

**ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY
SPLOST 2020 CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

January 28, 2019

The Athens-Clarke County SPLOST 2020 Citizens Advisory Committee met on Monday, January 28, 2019, at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held at 780 Barber Street, Athens, Georgia. The purpose of the meeting was review of project presentations

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Aitkens, Frances Berry, Carl Blount, Laura W. Carter, Dr. Cshanyse Allen, Tracy Davenport, Katrina Evans, Denny Galis, Dr. LaKeisha Gantt, David Griffin, Thomas P. Lauth, Robert Miles, Adam Shirley, Lora Thompson, Rob Trevena, Jim Weck, Dr. Shannon Wilder, Dr. Marilyn Wolf-Ragatz and Jennifer Zwirn

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sara Beresford, Frances Berry, Amy Stone

STAFF PRESENT: Keith Sanders, SPLOST Program Administrator, David Fluck, Central Services Director, Kent Kilpatrick, Leisure Services Director, Melanie Cochran Davis, Assistant Leisure Services Director

WELCOME / COMMENTS / INFORMATION

Keith Sanders briefed the Committee on the FTP site and file information that should be available. An e-mail has also been sent with the information and members should contact Keith with any problem in viewing the information.

Welcome by Chair, Dr. Shannon Wilder. Chair Wilder made an announcement regarding the February 2 work session which will be held at Bob Snipes Water Resource Center from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Agendas will be sent tomorrow. There will be time for small group discussions as well as larger group. Members were encouraged to give thought to ranking the proposals which have been heard into top six and bottom six. The rubric to be used will also be sent out with the agenda.

MEETING MINUTES REVIEW & APPROVAL:

January 16, 2019 and January 23, 2019 Minutes: Jim Weck made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 16, 2019 and January 23, 2019 Minutes. Adam Shirley seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.

PRESENTATIONS:

#07 New Judicial Center – Renovate Old Courthouse for Municipal Functions
David Fluck, Facilities Maintenance Director, made the presentation.

Questions/Answers:

Jim Weck: The contingency budget is \$400,000 for a place that is 115 – 120 years old. Do you think that is adequate?

David Fluck: Yes. The Facilities staff has been taking care of the building so we have a pretty good idea of what is hidden inside the walls.

Carl Blount: You said at the last presentation that sale of the land from buildings currently owned by the county could factor into this somewhere. Is that correct?

David Fluck: Land acquisition cost is not included in the new judicial center project budget. The general fund or other funds will front the cost of the land. The money will be used to reimburse the General Fund when other properties are sold. That is the concept.

Laura Carter: Where will the records go and will deeds and plats move to that area so that they are in one research facility?

David Fluck: The intent is for the records room and records to go to the judicial center.

Katrina Evans: The space allocation study and existing departments have 51,000 net square feet and what they should have is 67,000 in an ideal world. The courthouse is 65,000 square feet and 67,000 is what we would have today if everyone had their perfect allocation for private offices and all that. We are trying to shoot for the 2028 projection and that is an additional 22,000 and then the next project is 95,000 square feet for a new municipal building. I don't understand how 65,000 is okay for right now when we are shooting for ten years in the future.

David Fluck: One problem with a study like that is that when you talk about the square feet in a building there are two major numbers. Gross square feet and net square feet. Gross square feet is the entire building, the envelope of the building times the number of floors. Net square feet is office space and related space and does not include hallways, restrooms, lobbies, mechanical equipment and things of that nature. If you watch the work session presentation the statement was made that the new judicial center is almost double the size of the current courthouse. That is an incorrect interpretation. The current courthouse in gross square footage is 118,000 square feet. Going to 142,000 gross square feet is a 20% increase in physical size of the building. There are net numbers in there when you talk about specific departments but you cannot compare net to gross. In a courthouse the difference between net and gross is larger because of the need for multiple passageways and hallways to keep the different categories of people separated.

#08 New Municipal Building – Building Construction

David Fluck, Facilities Maintenance Director, made the presentation.

Questions / Answers:

Katrina Evans: If you look at the study done 9 years ago the courthouse only has 70,000 usable square feet so if you deduct the atriums, stairwells, etc. (Page 127. 2010). Is that accurate?

David Fluck: I don't have the book in front of me to review the same numbers but you are probably correct.

Laura Carter: Have we added additional courts since that 2010 study?

David Fluck: Yes.

Marilyn Wolf-Ragatz: Suppose we build the new municipal building. What situation will we be in after 10 years?

David Fluck: The same situation or worse. Judicial reform does not mean less courthouse space. Ideally it means less people going to jail. Reform may drive up the total departments of the courthouse but in a different configuration.

#09 **New Municipal Building – Old Courthouse Security Improvements**

David Fluck, Facilities Maintenance Director, made the presentation.

Questions / Answers:

Tom Lauth: I have heard you talk several times about the shared space and I get that. I have sat on the steps as a juror. How severe is the problem? Have there been escapes, have there been physical confrontations, have there been mistrials as a result?

David Fluck: What I have been able to find out from the Sheriff's Department who have to deal with that on a daily basis is that they are not keeping track.

Denny Galis: I do not know about escapes but there are frequent confrontations by parties who are upset. The deputies hate the situation because it is a very volatile situation with a lot of emotion. You are correct that the people cross paths and there are hallways that are generally full of people milling around. It is a bad situation.

Tom Lauth: Have there been mistrials?

Denny Galis: I would not be surprised, at all.

David Fluck: I am aware of one escape in the past five years.

Carl Blount: Do you know when the county realized that we have a problem? Is it something that has been going on for 15 years?

David Fluck: There have been issues since I came here 12 years ago and my office was in the courthouse. These issues have only gotten worse as we have packed more in. The fix has always been a giant number that no one has ever known how to get to.

David Fluck noted that the tour of the courthouse will be Tuesday, January 29th at 12:00 noon. Lynn Policaro, Court Administrator, will also be there to assist with the tour.

#81 **The Classic Center Arena**

Paul Cramer, Classic Center Authority, made the presentation.

Questions / Answers:

Laura Carter: Can you explain how many tax dollars it takes to operate the Classic Center every year?

Paul Cramer: Zero. (Actually, Unified Government pays the property insurance on the buildings, since the government owns the buildings.)

Marilyn Wolf-Ragatz: I was wondering about the parking. The design right now is the parking as it is with that versatile space on Foundry?

Paul Cramer: The Authority has gone to two other venues and we have looked at thousands but the trend now is not to overbuild parking. We would add 300 additional parking spaces but the other magic about our site is that it is connected to the Multi Modal Transportation Center. What that will do for ridership of our bus system is awesome. Right now we will do a concert for 2,500 in the pavilion and it shocks me that none of the students / attendees drive, they Uber or walk.

Carl Blount: Paul, can you speak to the size of a convention that you can accommodate now and what adding this will do?

Paul Cramer: Last week, we just finished GMEA with 3,000 people which is about the maximum for our center right now. We know of groups that had been 5,000. The Georgia Baptist Youth Conference was in Macon, GA and had never gone above 5,000 attendees. They came to Athens and suddenly jumped up to 7,000 attendees. We had to split their general session between the theater and the

grand hall and it was not good for the overall conference. They want to come back to Athens. FFA started out in Athens and would like to come back but both of those groups are around 7,000. We will do all the religious conferences and the sporting tourneys.

Shane Blackwell: Where is there a comparable arena?

Paul Cramer: Macon and Augusta have arenas that accommodate approximately 6,000. Augusta has one about the same size. Gwinnett has an arena for approximately 12,000. There is a magic about 6,000 seats – we would pick up 80% of all the touring acts in the country.

Tracy Davenport: How does this compare to the amphitheater that is proposed on Commerce Road?

Paul Cramer: There is a big difference in an outdoor amphitheater. It is an outdoor venue and would do between 20 and 50 events per year. This venue will be full 300 days out of the year because it has a roof and it is air conditioned. Our vision is not just music but music, dance competition, cheerleading, pickle ball, basketball, hockey. All of the things that can be used by this community and will attract new business from the outside. To answer your question, the two can live harmoniously together.

Adam Shirley: What is the average ticket price at the Classic Center?

Paul Cramer: It is so wide that I cannot begin to tell you. We have student hockey available for \$2 and we have had opera that was \$100. The Broadway shows are \$60. The prices are not set by us but by the act and the talent.

Tom Lauth: Your economic analysis suggests somewhere around 630 full time jobs. What kinds of jobs and what sort of skill sets?

Paul Cramer: Right now we are 130 employees at the Classic Center. On top of that our food service vendor has another 60 employees that come to work at the Classic Center every day. On top of that we have another 40 employees that are associated with the union which is really important right now. Stage hands, riggers and carpenters who are paid really well. The problem here is finding qualified riggers to put the shows in.

Tracy Davenport: What is the average cost for someone to host an event at the Classic Center? With the new addition how much of an increase will there be?

Paul Cramer: Typically, one room may rent for \$200 or you could have a convention for three days that would be \$30,000. It depends on what they need as to how it would price out. If our rates were not exceedingly competitive we would not be doing 700 events per year.

Tracy Davenport: Will you need to do any other upgrades in the future if this is approved?

Paul Cramer: If this project is approved we are talking about zero operating costs and we currently pay for all the capital upkeep of the building.

Katrina Evans: As far as your donors go, people are ready to write check for all of the \$26 million?

Paul Cramer: 100% of the \$30 million that is coming from the private sector. Yes, they are ready.

Katrina Evans: What is the Classic Center Authority's long term debt? Do you presently have long term debt?

Paul Cramer: We don't. Our first debt was on the parking deck and subsequent to that we did take out some to do the mini arena inside the exhibit hall. The parking debt has since been paid off so currently that is the only debt we have. We are easily meeting that debt obligation.

#77 Sandy Creek Nature Center Exhibit Modernization

Mack Duncan, President, Board of Directors, Sandy Creek Nature Center, made the presentation.

Mark Ralston, Chair, Long Range Planning Committee and Randy Smith, Facility Supervisor assisted.

Questions / Answers

N/A

#63 Downtown Improvement Program

David Lynn, Director of Planning and Outreach, Athens Downtown Development Authority, made the presentation. Linda Ford, Business Services Director, Athens Downtown Development Authority assisted.

Questions / Answers

Marilyn Wolf-Ragatz: This seems to be an excellent answer to the College Square dilemma. I assume you would not be here to present this if the businesses were not totally supporting you?

David Lynn: To say that I have run this through every business on College Square would be an over exaggeration. If you go downtown right before one of our big events, College Square is closed off in preparation for that big event. There is no activity on College Square, it is just closed. It feels lifeless and soulless. It looks like a shopping mall. When it is open and there are people there it is great. The psychology of the downtown visitor is that I can still park on College Square. That is a huge impact.

UNKNOWN (Linda Ford?): I serve as the President of the Downtown Athens Business Assn. and I was sitting in the Board Meeting for ADDA when they discussed this proposal. I had run it past a good amount of the business owners and we had discussed the business owners downtown on becoming more progressive with a walkable downtown. That was part of the stimulation for removable bollards so that we could make it a drivable street and then a blocked off street. Wonderful resolution to a long term debate.

Adam Shirley: I see about \$12 million on construction and I see the word possibilities. Do I understand that if funded that money would be used at the discretion of ADDA?

David Lynn: No. We are championing this project. If this was approved by the voters it would fold into our SPLOST Department and Public Works Department.

Adam Shirley: So it would fall back to the M&C about which direction to go with the project?

David Lynn: Yes.

DISCUSSION / ALTERNATE REQUESTS

Discussion:

#07 New Judicial Center – Renovate Old Courthouse for Municipal Functions

#08 New Municipal Building – Building Construction

#09 New Municipal Building – Old Courthouse Security Improvements

Denny Galis: Spoke in support of the needs of the Judicial Center. Gave personal account of the changes in the court system over the years and changing needs.

Carl Blount: I do not want to do #08 and #09. If we are going to do this I want to do #05 and #07. Rather than spend that kind of money for a band aid I would prefer to do it correctly to begin with,

Laura Carter: Agreed.

Lakeisha Gantt: Agreed with the sentiment to do the project correctly. Still has reservations because there are separate judicial systems for different populations. Has not heard enough about how this will improve for all involved in the judicial process.

Denny Galis: Stated that if you improve security you are improving it for everyone including inmates, parties, witnesses, staff. The more efficient the court system the better you are taking care of the people's business. It is the people's business, no matter who the people are and why they are there. You want to take care of it in a fair, efficient and proper fashion. You cannot do that with a horse and buggy and it is that simple.

Lakeisha Gantt: Has not heard enough about how it will all be prioritized, not just for those administering justice.

Jim Weck: It is difficult to identify the socio economic conditions that you are speaking about. The focus of the request is to alleviate over-crowding which they think causes other problems like security. Like the fact that 200 people are waiting in the atrium waiting for their name to be called. I think it has to be done but I am not sure how you do that. If the needs analysis was 147 pages I would say that your study would be 300. I am not certain that we will get that information before our determination on these options.

Rob Trevena: I think the attempt to serve the population is the reason the number of courts has grown. We have these new courts that are more specialized and focused on outcomes versus imprisonment. Just the programs themselves have lent themselves to rehabilitation versus just straight up lock up, from my experience.

Carl Blount: The growth of the population is a factor.

Katrina Evans: I have a bootleg spreadsheet and by my calculations the courthouse proposal is high by about 20,000 square feet. Someone needs to convince me. I don't see that the taxpayers will get the bang for the buck. I don't feel good about it and I need more data.

Tracy Davenport: Would like to see more data – how many judges in the courthouse, types and number of cases that are being tried? I am also curious about the numbers at the jail. As a minority I have seen the criminal justice system prey on certain demographics. Is this really necessary in the big scheme of things? Is there a way to reduce the amount of activity that goes through these courts?

Laura Carter: When I was trying to understand the space needs, I went through the staff directory for all the courts so I can send you the numbers of staff in the courts. I was shocked at the number of staff in these courts. The alternative courts are supposed to deal with some of the minor stuff and not send people to jail which is long overdue and I am thrilled. If it takes more space to do that then I am willing to pay for that.

Tracy Davenport: There needs to be a shift in policy, laws, culture so that you don't have to get to that point. The way we invest our money dictates what kind of community we are. You could say you are going to give \$100 million to the court or you could give \$100 million to the community to divert that kind of activity away from the court.

Marilyn Wolf-Ragatz: We are talking about the judicial system and judicial building. Is it possible that possibly on a Saturday we could bring in somebody who can give us an update on the judicial system, what is changing, what is being planned, those kinds of things to help us understand how we can answer Tracy's and LaKeisha's question? It seems that's some knowledge that we need to have to help us feel more secure in making a decision.

Laura Carter: Agrees that it is something needed in order to convince the taxpayers to pay for this. Believes that you will have to understand the judicial system if a new building will be built at that price.

Keith Sanders: If you decide that you want to set aside the time we can ask someone from the courts to come.

Tom Lauth: Thinks it is a good idea.

Rob Trevena: Maybe kind of a short thing like Blaine and David Boyd presented for the budget.

Chair Shannon Wilder: So this will be to discuss the judicial system more broadly and what is happening in Athens?

Marilyn Wolf-Ragatz: There are plans being done for making the judicial system fairer and I think it would be nice to understand what is happening.

Cshanyse Allen: Are we talking about prison reform?

Laura Carter: Broader – the courts that are now in place, what are their responsibilities and how is that keeping people from going to jail on a first offense or minor offense?

Katrina Evans: I agree that we just built a giant jail when funds could have been better spent, is that where we are going?

#81 **The Classic Center Arena**

Jim Weck: All questions seemed to be answered. The return on investment and the period of time it would take to recover the cost of this and the fact that the city is literally not paying any money for maintenance makes this a bargain.

Tom Lauth: Did he say that part of it would be Georgia Music Hall of Fame?

Paul Cramer: The Georgia Music Hall of Fame is currently boxed up at UGA . No one wants to build another museum but in the concourse there would be adequate space to actually highlight Georgia's best all through the concourse. Unlike many arenas that are built first for sports we want to build this first for music.

Chair Shannon Wilder: Larger community employer - huge consideration.

Jim Weck: Do you express any desire to your vendors that provide extra services to move them toward that kind of pay based option?

Paul Cramer: We can meet people wherever they are in their education and show them pathways in hospitality. Hospitality is now the second largest industry in the entire country. The number of jobs and opportunity for upward mobility is there.

Denny Galis: This is one of the benefits that people are not aware of; all the training and programs that they have over there that help people progress.

Carl Blount: I think we can all agree that our biggest issue in this county is our poverty rate and we have to do something. This addresses that better than most things. The Classic Center has been a good steward of county funds.

Adam Shirley: I agree with the compelling argument about leveraging the assets. My concern is more about the average pay is \$14 per hour. That average tells me that half the people are making close to minimum wage which is a poverty wage. I appreciate the value of jobs. I would need to be convinced that we are paying people a living wage of at least \$14 per hour.

Paul Cramer: I am happy to address that. That is our average wage, we have some that are making \$25 per hour and some that are making less. We don't have anyone making minimum wage. Even our hourly folks start at \$10 per hour. There is a movement toward getting everyone toward the living wage. The folks who want to engage and make this a career opportunity, the opportunity is there and there are countless people who have moved their way through that program to earn more.

Tom Lauth: Those who are direct employees you have control over. How about with contractors and vendors? What control do you have over their wage scales?

Paul Cramer: I will answer that with our wait staff. When we do the big conventions we need lot of wait staff. Currently we are importing folks from Atlanta and we are paying them \$19 per hour. That is the present wage for wait staff at the Classic Center. Our partners feel the same way we do. They want to pay the maximum they can pay and still make a profit. They have become partners with us in every facet of these educational opportunities. Bread for Life, we take people who have never had a job and no education whatsoever and they are now working to become our future cooks, future housekeepers.

We had a gentleman who came to us from the judicial system. Judge Auslander called me and said that he believed in this person. He is currently our night shift supervisor.

We just had 600 more rooms open up in Athens. The housekeeping staff are being paid no less than \$12 per hour.

Katrina Evans: One benefit that I think this could bring is to bolster up the sales tax collection rate.

LaKeisha Gantt: I like the potential for this project. My lack of knowledge is around the events for the arena. We have been told that there are 700 events. I am curious to know what percentage of events have been geared towards minority populations, non-standard. I didn't see any minority promoters and Athens is a music scene but it is a pretty diverse music scene. I am curious about how we go about being sure that it is inclusive and beneficial for many different vendors and many different musicians.

Paul Cramer: We do a little bit of everything there. We do wedding receptions and theatrical events. Are you familiar with Kirk Franklin? We went out on a limb and brought Kirk Franklin in. It was awesome, the entire theater was up on their feet from the beginning of his performance to the end.

#77 Sandy Creek Nature Center Exhibit Modernization

David Griffin: One thing I love about this is that it is free and covers a wide, diverse group. It is a wonderful investment.

#63 Downtown Improvement Program

Katrina Evans: The Classic Center is a front door to our community for 400,000 people every year. That is a lot of people coming through what I don't think is our most desirable portion of downtown so if we can enhance Washington Street to bring them into downtown I think that is a worthy effort.

Marilyn Wolf-Ragatz: We had two presentations tonight that work well together enhancing the streets. I am all about improving sense of place and accommodating people who are moving around and bringing in money for everyone. We talked about the Downtown Master Plan for which some people think nothing is being done. It is, and these would get that Downtown Master Plan going beautifully. It would enhance parking, visibility, bringing people to College Square and Jackson.

LaKeisha Gantt: This proposal reminds me of another project but I like it. I feel compelled to say that someone mentioned that there is a dramatic civic identity for downtown. That is not true for everyone. There are a lot of people that their identity is not shaped by their time downtown. With that it makes me think of other places that don't even have the basics that this particular area has.

Rob Trevena: One way to look at it is that these projects take the pressure off the general fund that then allows the general fund to go build that sidewalk plan.

Laura Carter: These projects generate more revenue and that helps the community.

LaKeisha Gantt: Those things are good but theoretical.

David Griffin: Would you submit an alternate?

David Lynn: We could do that.

Chair Shannon Wilder: How do we create a list of recommended projects that really do represent all parts of our community? Some of these projects will have more profound impacts than others. The TSPLOST will come up for renewal in 2022 (5 year program) and some projects would be eligible for that.

Laura Carter: Some of these projects would be eligible for ESPLOST. The critical nature of some of the proposals makes me look at those eligible for ESPLOST with more bias.

Lora Thompson: (Unable to discern what is being said.....technical difficulties with the audio /speaker has soft voice.)

Marilyn Wolf-Ragatz: We have had presentations for projects that enhance transportation, we are reaching out through transportation to bring people in for jobs and training, and we begin to see how certain projects would work together to bring in all communities. I think we need to look at that bigger

picture. If you have not read the envision goals, those are really important to look at. That is what the community has said that we really need, better housing, better transportation. You have individual groups working to solve those goals. When you look at the big picture it is all about the whole community and are we reaching it. Are these presentations fitting into some of those goals? I think the bigger picture, rather than individual projects, does one enhance another and how do these answer what the community has said is really needed.

David Griffin: I have a question about ESPLOST. Is it that they can build buildings, buy technology but they can't build a sidewalk?

Keith Sanders: ESPLOST would only build sidewalks on a piece of school property as they develop the school property. Generally, that would be the only sidewalks that would be eligible under ESPLOST.

David Griffin: How much funding goes into ESPLOST?

Katrina Evans: That is a five year cycle and it is \$112,000 million for education. Began in 2016.

INFORMATION / NEXT MEETING DATE

- The next meeting of the committee: Monday, January 30, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. at the Bob Snipes Water Resource Center. Purpose: Project Presentations

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

The above summation is an interpretation of the items discussed and decisions reached at the above referenced meeting, not a transcript of the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available upon request. Anyone desiring to add to, or otherwise correct the minutes, is requested to return written comments to the SPLOST Administrator by the date of the next meeting.



Keith D. Sanders, SPLOST Program Administrator

F:SPLOST2020/2.8/MeetingMinutes/2019 01 28