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Design Committee Minutes July 22, 1980

Pioneer Courthouse Square Design Committee

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DESIGN COMMITTEE
SUMMARY MINUTES
July 22, 1980

AGENDA

Informal session on proposals for Pioneer Square

MEMBERS PRESENT: Toby Fairbank, Ann Gardner, Mike Russo and Dave Soderstrom

STAFF PRESENT: Rod O'Hiser and Anne McLaughlin

OTHERS PRESENT: Terrence O'Donnell and Mike Alesko

The meeting began at 6:45 p.m. in Room 208 at the Bureau of Planning, 621 SW Alder, following a presentation by Don Stastny on the five proposals for Pioneer Square. That presentation was made to the Design Committee, Planning Commission and Portland Historical Landmarks Commission, beginning at 5:30 p.m. in Room 200 of the Bureau of Planning.

Soderstrom: I'll remove myself from this discussion and turn the meeting over to Toby.

This Committee was requested to select a juror and chose Mike Russo who sat in as a non-voting member. We received preliminary reports on the process, but no reports on its progress.

I met with various organizations and we traded our option to select a local architect, in favor of the Landscape Architects' selection of a nationally known landscape architect, so we essentially selected Paul Friedberg. The other organizations, the AIS, ASLA, et. al., selected the local architect for the jury.

We talked of Will Martin, but he said we were entering the competition. From then on I've kept myself out of the design selection process.

After tonight's session, Rod will please write a letter to Council relative to the discussions here.

O'Hiser: From the Committee's discussions last week, at the July 17 meeting, I assume your letter would contain the Committee members individual remarks, rather than any official Committee action, since this isn't a ~~real public meeting hearing~~ *clear*

Soderstrom: That process was not very forceful in the selection of a design for the City office building, and that's why I was worried.

Russo: Our letter of April 16 carried six points of concern to the jury, and I think the jury's choice conforms to those points. I think the letter confirms our involvement in the process.

Soderstrom: Also your sitting in on the jury's process, primarily for purposes of continuity and coordination between that process and our own. That letter could be used as a guide for the Committee's comments which have been requested on the concepts proposed.

Alesko: You'll have a formal public hearing later on?

Soderstrom: Yes. I see no problem with having a multiplicity of types of comments.

O'Hiser: I wanted to bring up the situation that the funding is not yet confirmed, and the project may thus linger on so long it's forgotten. Perhaps you can encourage Council to keep it alive and moving on the schedule established.

Mr. Soderstrom left the meeting at this point.

O'Donnell: Let me know if it's improper for me to be here. I'm waiting for the Planning Commission meeting which begins at 7:30 and wanted to listen.

There was no objection from any of the three Committee members.

Gardner: I love the concept and think the jury made the right choice. It's a good scale for gatherings, and I prefer the openness of the structures. The site ventilates well and relates to the adjacent buildings.

Not to detract at all from Martin's scheme, I felt that the other four were clearly not done by natives. In future competitions, I'd like to be sure more local people are seen.

Fairbank: A nationally solicited competition can't really say how many locals will be involved.

Russo: I think it's an advantage to have a look at a local entry in comparison with national ones. It gives better solidity and justification to the choice. There was nothing procedurally to stop more local entries in this competition.

The jury found this scheme flexible and conceptually attractive, with much possibility for growing and changing. The community could continue to have valuable input and the scheme could be truly local, while some of the other schemes seemed much more complete and unalterable. Martin's scheme permitted growth and development.

Fairbank: How will we transmit our comments?

O'Hiser: The minutes will be made into a letter.

Fairbank: They want our suggestions but we don't want to design it here. I'd rather make specific suggestions after Council has made its choice.

Gardner: Let's use the April letter and judge if its points have been met.

Russo: The letter outlines the concerns. I personally feel the jury carried out its responsibilities very well and that the results conform in important ways.

Gardner: Yes, perhaps with special emphasis on point six.

Fairbank: In my opinion, that's the one it doesn't meet. I wouldn't not go along with our saying they met the six points, but I don't yet see what the "aesthetic character" of that scheme is. I can see it in the other four.

Russo: It's the one design that combines flexibility with sensitivity to the context. The Halperin one could be anyplace.

Gardner: That one attacks the bank building.

Russo: The sensitivity to the environment is an aesthetic question; this design heightens and enhances the beauty of the context, while the others ignore or violate it. Another aesthetic consideration is to have a design which relates to the Pioneer Courthouse without leaning heavily on that building's period style. The jury's selection is modern but sits comfortably with the Courthouse design. The Machado submittal is very formal and classical and "period".

O'Hiser: Why did the jury want to interrupt the brick treatment with other materials?

Russo: An all-brick surface was seen as depressing and other materials could add to and heighten its appearance.

Gardner: The structures will determine this, but I see it as timeless.

Russo: The only judgement I can make is on an aesthetic level, not engineering or historical or other aspects.

Fairbank: I'm uncomfortable second-guessing the jury. I'd say in our letter "the jury chose wisely" and I wouldn't go far beyond that. But do tell Council to get on with it.

I don't think we need to do more than that, say that the jury was right and that we prefer that scheme for such-and-such reasons. I don't think we should get involved in muddying the process.

Russo: I think we can support the scheme wholeheartedly because it's conceptual.

Fairbank: The spirit of the letter has been met and we look forward to the further development of the scheme and its speedy or expeditious construction.

O'Hiser: Adding Ann Gardner's reasons?

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O'Hiser: Adding Ann Gardner's reasons?

Fairbank: No.

Russo: I think we should judge it on its merits, without locally chauvinistic comments. I think that the Square is very vital to the identity of Portland and this is the time to do something, to act on it.

It will add a great deal to the image of the City.

The meeting concluded at this point, about 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne McLaughlin
Recorder

am
7/28/80