

## Council Minutes February 17, 2022

STATE OF TEXAS §

COUNTY OF TARRANT §

CITY OF BEDFORD §

The City Council of the City of Bedford, Texas, met in a Town Hall Meeting at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 2000 Forest Ridge Drive, on the 17th day of February, 2022 with the following members present:

Michael Boyter  
Amy Sabol  
Dan Cogan  
Ruth Culver  
Rich Steves

Mayor  
Mayor Pro Tem  
Councilmembers

constituting a quorum.

Councilmembers Almendarez and Gagliardi did not attend the meeting.

Staff present included:

Jimmy Stathatos  
Michael Wells

City Manager  
City Secretary

### **CALL TO ORDER / GENERAL COMMENTS**

Mayor Boyer called the Town Hall to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **TOWN HALL MEETING**

- **Presentation and discussion regarding the Performing Arts Center.**

Mayor Boyter stated the purpose of the town hall meeting is to receive input from residents, and what will be presented are the possibilities for the project based on discussions between the architect, staff, and members of Council. City Manager Jimmy Stathatos stated staff wants sincere feedback from the residents. Council formed a subcommittee that met with the architects to see what the best fit will be and what the community wants based on feedback. He stated the funds Council is considering for the project were approved by the voters in 2017 and he read the language from the 2017 bond referendum. He further stated that part of the foundation of the discussions is to have a multipurpose venue that can benefit the widest variety of residents. Mr. Stathatos discussed potential revenue sources for the project, including the bond funds, hotel/motel funds, Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) funds, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, grants, and surplus general funds.

Chris Sano and Andrew Evertson with BRW Architects stated the purpose of the project is a multi-use facility that can accommodate theatrical performances, music concerts, visual art galleries, event spaces, maybe a conference center, and outdoor amenities. The overall vision for the site includes a cultural arts identity, energetic, to serve as a catalyst for Bedford Road, to complement Bedford Commons, to serve as a revenue generator, and to become a destination. The goals of the project include to act as a catalyst, energy, and cultural showpiece. Their strategy is broken

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into three major parts, including performance venues, outdoor gathering spaces, and art and activity spaces. They discussed and gave examples of performing arts venues, conference centers, events lawns, art moments, food trucks, walking trails, picnic groves, outdoor rooms, activity zones, water features, exhibits, shade, and festival lighting. They discussed programming and seating for performance venues, and presented three options, with the main differences being the performance space and ancillary spaces. They discussed how the entire site could be developed, which would be done in phases. In response to a question from Council, they presented a history of BRW and other performance art venues on which BRW has worked.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS**

Bob Cochrane – Mr. Cochrane asked about the possibility of having a retractable stage. There was discussion on seating and staging options, including issues related to storage for portable seats and stages.

Rebecca Andrews – Ms. Andrews stated she has a long history of involvement in community performance arts groups and felt that a multi-purpose venue is not a good environment for performances based on previous experiences at other such facilities. She felt that a performing arts center in Bedford needs to feel special for the performers. She discussed the 250-seat Irving Arts Center auditorium and suggested it as an example of a space that could be used by local schools, homeschoolers, and performing arts groups. She asked if the City has plans on generating revenue in the space so it did not have to be farmed out. She stated the only people who would use a Blackbox theater are a theater, which does not make for the widest use possible. Ms. Andrews felt that a multipurpose facility and a conference center were the same thing. She stated art classes and studios need to have dedicated space to be revenue generating. She advised on having enough greenspace, backstage space, and storage for a theater as well as sufficient parking.

There was discussion on avoiding incompatible uses at a multi-use facility; revenue being based on the direction Council decides to go with the project; input from the community and other stakeholders about what they want from the facility; opportunities to pay for the facility, including hotel/motel tax; market research for the facility; the facility being part of a bigger picture, including Bedford Commons, the Old Bedford School (OBS), and reactivating Bedford Road; and the limitations on the use of hotel/motel taxes.

Pam Cochrane – Ms. Cochrane discussed an opera company of which she was part that struggled to find an affordable place to perform. She advised that performance groups will not come to a facility that does not have good acoustics and discussed the need to have a stage.

The representatives from BRW discussed acoustics for theater versus musical performances and controlling the acoustics in the performance space. In response to a question from Council, they confirmed that the City can expect to have good acoustics with the facility and would work with an acoustician and a theatrical planner. There was discussion on portable versus more purpose-built stages.

Jeanette Cook – Ms. Cook stated there is a need for this type of facility; however, the money for it was taken from Generations Park, and could have been used to build tennis courts and a skate park or refurbish the trails on Cheek Sparger Road. She felt the facility would detract from the historic feel of the OBS area. She further felt that the City has not fixed the Generations Park debacle and is rushing things. Ms. Cook asked who is going to operate such a facility and if anybody on staff has the ability to do so. She felt the City was trying to go too big on the project. She further asked why the OBS auditorium was not being used for its purpose. Ms. Cook felt the

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OBS property was not the best place for the facility and recommended the Campus West property for its accessibility. She discussed having to move the musical park on the OBS property.

There was discussion on previous planning for the Generations Park project and the project being ahead of schedule and under budget; various other projects on which the City is currently working, including fixing streets and major thoroughfares, and renovations of public safety facilities; ramping up staff to operate the facility; feedback from the subcommittee working on the project; the upcoming Master Parks and Trails Plan; the potential for grants; and the management of the facility.

Rick Blair – Mr. Blair with Artisan Centers Theater stated their lease is up at their current location in two years, and they are looking at all options to handle the growth through which they are going. He discussed parking, including that they currently use three acres on the weekends for 1,500 patrons. He discussed a TIRZ that would incorporate the entire region and the performing arts and stated there are no performing arts venues in north Tarrant County. Mr. Blair stated a theater needs to have capacity, which is a minimum of 200 to 300 seats. He discussed grants and involvement with the school districts, as they do not focus on education for performing arts. He felt the OBS location was perfect. Mr. Blair further discussed budgets, the overhead of running a theater, and the space needed behind the scenes to support a theater.

Kit – Kit discussed the original intent of the project being a performing arts center and felt the plans were designed as a tourist trap. She felt the purpose of the project should be to facilitate access to the public arts, including for low-income families. She stated nobody asked for a conference center or multi-use space to be rented out to and/or run by third parties. There was discussion on revenue from hotel/motel taxes being used for operational costs and other allowable expenses.

Bob Freeman – Mr. Freeman discussed public-private partnerships and stated that conference centers in neighboring cities were not making money nor reducing taxes. He advised Council to look at what people want, and that Bedford should quit wanting what other cities have. He discussed potential issues with outdoor music, increased traffic, and competition with local restaurants. He advised getting back to the basics and whether there is a need for the facility. There was discussion on exploring options with other cities and organizations and doing something to support local businesses.

Angie – Angie stated that 17 of 20 elementary schools in the Hurst-Euless-Bedford Independent School District are Title One and asked that the facility not be built so big that people cannot afford to go to it. There was discussion on making everything affordable to the residents, including through different revenue streams to reduce costs, and giving preference to Bedford residents.

Margaret Hall – Ms. Hall felt the project had grown into a monstrosity and asked where people would park. She felt that it needed to be kept smaller and to make it for the people that live in Bedford. She asked if ONSTAGE in Bedford was still going to be around. She discussed other theaters that do not have stages. There was discussion on the agreement with ONSTAGE to use the second floor of the OBS, that the new facility being open to everyone equally, and phasing the project.

Lindsay Polito – Ms. Polito discussed the incongruity of keeping the facility small and affordable but not wanting outside traffic. She felt that a conference center bringing in outside revenue would be a good thing if it gives the City the performing arts center, and that it was important to bring something to Bedford that other cities do not have. She discussed the amount of space a theater needs, the Artisan Theater Group, public-private partnerships, and outdoor parks. She advised to

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be efficient and to consider traffic and parking, especially if larger events are brought to the City.

Josh Santillan – Mr. Santillan felt the visual arts were being neglected in regard to the project. He would like to see something akin to the Trinity Arts Guild Children’s Show in a municipal setting, like was done previously with the traffic signal boxes.

Roger Gallenstein – Mr. Gallenstein discussed his previous talks with Council about Bedford needing a destination as well as the previous plan to put apartments in the Bedford Commons development. He felt that cities that do not move forward will slowly die and for years the City has suffered under the concept of mediocre and discussed changes in Council and staff since that time. He stated he is on record on Bedford needing a performing arts center, in order to have people come into the City and for the residents to enjoy.

Mike Winters – Mr. Winters, the artistic director of ONSTAGE in Bedford, stated a theater needs more than 99 seats to make it beneficial for any group coming in. He felt it important for art to be installed on the inside and outside of the facility, and to make it full artistic space to inspire people to create art, music, and dance. He further discussed a combination performing arts and conference center in another city that worked.

Bob Cochrane – Mr. Cochrane felt that the City should start with a performing arts center and then shoehorn another use into it instead of the other way around.

There was discussion on performing due diligence on the project; getting feedback from the community; the next steps in the process; ensuring that what is ultimately built is the right answer for Bedford; the analysis performed by Duncan Webb on the need for a performing arts center in the area, the impact of the pandemic, the possibility of an amphitheater; the need for enough parking; and the desire for performing arts.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Boyter adjourned the town hall meeting at 8:02 p.m.

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Michael Boyter, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Michael Wells, City Secretary