

**APPROVED
SPECIAL MEETING
BEACH REDEVELOPMENT BOARD
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
8th FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33301
MONDAY, AUGUST 4, 2014 - 2:30 P.M.**

MEMBERS	FEB 2014/JAN 2015					
		REGULAR MTGS		SPECIAL MTGS		
		Present	Absent	Present	Absent	
Anthony Abbate, Chair	P	4	0	2	0	
Ina Lee, Vice Chair (l. @ 3:51 pm)	P	3	1	2	0	
Thomas B. McManus	P	1	1	2	0	
Dan Matchette	P	4	0	2	0	
Melissa Milroy	P	2	2	2	0	
Judith Scher	P	4	0	2	0	
Tim Schiavone	A	4	0	1	1	
Andy Mitchell, Jr.	P	3	1	2	0	
Shirley Smith	P	4	0	2	0	
Aiton Yaari	A	3	1	1	1	

Staff

Lee Feldman, City Manager
 Don Morris, Economic Reinvestment Administrator
 Diana Alarcon, Director of Transportation and Mobility
 Jenni Morejon, Director Designee, Department of Sustainable Development
 Tom Green, Beach Engineer
 Talal Abi-Karam, Public Works Department
 Jeff Stafford, Aquatic Complex Staff
 Eileen Furedi, Clerk II
 Jamie Opperee, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

Guests and Presenters

Lester Zalewski, LBM
 Abby Laughlin, Central Beach Alliance
 Fred Carlson, Central Beach Alliance
 John Weaver, Central Beach Alliance
 Scott Wyman
 Art Seitz
 Michael Glassman, M.D.

I. Call to Order/Roll Call – Anthony Abbate, Chair

Chair Abbate called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

Quorum Requirement

As of this date there were 10 appointed members to the Board, which means 6 would constitute a quorum. It was noted there was a quorum at the commencement of the meeting.

II. Aquatic Center Modifications - Lee Feldman, ICMA-CM, City Manager

Mr. Feldman explained that this meeting was arranged so that he could clarify some issues with the Aquatic Center. He provided a brief history of the Center. He said they received a single response to an RFP for a comprehensive facility in the summer of 2011: the proposal included an aquatic complex, restaurants, wave house, bridge, etc. The cost was about \$74 million.

Mr. Feldman continued that the project had issues with traffic, parking, concurrency and zoning, but the biggest issue was the cost. While the CRA would contribute \$25 million, there was doubt where the remainder of the money would come from. The City Commission instructed that the project be designed within the budget. Mr. Feldman continued that staff then presented a design that they thought would be within the budget, and the sole bidder RDC also presented a design based upon the same budget. The City Commission elected to go forward with the RDC design, and a developer's agreement was negotiated with RDC, which is now in effect.

Mr. Feldman then discussed ISHOF, which had been a tenant for many years. The City offered them a built-out space necessary for ISHOF to remain, a shell, and offered to lease the site to them for 50 years at \$1.00 per year. However, Mr. Feldman reported that they could not come to an agreement; ISHOF was seeking a greater financial agreement from the City to the tune of a \$50,000 per year stipend, profit sharing, etc. After that, ISHOF informed the City they were entertaining opportunities out of state, and were not interested in coming back to Fort Lauderdale.

Mr. Feldman reported there was a meeting two weeks ago with US Diving regarding the diving platform; they were asked the following three questions:

1. If they had concerns about the diving operations at the facility
2. If there is an issue with the peripheral vision of divers diving from a platform on top of the four-story parking garage
3. If there are wind issues

According to Mr. Feldman, US Diving said they thought the facility would be "great"; and they said the divers are focused on the water only - there would not be a problem with peripheral vision. Regardless of where the platform is, wind speeds exceeding 25 mph would cancel any diving. Based on calculations done by the developer's structural engineer, the difference between winds "at grade" and on the diving platform would be two mph. Mr. Feldman stated that winds here rarely get over 18 mph.

Mr. Feldman then consulted the City's Public Works Department to obtain an independent calculation from a professional at FIU - this is in progress.

Mr. Feldman continued that the City had entered into a development agreement with RDC at approximately \$32 million, \$25 million which is coming from the CRA and \$7 million from the parking fund (in the form of a parking revenue bond or cash contribution from the parking fund). Building plans should be submitted to the Building Division in November.

Mr. Feldman said they are bringing forth a series of change orders dealing with the facility in the previously designated ISHOF space. After considering several options, he said that the first dealt with freeing up space on the fifth floor and creating a nice venue there for the banquet hall. The second change was to create a two-story indoor diving training facility for which there may be a monetary contribution or sponsorships from the diving community. There also may be a credit on the moveable floor option on the pool since it does not provide any intrinsic value to the project. Mr. Feldman stated the scope has been drawn back "dramatically," and it is not the same facility that was first imagined.

Mr. Feldman commented that this facility has been (and still is) characterized to the City Commission as a "municipal pool complex." He said that City staff will be running the facility and book the events, as they have for 20 years.

However, Mr. Feldman stated that this pool will lose money, as do all the municipal pools - it is more of a service than a profit-making operation. The parking garage will generate additional revenue for the parking fund, which will bring dollars back to the General Fund. Those monies could help cover some of the losses incurred by the facility.

Chair Abbate asked the Board if they had read a June 10 letter from Mr. Foley, and a list of 20 questions and letter from Tim and Ron O'Brien. Although they had done so, they had not had a chance to understand the latest drawings and proposed revisions.

Mr. Green reviewed the changes:

- Reworking of the 5th floor
- City offices moved to a mezzanine floor (3rd level)
- Banquet facility on 5th floor (with no on-site cooking)

Mr. Green showed a rendering, pointing out the various areas/features.

Mr. Feldman relayed that there is a new sport: high-platform diving which would require a 28-meter diving platform and a deeper pool (one foot). He said they are looking into incorporating such a feature in the facility by adding 18 meters to the platform.

Chair Abbate wondered why US Diving had not made any accommodations as a result of Mr. Foley's June 10 letter. Mr. Feldman pointed out the letter was written in 2013, not 2014, and much discussion has occurred since then. In fact, Mr. Foley participated in the recent conference call and his concerns have been satisfied. Mr. Feldman continued that the biggest concern they now have with US Diving concerns visibility from the bleachers on the west side of the pool. To accommodate that concern, the City is trying to resolve some ADA issues.

Mr. Feldman added that the matter of attracting cruise ship participation is not the designer's obligation - it would up to the City.

Chair Abbate clarified that the "20 questions" are from Tim O'Brien and his father, Ron.

Ms. Lee wondered about the CVB's role in booking events. Mr. Feldman responded he has not had any conversations with them. Jeff Stafford of the Aquatic Complex confirmed that the YMCA is looking forward to returning, and they consider Fort Lauderdale a family destination.

Ms. Lee was curious if there had been any potential room-night generated studies once the facility would open and if staff has projected into the future regarding room-night revenue. Mr. Feldman replied that analysis has not been done because the City does not collect tourist development tax dollars.

Ms. Smith expressed concerns about the wind affecting the divers.

Mr. Matchette wondered what events they might miss out on because the facility will not "be world class." Mr. Feldman believed they would have the same level of activity that they did in 2006-2007. In addition, they do not want to push out the daily users of the facility by having too many events.

Mr. Stafford stated that the design specifications do meet world-class standards (FINA). Mr. Feldman commented that this will be a first-class, state-of-the-art facility and cautioned against getting caught up in semantics.

Ms. Scher was still concerned that she had not heard confirmation that the dive platform was acceptable. Mr. Feldman replied he would provide that answer when they have the results of the FIU study. If the results are not favorable, he said they would not build the platform. Mr. Abi-Karam (Public Works Department) said the results should be ready within approximately three weeks.

At this point, Chair Abbate clarified that a vote today would be taken on whether to proceed with the modifications costing \$1.238 million. Mr. Feldman did not foresee any more changes to the scope with the exception of possibly modifying the diving platform to 28 meters and deepening the diving pool by one meter.

Mr. Mitchell liked the family/tourist use of the facility and the fact that it will be state of the art. He was concerned, however, about the profitability of the business side. Regarding design, he wanted to see “fresh and exciting” concepts within the budget.

Ms. Milroy asked if there was still a concern about how the complex would look from Seabreeze and how it would fit in with DC Alexander Park. Mr. Morris responded that EDSA is looking only at the public open space areas and connectivity between DC Alexander Park and the Aquatic Center, not the building façade.

Mr. Matchette asked Mr. Feldman what the alternative would be if the FIU study had adverse results. Mr. Feldman replied they would consider relocating the dive tower at the at-grade pool. This might involve redesigning the pool width to accommodate FINA standards, which would encroach into the front design. Mr. Matchette suggested relocating the dive platform to the Intracoastal side, and Mr. Feldman said they had considered that option but have not decided. He added it might be better to have it on Seabreeze in terms of pedestrian and vehicular traffic (so people can see what is going on). They want to keep a park-like environment on the west side to enhance the walking experience along the Intracoastal.

Ms. Lee suggested how the open space can be utilized to create a “wow” factor.

Chair Abbate opened the floor to public comment at 3:28 p.m.

Abby Laughlin, Central Beach Alliance, asked how far in advance of the City Commission meeting they would have the FIU study; Mr. Feldman said there will be two readings of the ordinance and the study should be completed before the second reading. He elaborated that the City Commission will consider the site plan approval and the change orders (a two-step process); the City Commission first meets as the CRA on August 19 and then meets as the Commission on September 3, 2014. Ms. Laughlin also wondered about the deed restriction; Mr. Feldman explained that the deed restriction refers to “a” swimming hall of fame, not “the” ISHOF. Since no swimming hall of fame is contemplated under this plan, the State does have the option to take back the facility.

Fred Carlson, Central Beach Alliance, said that people at several recent meetings regarding DC Alexander Park wanted to wait until the pool is finished before considering what concept to follow for the Park. Mr. Feldman responded that they are moving forward with EDSA to begin design concepts for DC Alexander Park. The City Commission rejected the first design; they had a visual charette discussion at the Aquatic Center to receive public comment, and on July 4 they put up a note-taking project for passers-by to post comments. Mr. Feldman reported they did not get the desired public participation at the meeting - mostly staff and BRAB members responded. He did not think they could wait until the completion of the pool to begin thinking of designs due to the CRA’s expiration date.

Art Seitz, former Board member, cited the results of the Visioning process, which indicated very few people (less than 1%) had interest in water polo, synchronized swimming, recreational or competitive swimming and the like. He felt it was not certain the YMCA would come back. Mr. Seitz did not like the idea of putting a parking garage on the Intracoastal. He also cited lack of shade, no therapy feature, and too many other pools in the City as negative aspects of the plan; he suggested moving the center somewhere else, such as Holiday Park. Another suggestion was to make room at the top of the diving deck so people could watch Winterfest. He referred to critical articles written about RDC, and to some history of the project design.

John Weaver, President of Central Beach Alliance (CBA), reported that since the Swimming Hall of Fame reversed its position and said it was a great design, the CBA also thought it was good. He said the ISHOF generated 15,000 hotel room nights in 2011 (\$7.5 million) as opposed to \$10 billion for the entire beach. If the design is going to re-open, the CBA would like to see a four-story parking garage on Alhambra. Regarding the diving, he felt the study did not matter much - it was what the divers think that matters. He suggested that Mr. Feldman attend a CBA meeting to receive feedback.

Dr. Michael Glassman, surgeon and lifelong swimmer, expressed concern regarding locating the pool directly above a parking garage. He was worried about the effects of fume exposure from car exhaust. An open-air car garage cannot be vented to guarantee those above it will not be exposed. He also noted exhaust from yachts. He said that when he approached the developers about it, they did not perceive a problem, citing condo pools on top of parking structures. Dr. Glass pointed out the difference in numbers of people and children using the pools. Dr. Glassman left copies of medical studies linking respiratory problems to exhaust.

[Mr. Feldman and Ms. Lee left at 3:51 p.m.]

Lester Zalewski, Lauderdale Beach Management, thought the pool was a "done deal." He was not particularly in favor of the design, but felt the City Commission had made up its mind. He advised that there will be cost overruns, but thought there would be a benefit to the entire City. He suggested leaving CRA money in the CRA for neighborhood improvements, and tap the City for money for the Aquatic Center.

Chair Abbate closed the floor to public comment at 3:53 p.m.

Chair Abbate then summarized a letter from Tim O'Brien and his father Ron O'Brien into the record:

The two men have coached nine U.S. Olympic diving teams, and have spent their lives coaching/competing on a world-class level. They have been encouraging the City Mayor and Commissioners to step back and re-evaluate the current designs for the new Aquatics Center and its flawed business model, as well as trying to repair the relationship with the International Swimming Hall of

Fame so it can remain here. The City of Fort Lauderdale and areas surrounded by water has an incredible opportunity right now to make sure that it remains the central focal point of the aquatic world for decades by keeping the Swimming Hall of Fame here and building a truly world-class facility.

We believe the City can do something really special here and have the best of all worlds by:

- 1) building a world-class facility that is the epicenter of worldwide aquatics
- 2) keeping the International Swimming Hall of Fame in its home of 50 years
- 3) having an aquatic center with a business model that actually makes money
- 4) including the surrounding communities with water attractions and activities
- 5) host events that will benefit surrounding hotels, restaurants, and business for years
- 6) still have the parking garage in the beach area

During our time coaching at the Hall of Fame pool, the City was constantly presenting us with design plans in an effort to build a new aquatic center. These plans included the Hall of Fame and were beautiful designs for a facility that would be the pride of Fort Lauderdale. We were excited to see the vision of the City -- those older plans include shops, restaurants and a wave pool or other water attraction that would include the surrounding community. We always felt there should be something there for tourists as well as for surrounding communities, residents, and children who could happily benefit from the water attraction.

We did not want it to be just a training center for aquatic athletes, excluding everyone else. The City's plans during that time were aligned with our beliefs that to make a new Aquatic Center successful it has to have attractions for everyone and contain a business model that is profitable. Simply stated, you cannot pay bills; it loses money currently. We have not seen any financial projections/analysis which has shown that the new and improved Aquatic Center is anything more than the same business model.

It is not a world-class facility planned regardless of what the City portrays it to be. It will just be another facility - nothing special - with a 10-meter diving platform exposed to the wind and elements.

There is a better way. The current plans for the new aquatic center are the worst version we have seen, dating back to the early 1990s and more importantly, are the status quo. We have never seen competitive swimming and diving pools built on top of parking garages. We have coached on that pool deck for over 40 years, and the wind for a diver on top of that 10-meter platform could be a huge challenge.

The City can hire wind experts but a report is far different from reality. We met with City officials and the developer over a year ago and voiced our

concerns, discussed numerous options - but ultimately the City and the developer ignored our advice.

We have no financial, political, or other motive in this issue. We love the City; we simply want to see officials provide the best possible solution to everyone involved. We believe this falls far short in every aspect. We urge the Mayor, Commissioners, and those involved to pause, step back, re-evaluate, get more insight, another vision, and explore options. Perhaps it would be wise to form a group of experts separate from the City to look at the best options, to talk to facilities with profitable business models and ultimately solicit more bids and do the right thing.

It is not important to do this fast, but to do it right. We only have one chance at this. Respectfully submitted, Dr. Ron O'Brien and Tim O'Brien.

Chair Abbate closed the floor to public comment at 3:58 p.m.

Chair Abbate reminded the Board of their specific charge regarding the Redevelopment Plan. He pointed out that the plan specifically stated "world class," but he noted the discussion had moved to "state-of-the-art." That would cause a change to the Redevelopment Plan. Chair Abbate also stated that everyone on the Board should say whether they are convinced that the plan (as moving forward) will contribute to the economic revitalization of the CRA.

Feedback from the Board was as follows:

- Not convinced that a pool complex on that property is the highest and best use
- Not convinced that the pool complex is going to be the type of driver that the CRA needs for its future
- Thought the project was "unstoppable" at this point, and if so, the proposed changes (catering, setback, etc.) should be recommended
- Sounds like it will be a world-class facility
- Improved pools will bring more local people to use the facility
- If the diving board and the deeper pool work out, divers will come here
- Will the facility fit with the vision for the CRA and beach?
- Where people go to swim has changed in 40 years
- The new facility will enhance the City
- Concern that the new facility will not be maintained based on past experience
- Parking garage is not necessary (too many parking spaces and wasted money)
- New facility will be beautiful
- CVB will market it successfully
- Contributes to revitalization of CRA
- Will be state-of-the-art
- Covered bleachers would be nice
- Perhaps look into fumes from exhaust (unknown factor)
- Would prefer a more tourist-oriented facility tied into DC Alexander Park, but would run into the "trips" issue

- Constitutes a change to the plan
 - No evidence that it will revitalize the area
 - It is a community swimming pool
 - Parking garage will not revitalize area (concerns about parking garages on beach: when empty, attract undesirable elements)
 - Facility would not even be state-of-the-art architecturally

Having heard the comments, Mr. Matchette wondered what any alternative would be. Chair Abbate responded he wanted to be sure there are plans in place to guarantee revitalization - he did not see the connection. He would assess the value of the parking garage as a component. Chair Abbate expressed concern about spending one half of the budget on one facility that is for a single use (swimming).

Chair Abbate pointed out that no members of the Board had seen the updated drawings, and he did not want to pass judgment on a plan that nobody on the Board (except himself) had seen. He also wanted to see the results from FIU. He said he did not know what the “usage plan” was that US Diving needed.

Further, Chair Abbate commented that, as it currently is planned, the Aquatic Center is not the best and highest use of the property.

Mr. Morris reminded the Board that they had previously recommended \$25 million for a project that was \$70 million in December, 2011. The City Commission moved forward based on that recommendation. Now the staff is asking for approval of modifications to the original plan. Chair Abbate commented that the proposed changes do improve the situation.

Mr. Weaver said he attended the meeting because he thought the project was re-opening for review. He thought the CBA membership would be in support of that, and would be interested in seeing more consideration. He thought the thing that attracted people was the Fort Lauderdale beach, not the pool.

Mr. Matchette commented that in 2011, the project was proposed as a swim facility, not as a project being the “highest and best use” of the property. He favored more time for review, noting this is the last opportunity to provide input.

Ms. Scher feared nothing would take place if they opposed the changes at this point, but actually wanted more time for review.

Ms. Morejon stated that the redevelopment plan created by EDSA always anticipated maintaining the Aquatic Center. The Sasaki Plan also envisioned aquatic use at the site. She advised the Board to clarify their language regarding “highest and best use.”

Chair Abbate remarked there are three basic core components in the Master Plan that the Board is charged to implement:

1. Create a world-class atmosphere for residents and visitors
2. Revitalize business
3. Promote pedestrian activity

Chair Abbate continued that during the inception of the Master Plan, certain assumptions were in place regarding the cultural component of the Aquatic Center (ISHOF) in addition to the athletic and the community aspects. He said the cultural component has been removed, the focus of the program to meet budgetary constraints was narrowed, and the pedestrian and connectivity component were removed. Due to those changes, he thought it would be incumbent upon the Board to see if the changed plans meet the original charge.

Motion made by Mr. Matchette, seconded by Mr. McManus, to inform the City Commission that the Board has serious reservations about the Aquatic Center being the highest and best use of the property as defined by the Fort Lauderdale Beach Community Redevelopment Plan. If it is determined that the Aquatic Center is the highest and best use, the Board approves these modifications.

There was a brief discussion concerning the meaning of “highest and best use” in the context of the motion, and of the need (or not) for parking.

In a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

IV. Old Business - None.

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chair Abbate at 4:38 p.m.

[Minutes prepared by J. Rubin, Prototype, Inc. - 1st draft edits by Eileen Furedi]

Attachments:

Letter from Tim and Ron O'Brien - Mr. Morris