

AGENDA # 1

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: January 24, 2018

TITLE: 917 East Mifflin Street – Breese Stevens
Field Concessions Building Addition in
UDD No. 8. 2nd Ald. Dist. (49883)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: January 24, 2018

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Cliff Goodhart, Amanda Hall, Tom DeChant and Michael Rosenblum.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of January 24, 2018, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of the Breese Stevens Field Concessions building addition located at 917 East Mifflin Street in UDD No. 8. Appearing on behalf of the project were Mike Sturm and Peter Rott, both representing City of Madison Parks Division; and Vern Stenman, representing Big Top Events. Registered and speaking in opposition were Mike Ivey and Bob Klebba. Registered neither support nor opposition and available to answer questions was Nathaniel Leach. Sturm presented a Parks Division facility report from early 2017, as well as a report from Isthmus Architecture. The restoration work is separate from the current addition proposal. He shared context photos and reviewed the history of the project location, currently being used as a concert venue. A review of the proposed plans include some masonry restoration of the grandstand, accessibility improvements, selective removal and proposed site plan and grading plan. The material palette is nothing new, they are using materials that were used in previous work done most recently on the facility.

Mike Ivey as a local citizen and described his personal experiences at Breese Stevens Field. He is excited about the investment and current venue uses, but shared his concerns about the building and its placement. The 1925 landmark grandstand is what makes the stadium special; rather than place a building there, look at it, pull it away and find an alternative; don't turn our backs on it. While he understands the cost concerns, the need for restrooms and concessions, we can do better. Wrigley Field wouldn't do something like this. Find a solution that reactivates that end of the facility. Lindsey Lee has a drawing concept with another option. Understand He referenced the Landmarks Commission vote and staff comments. He suggested combining resources to activate that end of stadium, not compromise on the incredible baseball field. We could have fundraising drive to save the grandstand.

- When this was configured as a baseball field, was that the original home plate?
 - Yes, home plate was there. We're losing flexibility by putting the building here. Baseball turned the field orientation in 1934 and it's now been that way for 50 years.

Vern Stenman from Big Top Events, who runs the facility and grew up in Madison, spoke about working with the City to expand programming, while trying to celebrate the history of the facility. They don't want to compromise the facility, but have found it very difficult to coordinate concessions with the current setup. He has been working with the City to solve the problem of how to service events. They evaluated the space between East Washington Avenue and the field but there is not enough room. They have looked at all options, this is the best solution and it brings the facility up to a better standard.

- What do you see the grandstand being?
 - We are having a public neighborhood meeting tonight. The standard level of a soccer event is 5,000 seats and we need to utilize every square foot of space. We hope that by the time we find resolution to bring soccer, we find a way to make use of that space.
- Regarding the 5,000 capacity – is the grandstand unsalable?
 - We are still exploring options. The City put together a 15-year facility plan that identified the potential spaces in the stadium that could be used for these types of events, and this area was recognized as a possible area for hospitality or deck-type seating.
- What is the current seating capacity?
 - 3,740, for concerts we can put 9,300 in the facility with use of the field.
- If you bring in soccer, will you need to add seating?
 - Yes on the East Washington side or possibly the Brearly Street side.

Robert Klebba spoke, having been at the Landmarks meeting where some of these same issues arose. There is no doubt they need the functionality of the concessions stand, however blocking the view from the stands is a sticking point. It's not obvious that this stand will provide good viewing from those seats. It was discussed whether the stand could be lowered for better sight clearance, but we were told that is not possible. UDC should focus more on the design; we're looking at something that really does not fit in with Breese Stevens in any way. We're dealing with an historic building here, and as someone who has recently purchased a historic building, he is currently merging contractor's plans with Zoning, Building Inspection, the Wisconsin State Historical Society criteria and with the National Parks Service review of Department of Interior Standards. You do not work on an historic building at the lowest bid or lowest cost. This concession stand needs to be better integrated into the facility, it's going to be more expensive. It's a good location for the attendees, but a bad location for the stands and the historic preservation of the grandstands.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Regarding the interiors: you are adding new restrooms, can you add a gender neutral restroom?
 - The Parks Division is sensitive to the need for more options. Given capacities and size allowance, it's not a possibility. With that understanding, the long-range plan is to add restrooms along Mifflin Street. There will be a consideration when we look at those improvements. Recognize constraints.
- Can you add comfort rooms?
 - It is on our radar, but we're trying to work within parameters and funding. We can look at that in the future.
- Was lowering the building a budgetary decision?
 - Lowering was a primary challenge on the existing 1925 wing. There is circulation along the infield wall that is 4-feet lower than the existing elevation. In order to access that, we need 50-foot' of ramp. Accessibility is the issue.
- The proposed addition is symmetrical, was there any thought to turn it toward East Washington Avenue?
 - There is a rationale for that. Historic photos show home plate shifted over. The stands right behind the proposed addition were once prime seating for baseball, but are now furthest from any

athletic event. This seating is placed where there is a lack of activity now. The new corners align with the existing stairs in an effort to preserve as much of the grandstand as possible, also placed the mass where there was the least amount of activity. Within long-range facility plan, it is about preservation through use and sometimes adaptive reuse if necessary. We're trying to locate restrooms in front of stairwells.

- What are the proposed uses?
 - Depends upon the operator. Baseball is not coming back, thus the horseshoe shape may not apply.
- How does the new structure attach to the existing wall? Is it removable?
 - Yes. The goal is to preserve the existing structure; there is not a plan to remove the addition. It is about preserving the structure versus removing structure. Mechanicals are tied into the main building systems.

Alder Marsha Rummel spoke, noting she sits on the Landmarks Commission and voted against the Certificate of Occupancy. There is no facilities plan, it is not listed in Legistar, we don't know what that is; therefore she cannot support it at this time. How is it going to be a usable space? Nothing has been formally vetted. Is it up to the operator? No, it's up to the City. What future building will be there? Why is it blocking the grandstand? We need to know more.

Alder Ledell Zellers, who represents the 2nd District where the facility is located, spoke about the benefits of Breese Stevens Field, wanting it to be used while balancing neighborhood citizen concerns. She wants it to have a life that allows it to be maintained and used because it wasn't used for so many years, while realizing that to use a place like this, you have to make some compromises. She prefers that the addition not be there, but she recognizes that having concessions and restrooms accessible is important for the potential of the field to be successful. She does not have better solution and is supportive of this. It matters that it is removable with the historic structure still being there. She understands that longer-term plans, concepts and desires are not fully vetted yet, and it would be nice to have all of the details. She requested that the Commission not grant final approval tonight. There is a neighborhood meeting later this evening at 7:00 p.m. and she would like there to be an opportunity for people, should they wish to come and speak, to be able to do so.

Further questions from the Commission were as follows:

- If we give initial approval, we are approving mass and siting. If we want neighborhood approval/input, we need to refer the project. We can refer tonight.
- I have a question regarding funding, is this project 100% Parks funded?
 - Not sure of the exact contract numbers. There is a partnership with Big Top Events.
 - The majority of funding is City funding, \$650-700 impact fee driven, relevant to the Parks Division. The historic façade improvements included some of the \$25,000. There is more work to be done on the building.

ACTION:

On a motion by Goodhart, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (5-0).