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MUSEUMS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The City of El Paso Hispanic Cultural Center Subcommittee
Wednesday, September 16, 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, Kristen Hamilton-Karam and Misty Monteros

3. **Public Comment.** The following members of the public commented: Marilyn Guida, Corinne Chacon, Andres Ramirez and Hector Montes.
4. **Discussion and Action on Draft Final Report.** *Chair noted that approval of minutes were not included in the agenda, and Ben Fyffe explained that due to an additional meeting the week before, the turnaround was so quick, Board Secretary Misty Monteros did not have ample time to complete them with usual diligence. Kristen Hamilton added she would look into how to handle the approval should the board sunset after this meeting.*

Chair began by mentioning a few minor corrections were added to the report, noting that he added the 'for example' per Cindy Ramos-Davidson's recommendation on the answers to Tasks 4 and 5. He added that on Task 7, he had duplicated Task 6 and so that was corrected as well. Chair relayed a request he received from Gustavo Reveles that the group discuss the possibility of utilizing the El Paso Public Library, and opened the floor for discussion. Gustavo clarified that he wanted to discuss it in comparison to the Abraham Chavez to discuss the merits and challenges of both locations, rather than discussing one building compared to no building. He continued to say that his concern has been that there has not been discussion about how the center will fit in the Abraham Chavez Theatre, given the space and configuration limitations

that are there. Aside from that, there has not been serious or at length discussion about other possibilities for the center. Enrique Moreno expressed his belief that there has been discussion on that, although perhaps not as much as the group could have had. In his working group, there was extensive discussion not only about Chavez but other possibilities. He added that Nestor Valencia has looked at that issue very carefully and asked that he repeat those observations; Gustavo added he was a part of that conversation and it was generalities, no specifics about how gallery or classroom spaces would fit; this recommendation is very important and the group needs to discuss this as they move forward. Rafael Adame recalled that during the last meeting, it was discussed there are only two venues available after taking all the parameters into consideration – Abraham Chavez Theatre or the Public Library. The issue is which one can best accommodate the needs but he believes the theatre can and will be the best place for this.

Chair reminded members that in a previous meeting, Ben Fyffe had lined out exactly what the library offered. Chair noted his opinion is that the library is generally located where the theatre is located, there is 32,000 square feet there, there is a theater that seats about 200 and the space is connected to the library. He went on to say when he compares those, he doesn't feel the \$5.7M was an appropriate amount to build a cultural center for this community. He continued to say that he relied on what Working Group #3 feels can be raised; he feels \$20M is doable and went on to say he doesn't feel \$20M can be raised with a commitment to the library; but with a building of significance, grandeur and importance, plus the location; the \$5.7M can be leveraged into much more. Chair asked Nestor Valencia to provide the square footage available at the Abraham Chavez Theatre as usable space after subtracting the theatre, and Nestor replied the square footage available has been calculated pretty accurately, noting there is 2,957 square feet available at entry level as long as no modifications are made to the bathrooms and everything else necessary for the theatre, there are 5,420 square feet available at street level that are ready to go and 2,916 square feet available at the balcony, to total approximately 11,000 square feet that the center can make use of and still have the theatre. Hector Gutierrez added that he felt if the City was to designate any building; it would be the Abraham Chavez Theatre because it is more spectacular and awesome, creating more impact than the library. Moreover, if the City designates the Abraham Chavez Theatre, it would make every newspaper in Texas, if not the national news. He further stated the Abraham Chavez Theatre far outpaces any impact the library would make.

Luis Cortinas asked Ben Fyffe if those were the only two buildings the group could look at, and Ben replied that in terms of City facilities that would be available in that particular part of Downtown, yes. He went on to remind the subcommittee that duty 10 of the resolution charged them with recommendations regarding general locations of the center, and ultimately, Council will make the final decision. Rosa Guerrero expressed her opinion that there is no comparison in the library to the Abraham Chavez Theatre. She noted that on the lower level of the Theatre, there are offices that could be turned into workshops for visual arts, performing arts, guitar playing or singing. Congressman Silvestre Reyes added that the final analysis will show people that the subcommittee took this challenge seriously, that there were a number of different opinions and divergent ideas, and the group came together to act and make a decision on the recommendation. Gustavo Reveles said that people in the Mexican-American community deserve a center that works. We don't deserve just meeting, classroom and gallery space; we deserve adequate meeting, classroom and gallery space. He went on to say he was not convinced those things will fit in the Theatre and the community deserves a center that fits, and fits adequately. Mayor Maya Sanchez noted she feels the group has spent a lot of time, thought, energy and words on one duty of the ten, adding she doesn't understand why it's ok to be general about the other duties, yet the duty addressing location has to be specific. She expressed concern that each duty was not treated with equal importance. Jesus 'Cimi' Alvarado expressed concern that the concentration has been on a theater as opposed to all amenities that would be found in a cultural center, noting that the group seems committed to one building without knowing what is going in there. He further expressed the need for more time to look at more spaces, rather than just focusing on the Theatre. Dr. Teresa Ware-Asbury asked if this is enough money to get the 'wow' some members referred to, before noting the Abraham Chavez Theatre is an old building and if you're going to renovate it, you're going to find things you didn't expect and it wasn't included in the budget. Fermin Dorado answered no, adding that the Civic Center will lend itself to whatever we want to do with it and additional funds will need to be raised to make it what we want it to be. Ruben Chavez said what was very clear in his research was that programming had to come first, and what was going in the building should be determined before settling on size. Barbara Perez asked what the hurry was to recommend the Abraham Chavez Theatre to Council at this time, and Chair replied after reviewing available properties, the Theatre is iconic and located in an area that is being revitalized, noting the best way to leverage the \$5.7M is with an iconic building like the Abraham Chavez Theatre that can be made first-class.

Fermin Dorado made a motion to approve the report as presented for presentation to City Council. Hector Gutierrez seconded, and Chair called for the vote by roll call. Board Secretary Misty Monteros proceeded

with roll call:

Rafael Adame - aye
Jesus "Cimi" Alvarado - no
Ruben Chavez - aye
Yolanda Clay - aye
Luis Cortinas - aye
Fermin Dorado - aye
Jaime Esparza - aye
Rosa Guerrero - aye
Hector Gutierrez - aye

Gov. Carlos Hisa - aye
Enrique Moreno - aye
Barbara Perez - aye
Gustavo Reveles - no
Congressman Silvestre Reyes - aye
Belen Robles - aye
Mayor Maya Sanchez - no
Nestor Valencia - aye
Dr. Theresa Ware-Asbury - no

By a vote of 14 to 4, the motion to approve the report as presented for presentation to City Council passed.
5. **Adjournment.** Chair requested a motion to adjourn. Barbara Perez moved to adjourn; Gustavo Reveles seconded; all members voted in favor, none opposed, and motion passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 2:23pm.

Approved for content by:
Jaime Esparza, Chair

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

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