

CAPITAL CENTER COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes of Wednesday, March 14, 2012

A meeting of the Capital Center Commission (CCC) was held on Wednesday, March 14, 2012 in the 1st Floor Meeting Room of the Department of Planning and Development, 444 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903.

1. Roll Call

Members Present: Deming Sherman, Wilfrid Gates, Glenn Kumekawa, Duncan Johnson, Barry Fain, John Sinnott, Michael McCormick, Christopher Thomas and Seth Handy

Members Absent: Guy Abelson, Greg Benik, Chairman of the Committee on Finance, and Chairman of the Committee on Urban Redevelopment, Renewal and Planning

Staff Present: Christopher Ise

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 12:00 PM, Chairman Sherman presiding.

2. Approval of Capital Center Commission Meeting Minutes of November 9, 2011 Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Handy, seconded by Mr. Sinnott, to accept the DRC meeting minutes of 7/5/11 and 6/14/11 and to approve the CCC meeting minutes of 9/14/11. All voted in favor.

3. Acceptance of the Capital Center Commission's 2012 Meeting Schedule

A motion was made by Mr. Sinnott, seconded by Mr. Sherman, to accept the CCC 2012 meeting schedule. All voted in favor.

4. Annual election of Vice Chairman and Secretary/Treasurer

A motion was made by Mr. Gates, seconded by Mr. Fain, to reelect Michael McCormick as Vice Chairman and Christopher Thomas as Secretary/Treasurer. All voted in favor.

5. Providence Station

Presentation of the Providence Station Area Improvements concept plan

Presenter: Steve Derdarian

Chairman Sherman gave a brief summary of the Providence Station Area Improvement Committee's last meeting. He explained that the State hired VHB to study the existing conditions of the plaza and to develop a conceptual plan. The expected cost to implement the plan is between 5 to 6 million dollars. He added that 1 million dollars in funds was redirected from Station Park to the plaza. The study concluded that it would cost more to repair the plaza than replace it.

Mr. Derdarian made a presentation to the Commission, noting the numerous problems in the plaza and the area surrounding the station. He explained that the limestone block used for the station and the walls in the plaza have deteriorated due to the installation method of being in direct contact with the ground. In addition, lightweight concrete was poured in the plaza, which has rapidly deteriorated. Mr. Fain asked what the plan is if they are unable to obtain the 5 million dollars needed. Mr. Derdarian replied that phasing the plan is an option. In response to a question regarding the parking garage, Mr. Derdarian explained that the condition of the garage was assessed and that problems stem from the deteriorating condition of the plaza above. He added that installation of a new surface and plaza would improve the garage.

Mr. McCormick liked the plan but expressed concern regarding the maintenance once the improvements are completed. A discussion followed regarding the lack of maintenance. Mr. Derdarian blamed lack of ownership.

At this time, public comment was heard.

Ken Orenstein noted that Providence Station is the 18th busiest train station in the country used by 1.1 million people each year. He added that the committee should work with RIPTA on providing better service.

Todd Turcotte commented that there are maintenance agreements in place.

Leslie Gardener stated that Amtrak should be involved in the discussion.

Dan Baudouin noted that the conversation with Amtrak will increase with the involvement of the Mayor and Governor.

Mr. Kumekawa suggested better integration with Kennedy Plaza and the train station. A discussion followed bus service to the station and the possibility of using opening up a road on the west side of the station for bus service. Mr. Derdiarian explained that the area west of the station could handle bus load; however vehicular traffic could have a negative impact on Station Park.

Steve Durkee spoke in favor of continuing Exchange Street to Gaspee Street. Todd Turcotte added that Amtrak would fight that concept. A brief discussion followed regarding the proposed streetcar system.

This item was a presentation and for discussion only. No action was taken by the Commission.

6. Internal Operating Procedures

Proposed amendment to Exhibit C: Application and Processing Fees, Permanent Signage fee

Mr. Ise stated that the current application fee for installing new signage on an existing building is currently \$450.00. He was concerned that the fee might be too high if an applicant is only replacing or installing a sign. Staff recommended that the fee be lowered to \$250.00.

Mr. Fain, seconded by Mr. Kumekawa, made a motion to approve the amendment to the Internal Operating Procedures. All voted in favor.

At this time, the Commission provided additional comments on the Providence Station plan that was previously presented.

Mr. Gates thought that the removal of the limestone clad walls and the addition of a bus drop-off were good ideas. He noted that the plaza plan presented is a missed opportunity, adding that the plaza should be programmed to be more of a gathering space. Chairman Sherman asked if was necessary to cut into the Station Park area to the west of the station to gain additional space. Leslie Gardner noted that before any land is proposed to be taken from Station Park, the Commission should make sure that it could be done. She referred back to an earlier failed proposal by the State to acquire additional land from the State House lawn for parking.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM

Christopher Thomas
Secretary/Treasurer