



BENTON COUNTY HISTORIC COURTHOUSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes Friday, December 16, 2022

Members Attending: HCAC Vice Chair: Jill **Van Buren**, Courthouse Preservation Committee representative; HCAC Chair: Chris **Westfall**, Oregon Judicial Department, Trial Court Administrator; Jessica **Hougen**, Benton County Historical Society; Christina **Rehklau**, Visit Corvallis, Executive Director; Roz **Keeney**, representing Preservation WORKS; Scott **McClure**, representing the Historic Resources Commission; Peter **Betjemann**, OSU, Director of Arts and Education, College of Liberal Arts; Bob **Richardson**, OSU, Senior Land Use Planner

Advisory Staff Attending: Lynne **McKee**, Director of Benton County Natural Areas, Parks & Events; Jesse **Ott** Deputy Director of Benton County Natural Areas, Parks & Events; Nick **Kurth**, Benton County, JSIP Manager; Inga **Williams**, Benton County Community Development Associate Planner; Paul **Wallsinger**, Benton County Facilities Manager

Others Attending: Recorder: Lizz Gustin, Benton County Natural Areas, Parks & Events Administrative Assistant II, HCAC Recorder

- I. Meeting called to order 1005; **Westfall** and all present had great words of sendoff to Lynne McKee being this is here last meeting.
- II. Approval of November 18, 2022 minutes; **Westfall** requests a change to Page 3 to read as constraints are not affecting us unless we proceed with a grant **Van Buren** motioned to approve; **McClure** seconded; approved with corrections no opposed.
- III. Citizens' call to order; **Westfall** stated none present nor submitted.
- IV. Rental Facility Repurposing Discussion; **Westfall** this was not designated Rental Facility Repurposing as a bucket for this committee - DLR did a feasibility study geared towards turning the building over to a rental company. **Van Buren** if we turn this over to a rental company will we need to refab prior? **Westfall** yes I believe so **McKee** I believe this will just be empty and rented out as we do the fairgrounds / park rentals now **Hougen** so short term rental vs long term just one company rental Would this be certain parts of the building leaving the remainder empty **Westfall** renovations are predicated on change of use and occupancy if rented short term week to week or weekends this would be a change of occupancy **Wallsinger** yes this is how it would fall triggering a seismic upgrade **Hougen** CON the building would be empty majority the time and HIGH potential of damages especially with alcohol consumption – rental facility management truly is more than those believe **Van Buren** who would the liability fall on to

McKee the renter just as the fairgrounds – the event cannot be censored **ALL** there just appears to more negative than positive with this repurposing **Rehklau** the diversity to the building will be positive **Van Buren** how do you rent this at a small enough pricing to bring the people **McKee** yes you can break each room into its own cost trying to generate the revenue you will have to be out there to sale sale **Hougen** the bathrooms are a huge con for rental not only old but the location of them **Richardson** a short term lease does not feel positive, even if mainly empty the internal environment will need to be maintained such as heat maybe set a part of the building for rental **Wallsinger** moisture and vacancy is really bad on an older building **Westfall** I believe this had been brought up a consistent need for med – small space we could section a portion to fill this need – unclear if this is considered small or medium we will need to tour the building soon **Rehklau** arts and culture advisor board that no longer exists did a study before the pandemic on artists looking for cost effective spaces – 2019 maybe – never saw the final **Betjemann** who does rent at the fairgrounds **McKee** pre pandemic our rentals were at 1200 venues a year – 4-H, Farmers Market, Club meets, poultry swaps, a real mix – quinceañeras – celebration of life – Beazell does a lot of weddings being we are the county we cannot charge full retail keeping our prices reasonable. **Van Buren** would this not cause competition if changed to a rental in this way **Westfall** asking McKee do you see a lot of traffic looking for this type of space we currently have here at the courthouse **McKee** we are looking for a bigger rentable space as we turn a lot over to Linn County with this sizing it would probably be a Kiwanis or Rotary group looking for lunch space – it is hard to keep clean when carpeted – the new museum is marketing their space.

- V. Multi – Use Discussion; **McKee** can we see a synergy between what we have selected within our buckets or those that you just know would not work together. Repurpose notes that were emailed out review **Westfall** we identified a mix use as a pro – change of use of occupancy so we can cut and paste the cons as they will come across on any repurpose unless we keep it government use – seismic upgrade – we have not identified what connects well yet, lets discuss this. **Van Buren** Linn county has a shop in the basement that is being used by the persons using the courthouse and others in the area **Hougen** do we need another restaurants downtown so this would be a competition **CON Richardson** – it would have to be reconfigured for more private space – residential would be consistent long term revenue that would go well working with anything as long as they have that private entrance **Westfall** so we need to do an exercise of feasibility to be mixed together **Richardson** yes what sort of security will it be loud – like this space this could be an office or have a group monthly meeting in here to continue a revenue on top of the permanent residents **Rehklau** something of a need is the combo of restraint and rental space – 4 spirits and Corvallis club are the 2 currently that offers this – this need is there for a restraint seating of 150 people – common fields is trying but they are outside – a group wants to do an offsite dinner they only have one choice currently **Betjemann** a real draw for the outside community – how the building feels as its brand really matters – a artist studio and a wine tour rental all in one. **Westfall** – yes foot traffic has been brought up even to the commissioners – mixed use full and closed or occupied and get the diversity of the in and out traffic. – maybe we come up with a theme like government office space – that is how we will find out what attracts – think about the terms of topics already discussed – what are we looking for traffic or occupancy

– If lawyers rented is that government use **Westfall** – no private attorney **McKee** – what foot traffic would you like to see in the downtown area – synergy within the building along with downtown having its own synergy **Kurth** – landscape we know will expand as we know it as it will not be going away. **Keeney** – it needs to be multi use and each floor could be different your foot traffic would be dependent on where people are going – I like the draw of a place for a bigger group to have a place to enjoy a dinner. **Westfall** what kind of concept we will recommend the occupancy type and foot traffic sense – lets discuss this **Richardson** – choose something with a priority or regional draw – set on that concept then look at the building as to what would support the theme of mix use **Westfall** sounds like the discussion should be on the feel of the theme **Betjemann** I would love to hear from the folks around us to understand better where are gaps are in terms of something that has an identity that would increase the Corvallis capacity- sorry the people from the room **Rehklau** I support the arts and culture locally but to pitch that is hard – destination restaurant would be my pick – McMenamins has become a chain I would ditch that – pitching to the tourists is mainly focused on culinary as it is easy and brings the draw **Betjemann** how do we set the conditions for culinary – I like that draw as well. **Christina** needs to be immersive if we go wine like a mix your own – but that type of culinary draw would work **McKee** like we did at deep woods there is that type of history doing parties themed people really do come and will spend that money **McClure** – I have misgiven on getting away from the steady revenue by keeping this government used. **Westfall** – not certain there is a right answer here **Van Buren** let’s look at keeping a government with an added coffee shop or something – biggest reason we are missing having to do immediate refab. The longer we wait on seismic the more it goes up **Kurth** – city of Corvallis not interested in occupying this may be different a few months from now ¼ billion capitol infrastructure projects their tune could change – I am not speaking for them I just see their interest may change seismic challenges and all they need space and space is expensive – keep this in mind as a proposal **Westfall** there is a culture capitol encompasses real capitol as the cost to build something of this size nowadays is way more than just rehabbing what we have. Mix use could still encompass government and retail **Richardson** mix use not all eggs in one basket on revenue – still being owned by the county there could be various rental agreement like step increases. Better than having no revenue. **McKee** – we currently do this at Adair, new owner and we are gradually increasing her to allow time to establish **Betjemann** I agree with Bob we need to get the synergy for the mix use and work from there

VI. Next Steps; **Westfall** look at how are we going to get a draft report prepared – timeline shows to be ready for preliminary March- advising the BOC we will need to do a public input. We should invite some others such as the chambers of commerce – as Simon has been absent – Christina will reach out to Simon – we are at a point I feel we need all members’ voices before this report is submitted. **Wallsinger** end product will be the recommendation we propose to the BOC not a final decision **Westfall** timeline still here Jan – Feb draft this report Dec target was the 3-5 ideas to incorporate into the report – currently 6 big bucket items **Hougen** are we prepared to have the consensus in the next 12 mins or should move fwd to Jan meet? – work well with a poll being sent out then perhaps do an in between meet for the results of that poll and converse that only then Jan move into writing. **Richardson** in between meet may be better than a poll – do we look

at pieces for outside attraction or steady those who work here will use mostly – do we keep perpetuating the iconic building this has become. What is our theme? Art culture food – government – rental facility or private rental – these are the big 3 ? I heard today and feel we should be clear on – what is the thing the county will strive to attract to this place. **Westfall** – yes a guiding principal – Ott can you pull this off google docs and resend to all for review. This has been an enjoyable last few months with the creative discourse but here comes the hard work with possibility of conflict – here we will move what began a private conversation to open to the public. **Betjemann** – we are a big group but I would like more a case making for each use – maybe divide into case study groups – come together with each case and present them to overlook **Van Buren** one document that lists all the buckets **McKee** was sent out and will resend **Richardson** peter are you envisioning really specifically if this was a food center and to tease that out into detail what that looks like? **Betjemann** – yes **Kurth** interject on the timing if this committee needs more time we need to ask the commissioners with talk trash and bond measures if an extra month or two may be needed the BOC would probably not have a problem with this. **Westfall** – correct we do not have hard deadlines with the BOC – if we meet in sub groups between now and Jan then come do the senses for Jan meeting.

ALL Discussion on synergies/value how to group for more discussion prior to Jan meeting
Government public use

Residential use

Lodging use

Private office

Arts and culture / culinary

Retail / culinary

- VII.** Other – discussion on nonprofit – children’s museum – **Hougen** this in the end is robbing the current museums. The resources here are truly stretched with the nonprofits currently and adding to that will potentially take from others – nonprofit is constantly understaffed and under funded County pays to keep this running – and will continue to pay to keep alive There is no gain from the county it is about a self-sufficient renter

Went over 1130 for a multi person’s discussion of proceeding forward. 3 categories and go into deeper dive: choosing a theme with no exclusion of mix use

Leaving behind 5 of the big use topics to date

Changed to children/family programming – culinary arts – government public use/ civic – to present to the BOC

All comfortable with these ideas – and all comfortable leaving behind.

- I. Adjournment - 1200