

**ROCKY MOUNT TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
WORK SESSION
November 9, 2009**

The November 9, 2009 special Council work session meeting of the Rocky Mount Town Council was held in the Council Chambers of the Rocky Mount Municipal Building located at 345 Donald Avenue, Rocky Mount, Virginia at 5:30 p.m. with Mayor Steven C. Angle presiding. The following members of Council were present:

Vice Mayor Posey W. Dillon and Council Members Jerry W. Greer, Sr., John H. Lester, Roger M. Seale, Robert W. Strickler and Gregory B. Walker

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Angle.

The Town Clerk read for the record the following being present: All members of Town Council as noted, Town Manager C. James Ervin, Assistant Town Manager/Community Development Director Matthew C. Hankins, Town Attorney John T. Boitnott, and Town Clerk Patricia H. Keatts.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Prior to the meeting, Council had received the agenda for review and consideration of approval.

- Motion was made by Council Member Lester to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Council Member Strickler and carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION OF PRELIMINARY ARCHITECTURAL REPORT REGARDING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF AMPHITHEATER IN ROCKY MOUNT, VIRGINIA

The Town Manager came before Council stating that about a year ago during the annual Council retreat in Marion, Virginia, Council had discussed how to increase the Town's participation in its music heritage and how to put this into practice, with Council deciding to go along with a music venue amphitheater inside the Town's corporate limits, wanting to keep in mind that a large in-door amphitheater would be too cost prohibitive. At the approval of Council, the Town entered into a contract with Hill Studio to study the concept of the Town having a music venue amphitheater, and a lot of what will be presented from Hill Studio during this meeting is a culmination of them holding public meeting forums, talking with the citizens in the area, and presenting in some shape and form a concept driven by the community. This is the end of Hill Studio's preliminary study, with there being

room for improvement, changes, or other questions, with this project being moved into any of those directions.

David Hill of Hill Studio came before Council, introducing himself and Hunter Green of his office. He presented a summarization of the project, stating that they tried to find the best location, best fit, and best economic impact for the Town. Since last January, they have been trying to come up with a project that can be an icon for the Town. He also explained that they interviewed musicians, as well as neighbors in the proposed location of the music venue, listening to their concerns. A number of public meetings were also held at the Municipal Building. The interviews and meetings helped Hill Studio to shape and design what the music venue amphitheater would look like, with one of the designs incorporating the old furnace history of the Town; thus, with the music venue amphitheater possibly being named "The Furnace".

A PowerPoint presentation was given by Hill Studio:

- The site would be located in Mary Elizabeth Park, between the tennis courts and The Franklin Center.
- The stage house is the largest portion and is facing out towards the park.
- The theater will be the premiere amphitheater along The Crooked Road as the Town is the eastern gateway of The Crooked Road. A lot of folks start their journey on The Crooked Road at the eastern gate.
- All other types of events can be held at the amphitheater (drama, small and large concerts).
- This can have positive economic impact opportunities for the Town.
- It helps to connect uptown to downtown, which the Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) had wanted to do this some time ago. This facility will really help start this process.
- Site was chosen because it fits very nicely in the bowl shape of the park and would displace the blue painted roller hockey court.
- Coming out of the facility going towards the tennis courts, the grassy slope remains, with the high slope to the side remaining also.
- If Town proceeds with Phase II, the playgrounds will be moved to the other side of the park and should work real well there.
- Everything behind the wall of the amphitheater (facing The Franklin Center) would be hidden.
- Will work well with the acoustics, with Hill Studio having a sound expert working with the Hill Studio team throughout the project, with the speakers being well placed.
- Will make downtown and uptown more vibrant, increasing tourists coming to the concerts, which will help the merchants in Town.
- Pointed out where the 650 parking spaces are that would be available for events being held. The Town will have to work with businesses and institutions that own parking spaces that are not owned by the Town.
- The site plan consists of four major pieces: stage house; vast green lawn; restroom facilities; and merchant terrace for vendors. Behind the housing is a bay and service dock that has been added that will be facing The Franklin Center.

- The facility had a number of requirements that was asked for by those that attended the public meetings, with the following spatial requirements:
 - Needs to accommodate numerous musical and performance functions.
 - Request to have an indoor stage for winter months.
 - Outdoor stage itself is sized for small theatrical performances and a large band; the size is also a function of the site.
 - To support the different uses of the stage.
 - Includes separate Men's and Women's dressing rooms.
 - In addition, there is a Green Room for warming up before a show; these spaces and the stage area are soundproofed to maintain the privacy of the warm up music and the privacy of the performers on stage.
 - The backstage area has ample storage space.
 - The entrance into the facility labeled "Lobby" has two purposes: (1) It is used during the mild seasons of the year as an entrance and exit; and (2) during the winter months, it is an enclosed Lobby for the stage for indoor performances. Adjacent to this Lobby are the ticket booths, administrative area, and some of the public toilets.
 - All of these spaces are at grade level. There are no steps to get from one side of the building to the other, making mobility very easy.
- Went over stage building plan and what it all entailed. When it is an indoor performance event, the stage can be turned into an indoor facility. The stage is very flexible to be able to have large, small, or intimate events, with the flexible panels being very light.
- Pointed out the western elevation.
- Pointed out the ticket booths.
- Pointed out the "park" slide, showing where the playground is located and area around the tennis courts staying the same.
- Pointed out the "site" section slide, stating that there was not much of a slope and that it was semi-flat and not extremely deep.
- Pointed out the "materials and themes", with "The Furnace" being the most popular theme, as it was natural to see the old furnace components and reference to the past seemed to work very well for this theme.
- Pointed out the "sound and lighting requirements" and recommended that the Town have their own set up, which would allow the Town to control the sound, recommending the use of a system that has a small acoustic footprint and limits the acoustics so it won't bleed out into the neighborhood. Confirmed to Council Member Strickler that the sound levels can be highly controlled, and it is not planned for the sound level to be highly objectionable.
- Recommended a wooden stage.
- Recommended incorporating a large screen and projection system for outdoor movies. If the Town has an in-house sound system, outdoor movies can be controlled.
- Discussed the construction phase, recommending to build Phase I first to see how that phase works out for the Town. After that, the Town could proceed to Phase II. Stated that when it is a full build-out for Phase I and Phase II, there would still be

room for the playground to move to the upper portion of the park. With Phase I and Phase II, the Town is just adding to the park, not taking away from it.

- Confirmed to the Mayor that the perimeter of trees would be providing a natural barrier, but recommend fencing be put in place also, as a fence will control people running in and out of neighboring yards. Entrance gates are proposed in the site plan layout.

The Mayor stated that this was the Town's first of this type meeting, and that there would be other public meetings held regarding the proposed music venue amphitheater in the Town.

Mr. Green confirmed to Council that initially during the Request For Proposal (RFP) input sessions, it was the thinking that Mary Elizabeth Park could work for the site of a music venue amphitheater, but once into the working phase by Hill Studio, there was a lot in input from people that Hill Studio received information from, with them taking this information and putting it into their presentation before Council at this time. He further commented that Hill Studio will put this input into the second public workshop they will be held, making a few changes, but the design is pretty much the same.

Mr. Green confirmed to Council Member Lester that there is no reduction to the existing playground in Phase I. Council Member Lester complimented Hill Studio for what they have done so far, and further stated that at first he had his reservations about it, but is now quite pleased with it.

Mr. Green confirmed to the Mayor that he will leave copies of Hill Studio's proposal for the public to see.

The Town Manager thanked Hill Studio, further stating that he and the Assistant Town Manager helped get this process started, and after that, stepped out of the way. He concluded by stating that this is a flagship of what can be done.

There being no further discussion, the Mayor entertained a motion to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:05 p.m., motion was made by Council Member Lester to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Greer and carried unanimously.

Steven C. Angle, Mayor

ATTEST:

Patricia H. Keatts/Town Clerk

/phk