more discussion regarding the RFP.

Hyman recommended issuing the RFP.

Jordan asked if the RFP would preclude conversations. Rogers stated that the language in the RFP encourages conversations.

Emrick said the RFP could be extended after December 31, 2024, changed or a proposal could be accepted. Nothing would preclude the City from hearing ideas in the interim. It would be at Council's discretion on qualified bidders.

Fuller asked if anyone could submit a proposal to the RFP. The Mayor stated would it matter if the results were the same.

Allen said that the RFP lays out what is on the site and outlines the project to bid on.

Emrick said that even private partnership/developers could bid as they have the biggest tax benefit. The City has no tax benefit.

Emrick then explained that the RFP would be placed on an agenda so proper notice would be given to the community. The RFP would be open at that Council meeting and no discussion. The proposal would be put on the City's website and then discussed at the next Council meeting.

Adamson stated that she would like the community to still claim agency of ownership.

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Biddle recommended using Technical Colleges as partners.

**Ballery Skipper** said that she is happy with the progress.

Blain-Bellamy asked for any more questions or comments before the City's plan to move forward with the RFP.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Motion: Goldfinch made a motion, seconded by White, to adjourn the meeting. Vote: Unanimous. Motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Minutes approved by City Council this 7 day of February 2022.

  
Alicia Shelley, City Clerk