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MUSEUMS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The City of El Paso Hispanic Cultural Center Subcommittee  
Thursday September 10, 2015 – 1:00 p.m.  
City Hall, Main Conference Room

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order.** Meeting was called to order at 1:04 p.m.
2. **Roll Call.**

<u>Board Member</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Rafael Adame	X	
Jesus "Cimi" Alvarado	X	
Ruben Chavez	X	
Yolanda Clay		X
Luis Cortinas	X	
Fermin Dorado	X	
Jaime Esparza	X	
Rosa Guerrero	X	
Hector Gutierrez		X
Carlos Hisa		X
Enrique Moreno	X	
Barbara Perez	X	
Cindy Ramos-Davidson	X	
Gustavo Reveles	X	
Silvestre Reyes	X	
Belen Robles	X	
Maya Sanchez	X	
Nestor Valencia	X	
Theresa Ware-Asbury		X

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Others present: Tracey Jerome, Ben Fyffe, Brie Franco and Misty Monteros

3. **Public Comment.** The following members of the public commented: Hector Montes.
4. **Discussion and Action on Approval of Minutes for August 19, 2015.** Chair allowed members time to review the minutes before requesting a motion for approval. Silvestre Reyes so moved; Fermin Dorado seconded; all members voted in favor, none opposed, and motion passed unanimously.
5. **Discussion and Action on Draft Final Report.** Chair explained the reasoning behind having an additional meeting, which was to review a draft report of the final report that summarizes the group's work for a presentation to City Council. Jesus "Cimi" Alvarado expressed concern over a discrepancy in recommendations on square footage of the center between Group 1 and Group 2, noting that Group 1 recommended 40,000 square feet and Group 2 recommended ± 30,000 square feet; he hoped that all groups would be on the same page with 40,000+ square feet. Chair responded that he would review that with members as they walked through the report and gave members a few minutes to page through the entire report. Chair explained the way the report is written, noting he tried to answer the tasks that were given to the subcommittee in the resolution up front, with the work of the groups, a summary, and additional things Council should look at. He mentioned the final report should include things such as a list of speakers that made public comment, the kind of work that was produced by Group 3, and a survey that was taken by the City in order to support the decision that was arrived at by the subcommittee as a whole. He continued by saying they could go through each page one by one, but began with the first two tasks, noting

the recommendation for space was 40,000+ square feet and the \$5.7M is recommended for use in modifications at the Abraham Chavez Theatre as the Mexican American Cultural Center with additional improvements to be made in phases based on available funds. Barbara Perez stated she didn't believe the entire committee had come to a consensus on the Abraham Chavez Theatre, saying she had posed several questions about the asbestos costs and future costs for the Theatre noting it was premature and if need be, she would rather go through each page and discuss because she feels some members may still have some questions.

Chair replied he would be happy to return to that, but first requested the group address the third task having to do with the budget. Barbara Perez reiterated that in order to do a 501(c)(3), her understanding is that there should be a board in place, a facility in place, rules and a mission statement before applying for a 501(c)(3), and we don't have that. Rosa Guerrero added that could be done very easily because a 501(c)(3) does not require so many things; it doesn't take too long. She further added that as for the asbestos issue, Nestor Valencia and Fermin Dorado have background in that and a report can be prepared if necessary. Chair noted the answer to Task 3 was short and concise with the attachment of the work of the group. Rafael Adame offered his understanding of the 501(c)(3), mentioning he did not think it needed to happen right now, but rather apply for one after Council makes their final recommendation. Mayor Maya Sanchez requested clarification on the answer to Task 2, asking if the \$5.7M is appropriate for the construction alone; if not, she suggested offering a figure that the group thinks will be enough as a recommendation for an appropriate budget. General discussion on how quickly a 501(c)(3) could be established followed. Enrique Moreno reminded the group that their charge is simply to make recommendations, not take action. He believes that the recommendations should be general in nature as the City may choose to accept some and reject others and further added that to get into the level of detail some are suggesting is inappropriate. Luis Cortinas concurred and suggested that tours of the Abraham Chavez Theatre should be arranged.

Chair moved on to Task 4, noting that programs and amenities recommended for the Center were listed. He asked members for their input and Cindy Ramos-Davidson asked that wording be added to make the description more open and less definitive, noting that there are many ideas about what could go into the Center and the way the answer is written looks absolute.

Chair continued on to Task 5, asking for additions. He suggested adding the phrase 'for example' and Cindy Ramos-Davidson concurred, mentioning there may be other things the group hasn't thought of that should be provided as additional amenities for the Center. She noted that 'meeting spaces' was left off.

For Task 6 regarding funding opportunities, Chair said a 501(c)(3) would need to be formed for a public/private partnership. The model of the Art Museum seems to be a good working model with an active board that has a good partnership with the City. Cindy Ramos-Davidson requested to add a word in the answer so that it reads "501(c)(3) funding process to leverage local, State, national, and corporate partnerships", as opposed to 'contributions' because it is written like an absolute and there are no absolutes when asking for money.

Chair moved on to Task 7 and Mayor Maya Sanchez expressed concern that 6 and 7 seem to be redundant and could be combined. Chair replied they were separate tasks and that is why he answered it. Members pointed out that Tasks 6 and 7 were identical and Ben Fyffe clarified that Task 7 should be 'Recommendations regarding public/private partnerships'.

Chair moved on to Task 8 and asked for discussion. There was none.

Chair moved on to Task 9 and Enrique Moreno asked that a timeframe be established for members to send suggestions to Chair so that there can be discussion at the next meeting. Chair noted the next meeting was scheduled for the following Wednesday and asked that any suggestions be sent to him by the preceding Monday at 5pm. Chair noted a vote had been taken on Task 9, so the answer stands.

Chair asked that the group go back to look at Task 2 with Task 10 regarding the Abraham Chavez Theatre being designated the Mexican American Cultural Center. He explained that after the last meeting, when the Theatre, along with the \$26M (factored out in today's money) plus the asbestos abatement, and the Library were discussed, he asked the City Manager for a copy of the 2007 report. Upon receiving the report, he had a meeting with the Mayor, the City Attorney, the City Manager and Bryan Crowe via a conference call. It was discussed that \$26M was the cost of returning the Abraham Chavez Theatre to its original condition. Chair asked Nestor Valencia and Fermin Dorado to review the report to get their opinions on whether the Theatre is really an area we could go to, or if the amount of repairs and modifications are too great.

Chair mentioned that Bryan Crowe and Ben Fyffe accompanied himself and Nestor on a tour of the Abraham Chavez Theatre to review the space, noting it is a gorgeous building. Cindy Ramos-Davidson asked Chair to define 'original condition' and Ruben Chavez replied that 'original condition' probably indicates returning the space to its original condition as a theatre, not compartmentalized into different kitchen facilities and such. Chair asked Nestor and Fermin to share their thoughts on the 2007 report, and Nestor deferred to Fermin, who noted that despite it being built under building codes of 1975, the theatre is a safe place to be right now. He noted that he personally feels the theatre is in good condition although it needs some modifications to bring it up to current code. He shared a 2007 Needs Analysis Cost Estimate that utilized numbers from the 2007 report in comparison to costs factored out in today's money (attached here as part of these minutes). He mentioned that he believed remodeling priorities were life safety, performance equipment and electrical/lighting. Cindy Ramos-Davidson asked if there were any buyout clauses the group should be aware of if the recommendation to use the Abraham

Chavez Theatre is made to Council and Chair replied that Bryan Crowe has stated the contract is not an issue and the City owns that property. Chair further noted the general answer is no. Rafael Adame asked for clarification on the \$10,396,465.33 figure listed in Phase I of the 2007 Needs Analysis Cost Estimate and asked if that was the cost to move in, and Fermin replied that if all the items listed were addressed, yes, as Phase I items were most critical. Rafael continued by asking if current ADA compliance would be required, and Fermin responded affirmatively. Ruben Chavez added that new ADA rules required that ADA be brought up to code when remodeling is started, but the numbers in the 2007 report are deceiving because those numbers are to bring the building back to its original condition, which was an auditorium, not any other kind of space. Rafael further asked if the \$5.7M that is available now, sufficient to complete renovations in Phase I, and Fermin replied it was sufficient to take care of items 1, 2 and 5, noting he believes the key issue is fire protection.

Mayor Maya Sanchez asked if there was room to build a smaller auditorium for smaller events within the Abraham Chavez Theatre, and Chair replied no. She further asked if that meant items from Tasks 4 and 5 would need to be removed in order to fit in the space, and Chair replied he didn't think so. Congressman Silvestre Reyes expressed his belief that the group could raise the additional funds needed after the City gives \$5.7M, to complete the almost \$10.4M needed for all of the Phase I repairs. Jesus "Cimi" Alvarado reminded members not to underestimate the cost of a gallery, as it is not just a matter of pounding in a nail and putting some lights on a painting; it takes a lot more to take care of paintings, especially if they're on loan. He continued to say he has been inside the theatre and couldn't see where to put a gallery. Gustavo Reveles asked for clarification on what the real square footage we have left to deal with after the theatre and lobby square footage is subtracted because there is a kitchen, classrooms and a gallery that need space. Cindy Ramos-Davidson asked about the possibility of getting a scale model, architecture renderings or drawings based on discussion of what it would look like and then affix the cost. Enrique Moreno noted that he feels the charge would have been different if the City had allotted money to hire consultants and engineers to do preliminary studies and things of that nature. Without those resources, there is no way to answer the tasks appropriately. Barbara Perez asked where the group's dream about a state of the art center went and noted that the Abraham Chavez Theatre does not fit their dream about state of the art because there will be a lot of modifications needed to get the kitchens, the classrooms, the lighting for the art exhibits and everything else. She went on to say that moving in right now is the typical way of thinking and noted that members need to think ahead because sooner or later they will have to go to City Council and ask for money if enough money can't be raised. She assured the group there is asbestos in the theatre, along with lead-based paint, plus it is not ADA compliant by today's standards. Chair replied that in his opinion, the theatre is state of the art because it meets the basic requirements the group had spoken about such as location, parking, theatre and potential gallery space. He continued to say that with the \$5.7M from the City, and a \$40M building that the City already owns – this is the best use of maximizing taxpayer money because the City does not have additional money to invest in the center. He noted that moving in is the smart way, knowing you have to balance the taxpayer and celebrate our heritage using a phase-in process.

He asked members to follow as he continued through the draft report and noted that on page 9, he tried to summarize what Group 1 was doing; page 10 was a summary of Group 2 reports; page 13 summarized Group 3 reports; page 14 highlights the fact that the bond issue was for a greater amount and \$5.7M was earmarked for the cultural center; page 15 shows differences in centers located in other cities; pages 16-18 are pictures of other centers in Albuquerque, Austin and Juarez; page 19 lists basic requirements for a cultural center; page 20 listed the group recommendation to designate the Abraham Chavez Theatre as the Hispanic Cultural Center; page 21 noted what the \$5.7M would be used for; page 22 provided reasons for the Abraham Chavez Theatre; pages 23-29 featured photographs of the Abraham Chavez Theatre, the Guggenheim, and reflections of our heritage; page 30 provided a summary.

Mayor Maya Sanchez expressed her opinion on Task 4, noting it doesn't describe a whole lot of difference between what is already a Mexican American cultural center in other parts of the country. She continued to say that the information could have been grabbed off of someone else's website and it's a little disappointing, noting there are multiple pages dedicated to the Abraham Chavez Theatre, but nothing dedicated to tasks 4 and 5. Nestor Valencia acknowledged that in building a Mexican American center, you will generally have some of the same topics and issues everyone else has. He went on to say that the reports given to the subcommittee were written reports that were summarized to reflect the work that had been going on for months and added the group's charge was to give general recommendations to Council so that they can consider going further and making the necessary technical and programmatic reports to move ahead. He next provided pictures of the Abraham Chavez Theatre and plans at stage level, lobby level, orchestra level, balcony level, roof level and entry level via a PowerPoint slideshow. Luis Cortinas asked Jesus "Cimi" Alvarado if he as a professional believed a gallery could be set up along the walls in the Abraham Chavez Theatre and Cimi replied he didn't believe it was getting the respect or the space. Mayor Maya Sanchez asked the Chair if he planned to have the group vote on whether they want to recommend the Abraham Chavez Theatre, and Chair replied he thought it would be done at the next meeting on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Enrique Moreno said he would like a system set up so that any member of this subcommittee that would like to visit the Abraham Chavez Theatre, should be able to. Mayor Maya Sanchez requested answer to Gustavo's question regarding the square footage available to work with for the rest of the center on the 16<sup>th</sup>, and Chair replied he didn't know if it was possible but thought there should be a general idea

available. In anticipation of not having consensus on the Chavez, Rafael Adame requested that the group have other venues in mind so as to avoid having to scrap everything and start from scratch. Chair replied if a location can't be finalized on the 16<sup>th</sup>, the group could default to the location being downtown and noted discussion on specific places could not be had unless it is City property located downtown in District 8. Ben Fyffe reiterated the duty was for a general location and suggested recommending the reuse of an existing municipal facility, which would leave options open to list those that might fit the bill. Barbara Perez asked for a list of City-owned properties in the downtown area. Chair asked about the possibility of arranging tours of the Abraham Chavez Theatre; Ben replied that perhaps 3-4 different tours could be set up and Brie Franco replied that Legal will work with the department to determine how best to do this in compliance with the City rules and so forth. Luis Cortinas asked how long it would take to get the list of City-owned buildings in District 8 and Ben replied he could probably have it at the next meeting, noting he would need to work with the City's real estate officer. Nestor Valencia reminded the subcommittee that there is a cultural center sector of the City and it would be a shame not to be located in it. Ben noted that if members wanted a list of municipally-owned facilities just within the state-designated Downtown Arts District, that could be done by the end of the day. Rafael Adame noted that with the 30,000-40,000 square foot recommendation, smaller properties won't work. Ben replied in that case, the group has already seen the 2 properties available within the criteria and not already in use as museums already.

**6. Adjournment.** Chair requested a motion to adjourn. Rafael Adame so moved; Ruben Chavez seconded; all members voted in favor, none opposed, and motion passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm. Next meeting scheduled for September 16, 2015.

Approved for content by:  
Jaime Esparza, Chair

Respectfully submitted by:  
Misty Monteros, Administrative Assistant  
Museums & Cultural Affairs Department

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Abraham Lincoln Theatre  
 2007 Needs Analysis Cost Estimate  
 Escalated to 2015 Dollars

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No.	Category	Phase I 2007 Cost	Phase I 2015 Cost *	Phase II 2007 Cost	Phase II 2015 Cost*	Phase III 2007 Cost	Phase III 2015 Cost*
1	Life Safety	\$2,300,000.00	\$2,907,890.00	\$26,000.00	\$32,871.80	0	\$0.00
2	Performance Equipment	\$1,500,000.00	\$1,896,450.00	\$1,300,000.00	\$1,643,590.00	\$200,000.00	\$252,860.00
3	HVAC	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,400,000.00	\$1,770,020.00	\$200,000.00	\$252,860.00
4	Plumbing	\$700,000.00	\$885,010.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$50,000.00	\$63,215.00
5	Electrical/Lighting	\$213,100.00	\$269,422.33	\$162,900.00	\$205,954.47	\$1,159,400.00	\$1,465,829.42
6	ADA	\$2,710,000.00	\$3,426,253.00	\$50,000.00	\$63,215.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
7	Interiors	\$600,000.00	\$758,580.00	\$1,725,000.00	\$2,180,917.50	\$3,300,000.00	\$4,172,190.00
8	General	\$200,000.00	\$252,860.00	\$325,000.00	\$410,897.50	\$500,000.00	\$632,150.00
	TOTAL	\$8,223,100.00	\$10,396,465.33	\$4,988,900.00	\$6,307,466.27	\$5,409,400.00	\$6,839,104.42

Total Cost 2015 \$23,543,036.02  
 Contingency 10% \$2,354,303.60

~~Total estimated budget: \$25,897,339.62~~

\* The estimated cost is based on the Engineering News Record Construction Indexes from July 2007 and July 2015.  
 \* This cost does not include asbestos testing nor removal

