

**SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CIVIC CENTER**

**February 24, 1998**

**5:30 PM**

Chairman Wihby called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

**Present:** Aldermen Wihby, Rivard, Hirschmann, O'Neil

**Messrs:** Aldermen Pinard, Girard, Thibault, Shea, Elias "Skip" Ashooh,  
Barry Brensinger

Chairman Wihby advised that presentations will be made by the following individuals:

- (a) Elias E. Ashooh, MDC Sub-Committee Chair  
Introduction and Overview

In our organizational meeting of this committee, if you will recall, the Aldermen expressed an interest in understanding the process that the sub-committee used in achieving certain targets that we had set out and in thinking through the process I thought it would make the most sense to take a couple of meetings and have financial architecture and physical architecture our first night and that would set the stage for tomorrow night which would be primarily focused on operations, the building operations, so we would have the Building Manager here, the hockey operations and all those things that go on once you have an understanding of the building and its location. We ran into a slight problem with scheduling, pulling people in from different parts of the country. Everything worked except for our primary financial architect, Steve Stearn, could not be here tonight. He has got a major municipal bond closing tomorrow. He was available by phone but we found out that there is no speaker phone capability in this room so we couldn't put him on the speaker with anyone. I would like to make a few comments about what William R. Huff and Steve Stearn did for us during this process and basically what it came down to was Steve gave us an initial financial model, a proformer, that we used when we sent out our RFP's for the building managers and that proformer, that model sort to speak, allowed us to gauge the seven responses that we got back from all the other interested parties who wanted to manage this

building and provide concessions. Through that process, Steve was able to rework this model and we could use it to test the, well not the validity, but lets say the assumed accuracy of the bids that we got from the seven entrants in this RFP process for building manager. We went through, I think eight refinements of the proformer and at the end by the time we got done talking with Ogden, our finalist, we found that what they were proposing and what we found were the needs of this market were very, very close so that we were sure, as sure as we could be, that the assumptions we were using in this were not off the mark and that they were not trying to overbid us or underbid us based on what Stearns experience was in this marketplace. I am going to see about making Steve available to this Committee at a future date. Kevin Clougherty will be here tomorrow night. He couldn't be here tonight but he will be here tomorrow night and will be prepared to answer questions on the particulars of the financial structure. Suffice to say, everything that we did in making our selection of Ogden to manage and the economic assumptions that were used in that came out of this exercise which was developed over about six month's time. Those same proformers are the same bases that we are going to use in going forward and engineering the finances surrounding the hockey team performing in our building and I would assume those are going to be the same assumptions that an ownership group might want to use in their negotiations with securing a team. That is the key part there and it is an important part and I am sorry that Steve couldn't be here tonight but we will be able to touch on that at a future date. The other part of the process that the Committee expressed to us that they were concerned about was the architect's role in site selection and Barry Brensinger is here tonight and he is prepared to run through their process. Let me say that we gave the architects I think it was 11 sites scattered around town and we had certain criteria that they had to meet. One was, as everybody recognizes, this project is geared for the revitalization of downtown so in gauging the sites they wanted to take a look at the impact of this building in downtown plus all of the other factors that go into a site, demolition costs, any kind of collateral interest that you may have there, impact on the neighborhood and without stealing his thunder, I am going to turn it over to Barry but let me ask first if...with me tonight is the rest of the sub-committee, Dick Charpentier and John Snow and we have been the same committee from day one so we all have the same realm of knowledge here and we are all ready to answer questions on this process so Barry, let me turn it over to you.

- (c) Barry Brensinger, Lavallee/Brensinger, PA  
Architect's Role and Site Selection Process

Mr. Brensinger stated it is a pleasure to be here. I would like to make this relatively informal if that works for you. Ladies and gentlemen please feel free to interrupt me at any time with any questions or comments you may have and what I would like to do is spend a few minutes going through a recent history of the project, the process we used for evaluating various sites and why the conclusion of that process was to recommend the Staples site. We first began, as Skip mentioned, with a list of sites. Actually when our firm, along with H.O.K. Sport was engaged to work on the project, Skip and then under the chairmanship of John Snow, the committee had preliminarily if you will prepared a list of nine potential sites. So we started out with a list of nine sites and one of our first tasks was to look at that list and see if we thought there were any other sites that should be considered and candidly we confirmed the evaluation that they had done in advance. That was a reasonable list to start with. During the process of spending several months going through evaluating all of the sites, there were three additional sites that surfaced that were requested either by, in some cases, Aldermen or citizens in our public meetings that we added to the list and included them in the overall evaluation. So in the end we looked at a total of 12 sites. Those sites I think most of you are familiar with, but I will very briefly list them. I will just run down the list quickly. The Armory site, the National Guard Armory at the Amoskeag Bridge; Pearl Street, which is an existing City parking lot referred to as the Pearl Street Parking Lot; Bridge and Elm, the now vacant lot that was formerly being studied as a possible location for what is now City Hall Plaza; the Pandora Building in the Millyard. I think as I run down this list that you will see there is a considerable amount of diversity in the list. We tried to include Millyard sites, non-Millyard sites. What they have in common, however, is they all are located within what I think would generally be defined as downtown Manchester. I will get into that one in a little bit more detail when I talk about criteria. The Woman's Gym which is the Mill building, the horseshoe shaped building which was the site of the previous Centerplex project right at the foot of the Granite Street Bridge; the Hermsdorf site, again we had to label all of these so we could quickly identify them but essentially it is the property that is bounded by Canal, Granite and Elm Streets where Hermsdorf Manufacturing was previously located; the Staples site, a site I know all of you are familiar with; Allen Bradley, similarly I am sure you are familiar with it, Elm and Auburn Streets; South Commercial Street which is where the new soccer stadium is located. Just to the south of the Millyard beyond that horseshoe shaped Mill building I referred to a minute ago; South Elm Street which is an undeveloped lot at the end of Elm Street bounded by Elm, Jefferson Street and Brown Avenue; the PSNH Power Plant site in the Millyard and the surrounding land that is owned by PSNH and is currently undeveloped and finally Wall Street which I think again all of you are familiar with the site of the former BankEast facility as well as the more recently constructed Wall Street properties. Before we began to look at these sites in

detail, we set up a couple of mandates, if you will, to the design group to keep ourselves on track. One, and I hope you appreciate that I think this was followed through on by both the design team and certainly by the committee, was to keep it an open process to encourage public participation. We began the process by taking a preliminary look at these sites and then scheduling and holding a public meeting that was held at the former NH Insurance Building. Invitations went out and basically anyone in the City was invited to join us at that meeting to talk about what are the criteria that would be used to evaluate sites, what were the sites that were currently under consideration and solicit input, welcome people to propose additional sites. We subsequently held four workshops in various corners of the City at different times of the day, again encouraging people to join us and ultimately concluded with a model making session at the Center of New Hampshire. For those of you who couldn't be there, we had a great turnout and I think it was quite a successful event. We do have a video that perhaps you will have an occasion to view at some point. We also felt it was very important at the outset to establish objective criteria for evaluating a site so that it wouldn't be a matter of a group of design professionals sitting around a table saying I like this, I like that. We agreed, up front, in cooperation certainly with the committee on what were the appropriate criteria by which to judge the site so that we could do that in an objective process. The first thing we did was take pretty much all of downtown Manchester, certainly the 12 sites, and we went through a mapping exercise where in this case, I am referring to the ultimately recommended site, the Staples site, we took the site and we identified various types of buildings that are within a reasonable walking distance from the site. We looked at civic buildings, other public facilities, City of Manchester facilities. We looked at hospitality, existing hotels, restaurants, the kinds of facilities that would have a certain amount of synergy with a new civic center or that might work together to build the hospitality core or neighborhood in the City. We looked at recent development. One of the considerations we used in looking at all the sites is where is investment currently taking place in downtown Manchester so that the Civic Center might be a catalyst to promote further investment and further economic development. We looked at cultural facilities, historic structures. Actually there was a considerably longer list of these and I have abbreviated just so you can get a sense of what we did. So in the case of each site, as I said this is the Staples site, each of these property types were identified and color-coded so we could put all 12 sites up on the wall and again working with the committee begin to understand patterns of use so that we could locate the civic center appropriately. Again, the thought being that these types of facilities tend to work best with certain other types and how do you get the most energy out of the project, how do you make it the best investment for the City. Another consideration, and I will go through all the criteria in just a minute, but another key consideration is parking. The facility certainly needs a certain amount of parking to be successful. At the same time, we wanted to

minimize the capital investment and additional structure to parking. How do we take advantage of existing facilities? So we began to explore what are reasonable walking distances to parking facilities and we plotted these spheres of influence if you will on each of the maps with the maximum distance that we felt comfortable, and this is pretty consistent with national planning data this isn't stuff that we invented frankly. It is the kind of criteria that are used on many projects. We felt that the maximum reasonable walking distance was probably about 2,000 feet. On a cold winter's day if you are going to an event that is a few minute walk but it is certainly not unbearable and so we began to plot, in this case, what is available existing transportation, various bus routes, public and private parking facilities so we could get a handle on if we pick or as we rate the sites which ones are more favorable with regards to parking. So that comprehensive mapping was done for each of the sites, in addition to which we began with a list of criteria, again critiqued it with the gentlemen on the committee and ultimately all of us agreed on what are the total list of criteria that should be considered in evaluating sites. So these two exercises were kind of going on hand in hand to make sure as the criteria evolved that we were studying them appropriately. I am just going to walk through some of the criteria and make a few comments because I do think these are important to understanding how comprehensive the process has been. First and I think pretty logically we looked at physical criteria. What is the size of the site, the acreage, is there enough site to support the facility? Topography gets into issues of how does it fit into the site, what are the probable construction costs based upon how much earth we have to move and those considerations. Environmental issues. Although the initial phase of the study doesn't include comprehensive environmental studies, that will occur following the Board's authorization to go forward should that occur, we did want to take a look preliminarily at environmental issues, at least on the preferred site so that was a consideration. Historic context. Again as you look at the City neighborhoods that these might be placed in are there any structures of particular historical significance and visual quality. What is the sense of the quality of the neighborhood? This will be a substantial investment for the City so we want to place it in a location that is appropriate and supports that investment. Parking I talked about. Quantities, distribution and type, public, private, structured, surface lots, all of those were looked at. Vehicular Systems. What is the capacity of roadways that might serve the facility? Regional access to and from the highways, public transportation, service access. These facilities certainly as shows come to town need that kind of loading access, service access so all of those were looked at. Pedestrian Systems. Walking distances to parking I referred to. Walking distances to downtown. How will the energy that comes out of the civic center support the economy downtown, promote expansion of business there, etc. and linkages. If you start to, as I said a minute ago, look at patterns of development in the City, how might you expect the pedestrian linkages to occur between this

facility and other facilities downtown. Impact on the downtown, proximity to existing development. I talked about looking at where investment has been taking place in the City. Highest and best use of the site, we were trying to get a handle on, on each of the 12 sites. In some cases perhaps if you project forward into the future maybe there is another type of development that when you look at the City overall might be better for the City on the specific site. Bridge and Elm comes to mind. It is one of the sites we looked at and it was ruled out because it was too small but I think you could logically argue from a real estate development perspective that it is a prime site for some future office facilities and that might be a better choice for the City in the long run than putting a civic center there. So that was considered. Existing business displacement. Other sites have viable current businesses and we don't want to drive them out of town so that was considered and spin-off development. Although it is kind of the bottom line on this page, I will tell you that that was one of the most important criteria. If, in large part, the incentive for developing a civic center is to promote additional economic development, certainly an important consideration is how placing the facility in our downtown might influence the surrounding neighborhoods in terms of additional investment. Visibility from the interstate, from downtown is self-explanatory. Utilities. Throughout the process of evaluating sites we did meet with a host of City departments, including the Highway Department and it was clear that any one of the 12 sites from the standpoint of utilities would have been able to support the civic center so that didn't weigh in favor of any specific site. Acquisition, probable costs, the complexity of assembling parcels. In some cases a site was a single parcel and it was obviously easy to assemble and in others there may have been as many as 10 or 12 property owners that would be affected by choosing that specific site so that was considered as well as demolition costs. If the sites are currently occupied by buildings what are the probable costs of clearing the site for a new center. Lost opportunity costs I touched on a minute ago, but what are alternative uses that might occur on any sites, what is the potential tax revenue impact if we displace a facility. Those were a consideration as we went through the process. Finally, implementation of schedule. This is kind of a general category but it was the team's sense of the feasibility if you will of assembling and acquiring a specific site, how readily that might be accomplished and how it might relate to the project's overall schedule. So those were the criteria that we used and I will tell you that we spent a fair amount of time trying to argue is there anything we are missing. Trying to be as comprehensive as we can be and what we did after we established those criteria and I know you won't be able to read this from where you are but I will be happy to pass it around. We went through an exercise of taking the sites and evaluating them by applying these criteria. In order to do that and come up with an objective result we felt it was important to first attach a multiplier to some of the criteria so that they would be weighted in other words. If, for example, we felt that and when I say we I am

referring to the whole team, the committee and the design team, that promoting additional economic development was an important criteria that was given a weight factor over perhaps some lesser significant factor like utilities. I mentioned utilities were equal on all sites. So we went through the process of attaching multipliers to these various sites and I will tell you specifically what they were. We added additional weight to parking, to impact on downtown, acquisition costs, what I referred to as lost opportunity costs and implementation schedule. The greatest multiplier was applied to the impact on downtown criteria. The economic development issue. Having assigned those various multipliers, we went through kind of site by site all of the criteria and each team member did an individual assessment of each site and we added up all of the numbers and rated the sites accordingly. As we completed that process, and I would be glad to go through that in more detail with you. As we completed that process, the ratings, I won't go through all of the sites, but the top handful of sites. The Staples site came out on top with a score of 87. The Hermsdorf site was number 2 with a score of 82. Pearl Street, 79. The Pandora facility, 75 and we went on down the list. So that was kind of the objective start to the process. Once we completed that, however, we said well it is great we went through this exercise, assigned criteria, tried to kind of fairly attribute to each of the sites but now we need to know whether or not the civic center program as it has been defined will actually work on the specific sites. So we went through a process initially of taking the 12 sites and narrowing them down to a short list of 6 which we put into pairs and that may seem like an odd thing to have done but let me explain why we did that. We took the top rated sites, the Staples site and the Hermsdorf site and said they really are neighbors to each other and if we put the civic center on either one of the two of them it is very likely to have an impact on the other so we should look at those two sites as a couple, if you will and explore what is the impact of placing the building on either one, how do they influence each other. Similarly, we looked at that Pandora building down in the Millyard and the Woman's Gym directly across the street from it and how might those two work together as a couple and finally we looked at the Pearl Street site which was given a high score and is across the street from Bridge and Elm and is there any synergy between those two. The concept behind that, and candidly we didn't spend a great deal of time getting into those issues, but we didn't want to overlook any possibilities. We wanted to say these are the preferred sites, they have these neighboring sites that have also scored fairly well in most cases, lets look at them together and see what comes out of that process. We took that information and conducted the community workshops that I talked about. We actually set-up, the design team was there, we had plans all over tables and we spent the time taking the program and very conceptually designing the civic center on the two preferred pairs of sites. So we looked specifically at Staples/Hermsdorf and Pandora/Woman's Gym. Those were the two finalists in our opinion. The purpose of that was to get beyond data and begin to explore, as

designers, how the building might fit on the site. Does it really work? If it appears if it does in numbers, but what happens when you actually go to place a building and place parking and place a loading zone. So we went through that exercise and we must have explored a dozen or more design concepts on each of those preferred sites testing what works and what doesn't work. The conclusion of that exercise was that although either the Staples or Pandora sites might have worked, it was clear to us from the standpoint of working efficiently and economically, the Staples site was the preferred site. If we need to place on that site a civic center building, which by the program is approximately 230,000 square feet, some at least minimal pedestrian amenities, some plaza space as you approach the building so that as you have crowds of people they have a place to gather as they enter the building or assemble as they leave the building, we need at least a minimal amount of on-site parking for management and the hockey team and whoever might be participating in events, plus ideally we would supplement that with some additional parking for holders of premium seats and that is an issue that continues to be studied. Then as I mentioned we need a substantial amount of loading space so you look at all of that stuff and how does it actually work on each of the sites. It was clear to us that the Staples site was the most successful in that regard. It is approximately 9 acres in size. It is comparatively flat and readily developable. It doesn't require the assembly of many multiple parcels of land. We did conduct preliminary geotechnical and environmental studies. I do emphasize that they were preliminary but there were no findings that were of surprise to us frankly or that would suggest that we should look elsewhere. Nothing that you wouldn't expect to find pretty much on any site in downtown Manchester. We also, in addition to the parking analysis that I mentioned, engaged Sam Park Associates, who are transportation and parking planners. They are a Boston firm but they recently opened an office in downtown Manchester and were excited to participate in the project and knowing their credentials we were excited to have them. They went through a preliminary analysis of parking and transportation as I mentioned and concluded that the Staples site will function appropriately for the civic center without building additional structured parking which was important to us and then I suppose the last criteria that I was satisfied was supported in our public sessions was...I have spoken several times about additional economic development and how the civic center might support downtown. Our feeling was that of all the sites, with respect to the supporting Elm Street and promoting peripheral development, the Staples site was the preferred site and while I can't tell you this based on a scientific survey, I will tell you that overwhelmingly in our workshops as people came up to us with literally one or two exceptions, they supported that selection and that belief that the Staples site was an appropriate site for the facility. So I have probably spoken enough at this point. I hope that gives you a reasonable sense of the process and I would be very happy to answer any questions.

Chairman Wihby asked when you decided on the location, did you, I guess the way I would have started, not that I know anything, but I would have looked at what we needed. How big does this thing have to be, how many acres does it need, what parking does it need and I would have drawn this up and said okay where in Manchester or downtown Manchester does this fit? Did you work it that way?

Mr. Brensinger answered that is a good question Alderman. While we looked at sites that were known to be available, I mean there are some obvious candidates that I think everyone in the room would agree is a possible choice, but we also went through a process of preparing a base map of all of downtown Manchester and little models which were footprints of the proposed facility and literally, almost like a game, sat there and placed the facility all around downtown asking ourselves exactly that question. Are there other choices of where this might fit that might be appropriate?

Chairman Wihby asked so in the 12 locations that you had, did you ever think about, even though you had a location, taking some other property around that location to make it work. Did you look at...or did you just say like BankEast I know was one of the things that came up. Did you say well BankEast works if I take that other building across the street, or...? Did you look at it in that respect or did you just look at it from what is there?

Mr. Brensinger answered I think some of both. It really depended on the site, but we certainly didn't rule out the possibility of taking adjacent properties if it appeared to make sense to do so.

Chairman Wihby stated I notice that this (the chart) has only 10 of your 12. What happened to the other two?

Mr. Brensinger replied the other two came late. They were identified to us late in the process so they didn't get...these boards were printed up some time ago.

Chairman Wihby asked do you have those two also that we can put on this and can the Aldermen get a hold of that sheet.

Mr. Brensinger replied certainly.

Chairman Wihby stated Police and Neighborhood Housing both...I know we have a letter from Neighborhood Housing and the Police Chief asked if he could come

and attend these meetings because they are deadly against the Staples site. Did you ask for department's input or did you get their input?

Mr. Brensinger responded we certainly met with Planning and Highway. I had an appointment with Neighborhood Housing Services and the first time that was scheduled, frankly, I had to be out of town and then the second time Felix canceled the meeting and said he wanted to reschedule it. So I will get together with them. I have talked to them on the phone.

Chairman Wihby asked has Police changed their mind.

Mr. Brensinger answered when we met with Police and at the time we spoke to them we had narrowed it down to the two preferred sites and what we discussed with them specifically was Pandora versus Staples. Their preference was the Pandora site.

Chairman Wihby asked so who were the final two sites. It wasn't Hermsdorf? It was Pandora.

Mr. Brensinger answered it was Pandora and Staples.

Alderman O'Neil stated I know Barry and I had talked a number of times. I am one of the people that threw the Wall Street site at them. My two biggest concerns...I probably at one time or another have visited every civic center in New England for different reasons and I know the two things I am most concerned with when I visit is where am I going to park and where am I going to have something to eat either before or after the show. I have a big concern with the Staples site in regards to parking and there seems to be a lot of emphasis on street parking and I just don't think it is going to work. Secondly, from, I use the phrase you used Barry, hospitality, it is very, very limited down at that end of Elm Street at this present time. Might it cause some action down there, yes, but I think we have an obligation to businesses that have invested in restaurants and have invested in downtown Manchester. Those are my two biggest concerns. I know one of the other things that has been brought up is how easy it will be to get to major roadways. Again, I am no expert on these but I have visited several of them. We don't want people to get right in their car and get right on the highway. We want them to be a little bit inconvenienced where they walk by restaurants or shops and spend that money in downtown Manchester and I think at Staples they are going to get right in their car and go and I think that is a big concern. You know before we can get into talking about financing it and who is going to run it, we have to make sure we have the right site. That is my biggest concern, Mr. Chairman.

Alderman Hirschmann stated I have more statements than questions. If you looked at Manchester, the downtown, where would you if you just dropped a pin where would you say the epi-center of Manchester is.

Mr. Brensinger answered City Hall. City Hall Plaza, that corner of Hanover and Elm in my estimation.

Alderman Hirschmann replied because what I think we are putting together here is a big drawing card and I think we want to be more towards what I would call the epi-center of the City. Interesting on paper to me would be the Pearl Street site. Just picturing that coming across the Bridge Street Bridge and knowing that new development is right downtown. I, myself, had brought in I thought earlier on and maybe it didn't make it was the site at the power plant at the North End. I was just trying to take a visualistic approach and I pictured myself driving over the Amoskeag Bridge looking down and seeing a big domed stadium and no more ugly power plant and people driving up and down the highway, seeing all the bright lights and Manchester coming alive, that type of thing. Then I thought about it some more and said the center of the City is where we want to invest our biggest lump of money and that is what this is going to be. That is why I thought, really myself, the Staples site I think is the easy way out for everybody. I don't think it is the preferred site. That is what I think in my heart. If you looked at it from the point of bringing people really downtown, Pearl Street might look at little more interesting. Then I thought about past history and I said jeez, the LDR study that we did said that they wanted to link the Millyard with the downtown and this being our biggest lump of money we might want to do that. So try to find the epi-center and then try to link the Millyard with the downtown all at once. Kind of get a crosshair on this thing. So then I thought Pearl Street looks good and maybe somewhere close to the Millyard so the Millyard becomes merging City and Millyard space. So I kind of asked at the last meeting of Mr. Ashooh what...I didn't have any clue what the alternative sites were. I just heard the Staples lot. A lot of people in town were asking me questions like were we going to invest a lot of money in this site and I said it is a good possibility, I don't know, it is very early. They asked me what the other sites were and I really didn't know. Interesting on paper is the Hermsdorf site because I think that that fringes on what you discussed as the recent development. The Riverfront Park scenario. That being in proximity to the Hermsdorf and the WMUR complex. That would be an exciting piece there. Having this thing right on Elm Street, I am not sure that is exactly what we want. Those again are just thoughts rather than questions.

Alderman Rivard asked the Staples site does that include the taking of the four pieces of property that are there. There is an automobile parts store, a beauty parlor, a vacant building and a fruit wholesale building.

Mr. Brensinger answered the automotive store is on what we are referring to as the Staples site. The remaining parcels are not. They would continue to be abutting properties.

Alderman Rivard asked so there is no consideration of taking those. Those properties would stay?

Mr. Brensinger answered certainly the option exists to take those. Those were not a part of our plan. The automotive store and the shopping center are on the same parcel and they would be taken, but the beauty salon, the gas station, the wholesale distributor, those properties would not be taken by this proposal.

Mr. Ashooh stated we did have a discussion about the alternative properties that abut that and one of the goals that we had and I expressed the desire that anything we did with the civic center we should use as little land as possible because that comes off the tax rolls and try to impact the abutting properties as much as possible and create value on those other parcels. So the beauty school, the automotive shop and the fruit distribution center I would like to think would become much more developable and if we could leave them there and let private investment take over there I think that would be a more desirable thing. That was the tone of our conversation anyways.

Chairman Wihby asked what is the minimum site required, acreage. Is there a minimum?

Mr. Brensinger answered the minimum, Alderman, would be somewhere between 6 and 7 acres.

Chairman Wihby asked and all of these 12 sites had at least that or you could...

Mr. Brensinger answered no. There were some on the original list of 12, for example Bridge and Elm was clearly insufficient. It was just too small a site and there were others.

Chairman Wihby asked for instance Bridge and Elm, if you took from Elm to Canal that is not 6 or 7 acres if you took all that area there.

Mr. Brensinger replied you would have to go farther north as well and take the corporate housing and the former New England Telephone building. It is too narrow.

Chairman Wihby stated if you look at the chart, you said that 87 was Staples and 82 was Hermsdorf. I am looking here and Pandora is 75. What happened to get to Pandora being number 2?

Mr. Brensinger answered after we did the chart we looked at six of the sites but in pairs. So we looked at Staples and Hermsdorf, Pandora and the Woman's Gym, Pearl Street Lot and Bridge and Elm. We looked at all of those so as we began the study of the Staples site we were also simultaneously looking at Hermsdorf and which of the two made the most sense. I will tell you that in regards to Staples and Hermsdorf that they were fairly close in the numbers as you can see by looking at the chart. Our sense, and this is where you kind of get away from numbers and you use your experience in this and other cities and our judgment, including ourselves and the folks, the planners from H.O.K., the benefit of choosing Staples over Hermsdorf is that the Hermsdorf property consists of, I am using that term in general but that neighborhood is a collection of buildings which are relatively modest in scale, some of them are of interesting architectural character and the sense was that in a reasonable amount of time you might expect that to evolve into shops and hospitality, just the nature of that neighborhood would be supportive of that kind of development. Alternatively, if you chose the Hermsdorf site and knocked all of those buildings down, you would be left with the Staples property across the street and that seemed to be less predictable in terms of what the future development might be. So I would be the first to admit that there is some subjectivity at that level. There has to be. You are exercising some judgment about what is the best thing to do. The sense of the design team was that it would be preferable to place the building on the Staples site and thereby promote development, not only on what we are referring to as the Hermsdorf site, but if you look to the north of the Staples site across the street again there is a block of currently underdeveloped properties that might very well quickly be influenced by a new civic center.

Chairman Wihby asked on Pandora were you knocking down the building.

Mr. Brensinger answered that was part of the dilemma of that site. We, our preference was not to knock down the Pandora building believing that architecturally it is one of the more important of the remaining Mill buildings. We went as far as to say could we preserve the tower and the facade and somehow integrate it into a new civic center. Even doing that, in order to accommodate the full project it would have been necessary for the bowl, if you will, of the arena to be cantilevered over the edge of the river which is a complicated and expensive thing to do. The site is just too narrow to really properly accommodate the civic center and that is ultimately why we left that site. It just became very complex in terms of fitting the building on there in a reasonable way.

Alderman Hirschmann asked the Pearl Street site, did that include acquisitions of Elm Street properties.

Mr. Brensinger answered we considered that as a possibility, Alderman, and you would almost certainly want to do that if you were to take that. The arena would technically just barely fit inside the existing parking lot opening, but it would be a squeeze and I think that in order to make a reasonable site of that you would have to take some of the surrounding property.

Chairman Wihby asked Allen Bradley was just too far south.

Mr. Brensinger answered Allen Bradley was, in our estimation, too far south or just a few too many steps removed from the core of activity downtown. The concern was that it wouldn't promote the kind of, you know leave the civic center and walk downtown and shop or have a meal or whatever. That it would really at that point, you would be more inclined to just get in your car, as Alderman O'Neil has pointed out, and go home. It is just too detached from the downtown.

Mr. Boutin stated I want to just make it clear that I am not speaking as a State Representative or a Chairman of the Heritage Commission, I am here as a citizen and I share many of the concerns that this Board has expressed with regards to the civic center. More importantly, there is one theme that runs through all of these sites and that is we are going to have to have a vast amount of on surface parking. This will be a scourge on the downtown. That is what I want to say. There is a site across the street from Staples that has got a nice slope, sloping down towards Commercial Street and has an opportunity to go up with the civic center and stuff the parking underneath and to me that is a much more efficient use of what we have as a limited resource of land. You are going to need 2,000 parking spaces to service the civic center. That is a lot of on surface parking. I think that is a tremendous waste of a very precious resource of land downtown. There is an alternative. Sure it will cause a little more work, but the right real estate deal is not always the one taking the least course of resistance. My opinion is that the Staples site is not the right site. Frankly, as a member of the Heritage Commission I am very surprised that the Pandora site was even ranked second especially with what we are trying to do there. All that being said, I know you guys worked hard and I appreciate that but I do think that from a long-term standpoint of the community that the Staples site is not good.

Alderman Hirschmann asked, David, you are talking about the parking behind the Fleet Bank Building.

Mr. Boutin stated I am just thinking in very simplistic terms, Alderman. I have been looking to build a house here and if I build a house with parking underneath it is about 1/3 of the cost to build it as it is to build a house with a 2-car attached garage. So the same concept to build the civic center up in the air and put the parking, multi-level parking underneath. One individual said to me well jeez, if people park there they are not going to go anywhere else. Well, I get there early and go off somewhere and I have dinner then I come back for the show. We don't have the luxury that the Fleet Center does. Probably 50% of those people are getting there by train, by subway, and they do have a parking garage and some on-site surface parking. We don't have that. Everybody who is coming to these games or shows is going to get there by car. Period. Then what are we going to do. That means 2,000 parking spaces and I am here to tell you that is a very inefficient use of land.

Chairman Wihby asked the BankEast site, acreage wise is that too small. Is that why that was ruled out?

Mr. Brensinger answered I don't have the acreage at my fingertips, Alderman. We did go down there and measure the site and if you removed the BankEast and the Wall Street properties and that also included the parking lots, you could fit the arena on that site. It, again, would just barely fit. You wouldn't have any on-site parking and we were concerned about some loading issues and things like that but the building proper would technically fit on that site.

Chairman Wihby responded if you closed that road too. Would you have to close the road, the off ramp?

Mr. Brensinger replied I did not assume that you would take the ramp to the west. I would assume that you would go right up to the retaining wall at that ramp.

Chairman Wihby stated if you looked around that site though, there is four or five different parking areas around there. A couple of thousand spaces probably. You just thought it was too far or too tight?

Mr. Brensinger answered the concern was that you would literally fill the site with the building and that it was just too tight to make it work properly.

Alderman O'Neil asked, Barry, have you visited Worcester at all.

Mr. Brensinger answered oh sure.

Alderman O'Neil stated Worcester is a tight site. I mean the building comes right out to the sidewalk on all four sides, but I think the City of Worcester would say that it is a success.

Mr. Brensinger replied it is certainly not an impossibility, Alderman. As we looked at our criteria, it seemed to be a tight fit.

Alderman O'Neil stated I am not sure where they park. They have a hockey team there and I am not sure where they park, if they park across the street or if there is a public garage.

Mr. Brensinger responded the parking issue is an interesting issue and I respect the fact that there is a lot of concern about parking. I will tell you that our take and the strong advice we got from H.O.K.'s planners who have done 300 of these or whatever, they have done many of them and they have also gone back to renovate older arenas that had been done by either their firm or other firms so there is a substantial amount of experience there. The collective wisdom on our part was not to build structured parking, both to avoid the cost and the issue of people going directly to and from their cars and in fact one of the curious things their planners told us is that in a number of instances they are aware of sites around the country where communities, believe it or not are actually going back and taking out parking which was built right next to their civic centers because they are realizing that land is more useful for other purposes and again they want to promote people going out into the community, out in the neighborhoods and not going directly to their vehicles so one of our objectives was not to have to build structured parking and we were satisfied that the Staples site specifically, and there may be others on the list, is able to accommodate the parking needs of the facility without building additional structured parking.

Chairman Wihby asked can you explain how.

Mr. Brensinger answered well we actually have a complete report from Sam Park Associates that we would be happy to share with you folks and go through that in detail. Among other things, if you map as we did all of the available on street and off street parking, public and private, within a reasonable walking distance of the facility the numbers for the Staples site were a little over 2,000 parking spaces within existing parking spaces in a comfortable walking distance.

Chairman Wihby asked on street parking.

Mr. Brensinger answered on and off street. That is kind of the total parking spaces within a reasonable distance. Keep in mind also that one of the nice things about

civic centers is that there is a fair amount of compatibility with other uses because their peak parking needs are off peak for all of the other offices and activities downtown for the most part. So you can get dual use of some existing parking resources without feeling that you need to go out and build a lot of additional structured parking.

Chairman Wihby asked do you envision people taking the properties that are there now and knocking them down and putting parking lots up. Your consultant is going to say here is what happens. Is that what you envision? I mean you envision the buildings across the street, probably to the north, are going to be restaurants or clubs or something. Do you envision people taking down buildings and putting in parking lots?

Mr. Brensinger answered I guess that is not a vision I have had frankly. It really would depend on the quality of the property and whether or not it is economically viable to renovate it into a better use.

Chairman Wihby stated well you see what happened at the beach where there was buildings and they take them at auctions and knock them down and put parking lots in. It is very profitable. They don't look bad, but they are there.

Mr. Brensinger responded I think it is certainly reasonable to assume that you would have this little cottage industry that would pop up with existing lots, private lots in that part of the community that would become a little business on activity nights.

Alderman Hirschmann asked what do you think of say the power plant site knowing that the university is centralizing right in the Millyard. Does that make that any more exciting or...?

Mr. Brensinger answered the power plan site is a possibility. It has appeal because, as you said, it is very visible, it is right on the river. Without kind of realignment of roadways, it is a comparatively small site. It is not as large as the Staples site as an example. The other concern we had about that, maybe with the university and some of the development in the Millyard there is some linkages, but it is quite removed from Elm Street, from kind of the core and epi-center as you described it of the City and one of our concerns was that it is on that, kind of that edge of influence.

Mr. Hirschmann stated basically it interests me. Just the visibility coming up 293 and everyone is saying that Amoskeag Falls is the focal point of coming up the highway I guess so I just wanted to hear what you thought of the site.

Mr. Brensinger replied I think our biggest concern with that site was its remoteness from the core of downtown.

Chairman Wihby stated we have 15 people up here and 15 are going to have different ideas and different locations. Where do we go from here? I mean when is that going to be important that the Aldermen are going to have to decide or...before we sign something with Ogden or with somebody or...? What is the time-frame? Are you still looking at the sites? Are you still working on parking or is it done?

Mr. Brensinger replied our preliminary study at this point, subject to and we would be happy to consider your suggestions, but our preliminary report at this point is complete. We, as a design team, have made a recommendation to Skip's committee.

Chairman Wihby asked so we are proceeding with that site in mind.

Mr. Ashooh stated we will proceed with that site in mind unless someone were to come forward with an alternative that would overwhelm the basis we made this decision on. For instance, if you took a look at the Pandora site or the Woman's Gym and someone came along and showed us a way that they could put together a financially more responsible deal that would still meet all the other criteria, then at that point we could indeed change our minds. This is our preferred selected site at this point. It is not an absolute frankly until we acquire the property. This is a committee that very much this is a work in progress which is one of the reasons why your input at this stage is important to us. If there is a way we can do this better, we will always be open to those ways of doing it better but the professional advice that we have retained at this point has ranked the properties that I think everybody had on their list and this is where I think our professional advice...this is what we paid for and I think we came out with a good number.

Chairman Wihby asked what was the third site.

Mr. Brensinger answered Pearl Street.

Alderman Girard asked the proposal that has had some discussion here tonight, the Wall Street/BankEast area, did you receive that idea soon enough to consider along with the proposals you had on the board because it seems to be a number of places where the committee places emphasis, such as impact on surrounding properties, pedestrian access, vehicle access, access to parking, it seems to me that that site would be superior to the Staples site or candidly any other site that you

ranked simply because it is near, as Alderman Hirschmann said, the epi-center of the downtown. It is right where Spring Street joins Elm Street to Commercial and everything seems to be more central to it. I know I spoke to you very early in the process and I only talked to you about that parking lot behind BankEast and you came back and said it was too small. Then Alderman O'Neil came up with well lets look at BankEast and the Wall Street Property next to that and you say it fits. I am just wondering whether or not you got that soon enough in the process to evaluate with the other choices.

Mr. Brensinger answered it did arrive relatively late in the process so it wasn't, it didn't go through the analysis at the same time that the other sites did. That is a fair statement.

Alderman Girard asked has it gone through the analysis that the other sites went through at all. If it hasn't, could it be put through that analysis so that we would have an apples to apples basis for comparison.

Mr. Brensinger replied it has gone through that analysis. These charts were formalized before that site came up as an issue but we did apply the same criteria. What I will do, as has been suggested, is include that criteria on the list in our final report.

Alderman Girard stated as Mr. Boutin pointed out, the property he is talking about had a slope which does give you the ability to do some kind of parking or something underneath the building. I would think that that BankEast property would lend itself similarly because of the slope of Spring Street and the different elevations of the land. So there may be some possibilities to do something underneath.

Chairman Wihby stated we will take up the rest of the agenda tomorrow night. Is there something that you took from the chart and evaluated and gave weight to so we can see where everybody was? I can look at this (chart) and tell you who was first and second but it is not correct because you did something else with it.

Mr. Brensinger replied we put together a draft of a report which has been submitted to Skip's committee and is currently being reviewed and it goes through in more detail than I did tonight, Alderman, what the process was. I think, upon receipt of that report, it will further answer some of your questions.

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There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Hirschmann, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee