

CITY OF MELBOURNE, FLORIDA  
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 15, 2000

A special meeting of the City Council was held in the City Hall Council Chamber, 900 E. Strawbridge Avenue, and was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Mayor John A. Buckley.

1. All present gave the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.
2. The following members and officials were:

Present:	John A. Buckley	Mayor
	Ed Palmer	Vice Mayor, District 2
	Richard Contreras	Council Member, District 1
	Pat Poole	Council Member, District 3
	Grace Walker	Council Member, District 4
	Cheryl Palmer	Council Member, District 5
	Loretta Isenberg-Hand	Council Member, District 6
	Henry J. Hill	City Manager
	Suzanne Novak	Assistant City Attorney
	Cathy L. Baker	Assistant City Clerk
	Bud Emerson	Assistant City Manager

Absent:	Paul R. Gougelman, III	City Attorney
	Cathleen A. Wysor	City Clerk

3. COUNCIL ACTION RE: Discussion of City Hall Feasibility Study.

Mayor Buckley reported that the four locations in the study are the present City Hall, the Melbourne Auditorium area, the Police Communications facility on Babcock Street, and the former J.M. Fields/Encore building on Babcock Street. He pointed out that the two locations on Babcock Street are no longer available.

Herb Sands, consultant, stated he compiled information to assist Council in making a determination regarding a proposed City Hall. He discussed the report and said a large portion of the study involved meeting with each department to review and assess the relationship between the departments and the space needs. That information continues to be valid. Mr. Sands pointed out that Leisure Services, Community Development, Public Works, Police Department and Fire Department should not be brought into a proposed City Hall. Each of these departments has an outstanding facility that meets their needs and is well maintained. The remainder of the report addresses those departments that are involved in the City Hall or annex structures. The report finishes with a cost comparison.

Mr. Sands stated this study is about needs and dollars, not necessarily direction for a location. The four sites were investigated to get an understanding of the wide variety of issues that might be faced if a move were made.

Mr. Sands recapped the summary of the existing site and the Melbourne Auditorium site. He stated that the location of the existing City Hall is poor. It is difficult to enter the site and the traffic on Strawbridge Avenue continues to grow. Parking is a major problem. Mr. Sands said the existing Fire Station should be relocated. That, along with demolition

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of the Annex II building, would help alleviate some parking problems. However, acquisition of additional property is needed to provide adequate parking.

Mr. Sands stated that a 20,000 s.f. addition and renovation of the existing structure would be compromised by the existing conditions. Temporary relocation of existing operations and relocation of the Fire Station would be required. This substantial cost should be included if the choice were to remain at the existing site.

Regarding the Melbourne Auditorium site, Mr. Sands stated it is one of the best sites in the city. It is the most attractive, the size makes it very desirable, and there is an abundance of property so parking would not be a problem. Temporary relocation of existing operations would not be necessary. He noted that use of this site could possibly require the construction of a new Auditorium.

Mr. Sands stated that this study was not driven by dollars. In reviewing the locations, the cost did not seem to be substantially changed by the selected location. He noted that the cost analysis created with this report was created without a feasibility site plan. A preliminary drawing was created for evaluation and budgetary purposes.

Mayor Buckley asked how the Auditorium site became part of the study. Mr. Sands responded that Council established the four locations. The Auditorium is in a central location. If Council's decision were to build a new City Hall, this location could house all of the facilities.

Council Member Hand asked whether any consideration was given to the North Babcock Street area where the courthouse was proposed. Mr. Sands responded no; however, it could be considered. He tried in the first step of the study to establish needs and how best to address them rather than making the study a site selection.

Responding to Mrs. Poole, Mayor Buckley stated the Fire Station consists of 3,827 s.f.

Mr. Contreras discussed the return on investment of the existing city facilities and asked the number of years used in the factoring. Mr. Sands responded that the figure was a 10-year range; however, the building should last 50 years or longer.

Mr. Contreras asked if there was any potential space that would not be used. Mr. Sands responded that has been revised because the city continues to move people around. He stated that the relocation of the City Attorney was taken into consideration. He said an architect will not give you something that he feels is too stringent; flexibility will be built-in. He stated we don't want a building that only satisfies current needs.

Mr. Contreras asked if One Harbor Place was considered. Mr. Hill responded that the only sites that Council discussed and directed to be included in the study were reviewed. The study was aimed at reviewing the existing problems, establishing the potential need for space, and looking at other areas with the idea that if Council wanted to do something there may be other alternatives.

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Vice Mayor Palmer stated that this was an exploratory phase; questions must be answered if we are to find the most cost effective way to construct a new City Hall. He noted there are six city departments not housed at the City Hall location and asked whether thought was given to moving any of these departments into a proposed City Hall. Mr. Sands stated that was addressed in the study and the recommendation is that those departments are better served outside City Hall.

Mr. Hill stated that he discussed the study with Mr. Sands and the conclusion is that decentralization is the best way to meet the citizens' needs. Based on new technology, things that would otherwise require direct proximity are no longer necessary. Much of the study was to group things that needed grouped for the convenience of the public.

Mr. Hill stated the existing facility was built in 1960 when the population was about 20,000. The record is clear that we have rearranged offices and restructured. The key, and the most fundamental issue, is how to best serve the public. There are needs to be addressed if we stay here such as parking, suitability, and public access; however, there is no one pressing issue that compels us to make an immediate decision. Mr. Sands provided compelling information that shows there are issues that must be addressed within the next few years. The question is what is the best strategy, the most cost effective, and how to best serve the public.

There was discussion regarding decentralization of various departments and the need to have services such as Building and Engineering grouped to better serve the public.

Mr. Sands stated that early in the study he determined that the Fire Station should not be located at City Hall. It is a bad location for a Fire Station, it is dangerous for the employees as well as the public. The engines have difficulty pulling into traffic and unfortunately this will only get worse.

Mr. Sands confirmed that the existing City Hall site contains about 37,000 s.f. Based on the proposed demolition of Annex II, an additional 20,000 s.f. would be required, making a total of 40,408 s.f. Site congestion is a problem and removing the Annex II building would help alleviate some of the congestion.

Mrs. Poole questioned the comment about the dangerousness of the Fire Station and asked the number of accidents involving fire vehicles pulling out of the station. Traffic lights can be installed to allow the engines to get through. Mrs. Poole stated this is a central location and this Fire Station goes out on more calls than any other station. She commented that 25 years is young for a building; the Henegar Center was built in 1926 and is being renovated and made into a beautiful building. She is appalled to think that we would tear down the annex building after spending the money to make it safe. She added that there are a lot of places that can be used for parking. Mrs. Poole complimented Mr. Sands on the comprehensive study, stating that anybody could take it in the future and update it and it will make it easier when the time comes to do something.

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Mrs. Poole discussed the donation of the Wells Park property, which contained a stipulation that the area would remain green with no buildings. Mrs. Poole stated that when there is a stipulation on land donation, the request should be honored.

Mr. Sands responded that the report indicates removal of the Annex II building, not the Annex I building that is being revamped. This would allow for a decel lane for ingress from 192, making the site a little safer. The report does draw some conclusions regarding the Fire Station; however, the Fire Department is better equipped to respond to Mrs. Poole's questions.

Mrs. Walker asked about a cost estimate and possible alternate locations for the Fire Station. She asked whether the existing Fire Station space could be included in the City Hall expansion if the Fire Station were relocated. She expressed some concern with parking, stating that the city should acquire property to the west for parking.

Responding to Mrs. Walker, Mr. Sands confirmed there is no proposed area for relocating the Fire Station. He stated that the study recognizes it is in the wrong place and should be moved. The existing area could be used to alleviate some parking problems and for different city functions. The budgetary number for relocating the Fire Station is \$600,000. However, finding an alternate location for the Fire Station was not part of the study.

Mr. Hill commented that the dilemma with the Fire Station is that it needs to be on an arterial roadway with ready access to a major thoroughfare. The engines must deal with traffic, that problem is faced wherever the station may be located in the expanded Downtown area because it is heavily urbanized. The only land the city owns is the Wells Park/Auditorium complex and there are advantages/disadvantages there. The Fire Station is not in an ideal location; however, it would be difficult to find a better location due to cost. Mr. Hill stated that the recently completed Station #7 (Brevard Community College, Wickham Road) cost \$500,000. Add to that the cost of the land and it becomes an expensive effort to move the station.

Discussion followed regarding the need to construct an additional Fire Station and the possible need to relocate Fire Station #3 (Airport) in the future.

Mr. Palmer stated that multi-level parking could solve some of the parking problems. Mr. Hill noted that the Downtown area is nearing full occupancy. As property becomes more valuable, people are less likely to lease it to the city for parking.

Mrs. Hand asked if any consideration was given to relocating the Fire Station to the Harbor City Volunteer Ambulance Squad facility (Hickory Street). Mr. Hill responded that he is not sure that is an ideal location. The hospital traffic is congested. Additionally, that property may be more valuable for other needs or for marketing rather than for use as Fire Station.

Mrs. Palmer commented that in looking at the other Fire Stations, it appears there exists an impossible situation to get in and out of them.

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Chief Walt Chamberlin stated that he worked at the City Hall station in 1971. At that time there really wasn't a problem; however, as the city and the traffic have grown it has become very difficult for the engines. They are delayed because they must pull up and stop for the traffic before continuing on their call. He discussed various problems.

Mrs. Palmer asked about the use of the current Fire Station for fire administration if City Hall is relocated. Chief Chamberlin stated that the fire administration was moved to Eau Gallie Boulevard about 10 years ago and is working nicely. Mrs. Palmer asked about viable recommendations. Chief Chamberlin responded that lighting and warning signals would make the traffic situation better for the fire engines. He also discussed possible relocation to Hibiscus Boulevard (Liberty Bell Museum area). Mr. Hill noted that the area is the extreme northwest corner and the expansion of the Liberty Bell Museum would not have an impact on this location.

Mr. Hill reported that the water tower might have to be removed because it was painted with lead-based paint, which makes it more expensive to repaint rather than build a new tank. Also, as the water system has grown and developed over the years, this may not be the most ideal location for the water tower. However, there are no immediate plans.

Mrs. Palmer referenced the Auditorium cost sheet. She would like to see information on a comprehensive analysis of all the Downtown city uses (the Fire Station, Auditorium, etc.), what areas are more cost effective to keep where they are or include in a new City Hall complex, and how to conserve as much green area as possible. She asked about demolition cost.

Mr. Sands responded that Council certainly should not do anything without a comprehensive study of the two sites. It appears that the existing City Hall building should remain a city function and could be a good site for the Fire Station. He stated that it is the mix of the two that is not good. Signals can be used for the fire engines. Mr. Sands stated that a comprehensive plan is the next step. After the data is developed for the two sites in question, a feasibility plan could be prepared for both locations.

Mrs. Palmer agreed with Mrs. Poole regarding the donation of the Wells Park property. There was a hope that the area would remain green. She noted that it is the only green area in the Downtown area. It might be more agreeable to remove the existing Auditorium and locate a new complex to conserve most of the green area.

Mayor Buckley pointed out that the cost is vastly understated. Construction/relocation of the Fire Station and relocating City Hall employees for renovation to the existing site is extremely costly. The buildings need to be taken down to be contiguous. He agreed with Mrs. Hand that the property at the north end of Babcock Street should be investigated. He is not sure of the actual size; however, it could handle a City Hall.

Mrs. Poole commented that we should not move just for the sake of moving and having a bigger facility. The study has been done and can be looked at in the future. A tremendous amount of money has been spent to upgrade the City Hall and Annex facilities. She favors City Hall remaining here and stated there is plenty of time to look into this.

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Mr. Contreras stated that in terms of the day to day use, he would like to hear from city employees, citizens, and Downtown business owners regarding City Hall concerns.

Mr. Palmer emphasized that no decisions will be made until we have all the facts. He does not anticipate any decisive moves within the next six months; however, he said there is definitely a parking problem that should be addressed immediately.

Mrs. Hand stated that since two of the locations are no longer feasible, she would like further investigation of other sites, especially the North Babcock Street location.

Mrs. Palmer stated that now is the time to explore the options, taking into consideration the land assets and the needs of the city. She would like City Hall to remain in the Downtown area. She said that city buildings are in many respects the anchor and crown jewel for the Downtown area.

Moved by Buckley/Hand to develop a layout to construct/expand the City Hall location, develop a layout for Wells Park, and to conduct an evaluation of the property on North Babcock Street where the courthouse was proposed.

Mrs. Walker would like City Hall to remain at its current location. Based on her recommendation: The maker/second agreed to amend the motion to include the type of expansion to be done if City Hall remains on the existing site and acquisition of property to the west of City Hall for parking.

Mrs. Palmer requested a more comprehensive look at the Auditorium property.

Mrs. Poole questioned the cost of the current study and the additional study. She noted that this has not been included in the upcoming budget. Mr. Hill responded that we would need a cost estimate from Mr. Sands for the additional work. The current study was a contract with Mr. Sands for \$25,000. With his presentation to Council, the responsibilities assigned to him are complete. Staff will need to discuss additional services and return to Council with a cost. He agreed with Mrs. Poole that funding must be identified.

Mr. Palmer stated it is prudent to look at the options. If one of the options is a City Hall at another location we need to determine whether that is what is expected. It appears that the best option is to expand at this location while moving the Fire Station.

Mrs. Palmer asked if there is any overlap between the properties in this study and the study for the Downtown Redevelopment area. Mr. Hill responded that in the most recent Downtown study there was discussion about having a presence, an identity, and a sense of place. City Hall contributes to that and there is an overlap from that standpoint. As this project has evolved, Downtown representatives met with Mr. Sands and the Redevelopment Committee to discuss the Downtown area and keeping a presence.

Mr. Palmer suggested investigating multi-level parking in the vicinity of City Hall. Mr. Hill discussed Winter Park's innovative, multi-level parking that is very attractive. They were

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concerned with image and built a parking facility that looks like the facade of the buildings in their Downtown area. It is not easily identified as a parking structure.

A brief discussion followed.

The question was called on the amended motion. Motion carried. (Mrs. Poole voted nay.)

Mr. Hill stated he would return with a proposal for the additional work. Council can determine at that time whether to proceed.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Hand/Contreras to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

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Assistant City Clerk – 8/28/00

Approved by Council \_\_\_\_\_