

# **CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS**

## **BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA**

### **Work Session – March 13, 2012**

Pursuant to due call and notice, a work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, March 13, 2012, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, Mayor Larson presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Larson, Waldhausen, Hellquist, Johnson, Albrecht, Negard and Thompson (joined the meeting at 6:03 p.m.)

Staff Present: City Manager John Chattin, City Attorney Alan Felix, Parks & Recreation Director Marcia Larson, City Clerk Kay Murphy

Others Present: Upstream TV - Mike Bredon and Mark Clemens  
Lewis Crenshaw, Alan Brew

Mayor Larson stated that the purpose of the work session was to discuss a proposal from Upstream TV to utilize the Carnegie Library building.

Mike Bredon, Executive Director for Upstream TV, reviewed a proposal for use for the Carnegie Library thereby saving the Carnegie Library building. He stated that the Carnegie was initially built with the purpose of disseminating information and Upstream TV proposes to return to the initial use and intent of the building by unifying information and technology. He suggested that the Carnegie could be renovated to house shared studio space for Upstream TV and the City's government access channel. Bredon stated that Upstream TV is anticipating growth and increased membership. He stated that while membership is important to Upstream, they will always look for underwriters and seek grant funding.

Lewis Crenshaw presented a funding plan that he researched after the Council voiced doubts at its January meeting regarding the availability of funding to restore/renovate the Carnegie. Crenshaw stated that after research, he is convinced that with a combination of state grants, foundation grants and donations from the community, we can fund the library preservation project. Crenshaw further commented he has spoken with the Minnesota Preservation Alliance and the Minnesota State Historical Society and believed that the community could raise the target figure of \$1 million. He stated that Thief River Falls was successful in their efforts to get funds to convert its Carnegie Library into a convention and visitors center.

Crenshaw reviewed an aggressive timeline in order to apply for Legacy Funds by the June 1 deadline. He concluded by stating that the actual project timetable depends upon the success of fundraising.

Councilmembers questioned whether the funds could be raised to hire an architect to conduct the condition assessment by mid-April. Alan Brew, Heritage Preservation Commission Chair, pledged \$10,000, Crenshaw pledged \$1,000 and another individual in the audience offered \$500.

Councilor Johnson stated that the proposal by Upstream fits the Public Affairs Committee's vision of expanding government access and co-locating with public television. However, Johnson stated that it is not about access television but about saving the Carnegie Library and he did not feel they should be tied together.

Hellquist wondered if Upstream could pay market rate rent for the building and cover the monthly costs of operation.

Albrecht commented that it isn't about an organization but could be some other group in the building. She stated that there is a use envisioned for the building that could utilize the building and sustain it but did not agree that market rate rent was necessary. She observed that other building tenants that are in City-owned building are not charged market rate rent (old Bethel Church and Depot).

Hellquist asked for a real business plan from Upstream TV that lays out costs they will strive to achieve. He further commented that whatever Upstream TV cannot pay will be the

taxpayers; responsibility. He stated that the cost of maintaining the building is not part of the park plan and that is why the Council has voted not to include it two times.

Albrecht commented that there has been a sustainable use in the Carnegie Library for years and it is a public building for public use.

Waldhausen agreed with the idea of shared public access and partnering with Upstream. However, from a business plan, if there was no Carnegie Library would a building like this make sense businesswise. Waldhausen wondered if the Council is listening to a proposal to partner with Upstream TV or to save the Carnegie Library.

Bredon commented that Upstream had originally wanted to be located in the Carnegie Library which they believe is a great location and fits their needs.

Negard expressed concerns about Upstream TV's ability to maintain the building if they are the user and is not in favor of saddling the taxpayers with the cost of the building.

Bredon stated that the community wants to save the building and believed the funds will come.

Discussion continued regarding how the Waterfront/Library Park planning process would be affected if the Carnegie Library was to remain in the plan. Marcia Larson stated that the final decision on the Carnegie could impact the planning process and she along with the consultant would like this resolved. She suggested that they could hold the kick-off meeting scheduled for March 15 but delay future meetings.

Mayor Larson asked if a delay in the park design could affect funding. Marcia Larson responded that it might delay applying for Legacy funds and potentially delay the park improvements another year.

Discussion continued regarding the cost to move or demolition the building. Chattin stated that the estimated demolition and asbestos removal is \$100,000.

Crenshaw stated that he would be happy to volunteer to help with the fundraising. He believed that the City needs to take the leadership role and commented that there are a lot of people out in our community that want to save the building and there is grant money available.

Albrecht stated that the community has overwhelmingly expressed its support to save the Carnegie Library. She further commented that it was "arrogant" of the Council not to listen to the community.

Crenshaw stated that at a minimum the City could stabilize the building meeting the ADA requirements. He stated that he believed the park planning process could continue suggesting that the design leave out the Carnegie Library building. Crenshaw suggested that someone passionate is needed to lead the fundraising efforts to save the Carnegie Library, someone "Rita-like". Albrecht responded that she is willing to sit down with a group of people and lay out a plan but does not have the time to be the leader. Johnson suggested perhaps a team, i.e., Albrecht and Crenshaw.

Hellquist stated that the only way he could get behind saving the Carnegie was if it was moved to the end of Library Park.

Mayor Larson asked Bredon if Upstream TV could prepare a Business Plan which included the Carnegie Library scenario. Bredon stated that they could have one prepared by Friday to include in the Council's packet for their March 19 meeting.

**Motion by Waldhausen, seconded by Thompson, to table the Carnegie Library discussion until the Council's March 19, 2012 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business, motion by Waldhausen, seconded by Hellquist, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kay M. Murphy  
City Clerk