

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
CITY OF BRANSON, MISSOURI, AUGUST 27, 2002**

The Board of Aldermen of the City of Branson, Missouri, met for a Public Meeting in the Council Chambers of the City Hall on August 27, 2002 at 7:30 p.m. with the following members present:

Mayor Pro Tem Huff presiding, Dick Gass, Stan Barker, Larry Taylor, and Bob Warlick present. Mayor Lou Schaefer and Eric Farris absent.

Mayor Pro Tem Huff called the meeting to order with the "Pledge of Allegiance" and an invocation by Sandra Williams.

City staff also in attendance were: City Administrator Terry Dody, Assistant City Administrator Kevin Faught, City Attorney Deborah Deuster, City Clerk Sandra Williams, Director of Economic Development Mike Rankin, Finance Director Deanna Schlegel, and Communications Director Jerry Adams.

Mayor Pro Tem Huff welcomed everyone and stated they were fully aware emotions were running at a fever pitch in the community, and there are high expectations that the Council will reach some major decisions this evening. Decisions that we have all been waiting for such a long time. I want to caution you that the Council may or may not get there this evening. Our decisions must be based on facts and not on political pressures or emotions. There is too much at stake to let these things get in the way of sound judgment and reasoning. My hope is that whatever decisions are made that we can all get behind it and make it work and move forward.

Tonight's public meeting is on the redevelopment of approximately 72 acres fronting Lake Taneycomo in downtown Branson with consideration of an alternate project locations for a Convention Center. We have representatives of the review team who will give us a final summary presentation of the submitted proposals. I want to remind everyone that the team is not here to make a recommendation, but is to provide information that will assist the Board in making a determination for a preferred respondent, indicated Mayor Pro Tem Huff. The floor was then turned over to Jerry Klint of Core Program Development.

Jerry Klint of Core Program Development addressed the Board and members of the community, stating that one month ago, by an action of the Board, an evaluation committee was formed and charged with the task of conducting a formal and thorough evaluation of all of the RFP responses received for the selection of a Master Developer. Tonight represents the evaluation committee's culmination of that effort. Mr. Klint then introduced the other members of the committee, besides himself: Deanna Schlegel, Director of Finance; Debbie Deuster, City Attorney; Mike McMahon of CSG Advisors,

David Livingstone of Solomon Smith Barney; David Queen and Rick McConnell of Gilmore & Bell. Mr. Klint stated as this was the committee's final presentation, it was best to begin by recapping the time-line that indicates their process through the RFP's. (Overhead time-line shown and reviewed). The issuance of the Request For Proposals for Master Developer occurred on May 29<sup>th</sup>, and here we are August 27<sup>th</sup>, nearly three months later. The committee's evaluation has been focused on evaluating the developers and the proposals submitted based on the criteria listed within the RFP. Our focus has remained with determining a preferred respondent so Council may select a preferred respondent and begin negotiations of a full development agreement. We have not begun negotiations or detailed analysis required beyond the submitted information. Mr. Klint then displayed the criteria. There are 13 specific items listed in the RFP on the "Criteria for Selection" and the committee categorized them into five separate categories: Responsiveness to RFP; Design; Qualifications and Experience; Schedule; and Finance. The second set of criteria was "Special Objectives of the City". The proposals presented have included varying sites and sizes for the Convention Center portion. The size of the Convention Center that is outlined in the RFP was determined from information provided in the CS&L Study, and it was one of the larger venue models befitting the City's needs. The Convention Center specifics, within the RFP, were chosen for two reasons: 1) to have all respondents responding on an "apples-to-apples" basis and 2) more importantly to establish the maximum cost of a Convention Center to test the financial capacity of the project. Tonight we are focused on summarizing two things: a) have the developers responded to the specific criteria in the RFP; and b) taking a preliminary assessment of all of the developers capabilities. Mr. Klint then gave a synopsis of key points from the committee's two previous presentations.

Next Mr. Klint addressed some of the questions that were asked at the previous meetings.

- 1) One year ago we had one project and 20 public meetings. Today we have 6 projects. How does the Council intend to keep the public involved?

Answer: With the 20 meetings that occurred the public had the opportunity to become knowledgeable regarding the primary concepts surrounding the waterfront project. The primary concepts today remain relatively unchanged. The City contributes, conveys, sells or leases the land. Developers introduce retail, restaurants, specialties, marinas, hotels, and all of these contribute to a tax base that can and will support a proposed Convention Center. The components themselves haven't changed very much.

The committee's task was to evaluate the RFP's that were submitted pursuant to the RFP for the Master Developer. The team sought to determine which of the proposals had the strongest background in these areas, and one proposal stood out as actually having a pretty highly sophisticated program in place for gathering, analyzing, and cataloging all of these types of information.

- 2) There is a \$75-million dollars in gross total direct spending estimated as a result of the Convention Center project that was studied which is shown on pages 62-63 of the CS&L Study. The CS&L Study also stated \$35-million in new net spending. Where from the existing business community does the \$40-million dollar balance come from that is to be spent in the Convention Center Area?

**Answer:** Mr. Bill Gruger explained that the \$35-million dollars was actually misinterpreted. The \$35-million new spending in Taney County, which is generated by Convention Center attendees, which would normally not otherwise come to Branson. This does not represent monies spent in the Convention Center area, but spent throughout Taney County as a result of the Convention Center. The additional \$40-million dollars spent by people visiting the area, not primarily due to the Convention Center. We offer this extended venue; you create the atmosphere, and people stay a day longer. They actually spend more money as a result of the extended venue, and this would include local residents that attend events.

- 3) Where does the increased visitorship and economic help of existing businesses fall within this discussion, and how will this effect Corps recommendation?

**Answer:** The entire redevelopment of the waterfront is part of an overall strategy to increase visitors count, to modify the current demographic, to increase the capture, and to appeal to a larger more diverse segment of your market. This increases the pie for existing businesses, by having new businesses introduced.

- 4) Convention Centers need appropriate hotels, typically within 6 blocks to succeed at a higher level. Please assess the right hotel for this kind of business and identify projected room nights for each proposal.

**Answer:** All of the items of data that have been requested will be gathered and analyzed prior to any team investing the significant dollars required to build a Convention Center hotel here. Appropriate hotels of this type may be The Chateau, the Overland Park Convention Center and Hotel, and the Hyatt Regency Convention Center Hotel in Dallas. I think each one of these serves as a fine example of an appropriate Convention Center accessory hotel. Once a Master Developer has been selected and a convention flag has been designated, we can ask if this information can be provided, but I will be willing to say that the odds are that it will be consider proprietary information and will probably not be released to the public. One because we haven't paid for it, and two because frankly they do not want the data to get out to their competition.

- 5) Mr. Klint said that in another document that has reached the City recently, there were other questions and concerns and he was going to address three of them and then wrap this segment up. Has the focus shifted recently from construction of a Convention Center to addressing the large financial commitment the City has incurred too date?

**Answer:** This Board of Aldermen has never shifted their focus from the development of a Convention Center. The Board made a conscious and deliberate decision to purchase the waterfront properties in 2001 for the purpose of redeveloping the Lake Taneycomo waterfront. Redevelopment of that blighted area and inadequate infrastructure and establishing a large central area dedicated to the purposes of this community has been a goal of the community for quite some time. Over the last ten years the City has invested in excess of \$100-million dollars to facilitate development along West Highway 76. Without this public investment, the business development that has occurred along 76 would have been crippled. Many more improvements are planned within the near future for that area. As development has shifted west of downtown so did the economic activity, leaving areas of the waterfront in a deteriorated state. The community has long recognized this and the opportunity to acquire that property has given the City the ability to address it as cities all across the country has done. As evidenced by the RFP, and I quote, “The City of Branson requests written proposals for the development, design, construction, ownership and lease of a public arena Convention Center capable of containing; a) 8,000 feet; b) an exhibition hall of approximately of 115,000 feet”, and it goes on to describe a public plaza, boardwalk, and other accessory components.

- 6) The next issue. What is the correct location size and logistics of a convention center, and what can we afford to build for a convention center?

**Answer:** The City has no intention of proceeding with the development of a Convention Center without the proper analysis as to size, logistics, and consideration of both the market the City is targeting, and the investment proposed to be brought forth both by private and public sectors. Without that information the City would never get it financed.

- 7) Other concerns are the City has committed a large amount of financial resources without having a firm Master Development Agreement, and Convention Facility Plan. Why did they do that?

**Answer:** The Board of Aldermen made a unanimous decision to purchase the waterfront property in order to control its redevelopment.

- 8) With the limited research, feasibility studies, and not having a guaranteed maximum bid, is there a concern that the City’s costs could exceed \$150-million dollars?

**Answer:** I can assure you that the City will address each of these issues during the negotiation process with the preferred respondent.

- 9) The City should just sell the land or perhaps lease it.

**Answer:** It has always been the City's intent to control the property and to recap their investment through leasing or other methods of reimbursement.

Mr. Klint then stated that at the last meeting, each of the teams were given 30 minutes to present their proposal in their own words, and then answer any questions from the public and the Council. This too was informative and allowed everyone the opportunity to meet the principals from each team.

The committee realized that the only way they could truly accomplish their job for the Council, was to create a rating system that simple measured each team against the requirements listed in the RFP. Mr. Klint then presented the findings of the committee based upon the Criteria for Selection, and reviewed the 5 categories and specifically the 13 individual items listed in the Criteria for Selection. The evaluation was based on the facts as a result of the responses. There was a response indicating that two teams were to be considered jointly, as the Sansone Group had joined HCW on certain retail portions of the waterfront. The Garfield-Traub had also submitted an alternate proposal that pertains specific to a funding mechanism.

Next David Livingstone, of Soloman, Smith, and Barney, gave a financial presentation. Mr. Livingstone said the general financing plan was to promote private development by investing public funds. The public invests small amounts of money through issuing tax exempt bonds to fund things like infrastructure, the Convention Center, and possibly the land. In return the private sector invests much larger amounts of funds through equity and private loans to fund hotels, retail, golf courses, etc. The new project will generate revenue for the developer through cash flow, retail, food and beverage, and for the City as well through economic activity taxes, property taxes, state sales tax, and also through existing businesses. The five proposals were then broken down as follows.

Caswell-Sansone proposal provides detail on the Convention Center, but not on the waterfront. On the Convention Center site they proposed a hotel, retail, and restaurants, to be funded privately with a cost of \$80-million dollars. They expect the City to pay for the Convention Center and Arena with an estimated cost of \$61 million dollars.

Garfield-Traub proposal was different, you fund it and we will develop it.

Native-American group proposed both the Convention Center and retail on the waterfront site. They proposed to fund retail, restaurants, using \$96-million dollars of their money, and in return, the City would fund the Convention Center, access roads, etc. estimating \$76-million dollars.

HCW provided the most detail. They proposed on the waterfront retail and 2 hotels costing them \$146-million dollars, and the City to pay for access roads, a Town Square, and parking at an estimated cost of \$27-million dollars. Proposing the Convention Center on the Branson Hills site funding \$39-million dollars, and

**the City funding \$55-million dollars. For full disclosure, the City would also have costs from capitalized interest, financing fees and reserves associated with the bond issue expecting to be \$22-million dollars. The City also funded the land purchases with a total cost estimates to be \$136-million dollars, and the private investment to be a little under \$230-million dollars.**

**Mr. Livingstone provided some preliminary conclusions based on the HCW proposal, as it was the only proposal that provided a complete enough proposal to analyze. The incremental tax revenues that the City should generate would be sufficient to cover the debt service on the bonds funding the public costs. It is critical that both the private money and public money are on the table simultaneously. In conclusion, they think the HCW proposal provides the basic framework for feasible financing in both the lakefront and the Convention Center public elements of the project. Next, the City needs approval of a State TIF, and expert studies done verifying the incremental tax revenues projected is enough money to fund both sides so that both the lakefront and Convention Center get completed. The private project element to be funded (retail and restaurants) need to be leased, and finally a favorable capital markets conditions completed.**

**Similar analysis could have been done on the other proposals but they didn't have enough information included in their proposals, stated Mr. Livingstone.**

**What needs to happen from a financing stand point to get this all done? First the Council needs to direct staff to negotiate with a preferred developer. Second, more detail cost in financing structures needs to be developed. TIF approval, expert studies, finalize the development time-line of the project, finalize and sign a development agreement, prepare financing documents for both the private and public side, and simultaneously fund both sides, stated Mr. Livingstone.**

**Jerry Klint then addressed the Board again, listing the intangible elements of the developer such as, it would be more beneficial to the City of Branson for them to have an office location either locally or within the state; size of the company; in-house disciplines in terms of construction; design; alliances. Team quality across the board was another, and the committee felt every team had the potential ability and quality to perform this task. On the development evaluation matrix, the teams are only as good as what they plan to produce, land, location and size, who builds it, who owns it, who runs it, and other incentives, indicated Mr. Klint, with Sansone and HCW were the highest on the chart.**

**Upon the decision of a selection of a preferred responder the lengthy and detailed process has just begun, stated Mr. Klint. A time-line for negotiations with the preferred responder for an agreement would conservatively be 60-75 days. Once the development agreement was executed, you would have a Master Developer. The Council would then go through the technicality of two readings. We are now looking at a total of 90 days, which puts them around early December. Should too much time lapse in making a decision, some of the contenders may come across other projects and not be available when a decision is finally made.**

**David Queen, Gilmore & Bell, gave an update on the clarification from the Sansone Group including a more detailed definition of the private equity that would be included and defined some of the costs associated with their Arena/Convention Center.**

**At this time Mayor Pro Tem Huff opened the floor for questions or comments from the Board.**

**Alderman Taylor acknowledged that we do have some work to do but felt that this was a step in the right direction for Branson. Negotiations will be when we will be able to make sure the best interest for the citizens and the City are covered and will also be crucial in determining if we are going to enter into a contract with a developer.**

**Mayor Pro Tem Huff then opened the floor for questions and comments from the audience.**

**Steve Share, CEO of Grand Hospitality, spoke supporting the Caswell-Sansone concept. The Convention Center proposal should be in the heart of Hwy. 76, with a supporting cast of full service hotels, restaurants, theatres, and attractions. Alderman Gass asked him for his comment on the waterfront. Mr. Share felt that the Convention Center and waterfront should be split and that the Convention Center should be on Hwy. 76, logically, on Branson Place or Grand Palace area.**

**Steve Critchfield, 7807 Cozy Cove Rd. spoke indicating he feels the City is trying to come to a consensus and doesn't know if that is possible to achieve. We must consider the City's future in a 10-20 year time frame, let's move forward. It's the City's responsibility to make a decision that will benefit all of Branson citizens today and into the future. Build the Convention Center that is properly sized for today but make sure you can increase it tomorrow. Mr. Critchfield said he believed the only decision is to select the best long-term location for the Convention Center and get the lakefront project going, these projects will benefit the whole. The right decision is to allow this group of private businesses to build the kind of attraction and visitor generators that will increase the future tax base of this community and the communities that surround us, by simply capturing a portion of this increase tax, a tax that you won't and don't currently have without these projects being built, money that can help to retire some of the investment debt required to create these attractions and some of the infrastructure expansions. A vision for growth that can improve the health and wealth of all local businesses.**

**Jim Thomas, 3431 W. Hwy. 76, said the history is that the City owned an airport, outside the city limits, they moved the airport because there was a lot of cost involved that the City was having to subsidize. They leased it, and there has been millions of dollars in income from those leases over the last twenty years. It has generated millions of dollars in taxes collected, \$50-million dollars in improvements on the land, and 500 jobs. That is history, now as we look to the future, the City owns Branson Landing, 70 some acres. Now that we own it, what are we going to do with it? With a bond debt of \$100-million, are we going to clean it up, plat it, and lease it as history shows and bring income in rather than sticking our necks out for a project that could approach \$200 million dollars bond**

debt before this is through. The feasibility of it doesn't seem to be able to work, the feasibility of the Convention Center. The City paid \$55,000 for a feasibility study which says that 60% of the people are not going to come. We've paid for the study but we are disregarding it. We have the answer very simply, clean it up and people will lease it with no risk to the City. A simple approach to a very successful time proven method.

Jim Thompsen, Blue Eye, stated we need a state of the art Convention Center in a location where people can come and get to it and not have to fight traffic. Branson Hills is not out in the middle of nowhere; it is 1 mile from the 76 strip. The property owners have offered to give the City 200 acres at no charge, and park property to reestablish the park system. We need to move forward right away, let's do something, and do it the right way. A study was done pursuant to the locations of the Branson properties 2 or 3 years ago. Bill Yung did it. Several of the sites were analyzed and he encourages us to pull that study out again, make your decision, but make a decision and let's move forward and put up a Convention Center and riverfront.

Rich Milstead, Walnut Shade, said as a business owner in downtown, he wants the development to be an asset to the community, not a detriment to the East side or the West side. We have an asset in our lakefront, we have reviewed the proposals, listened to the review committee, and it's time to make a decision and get on with the development of the lakefront and Convention Center. Select a developer that can give the City what it needs to be prosperous and to be a world class City.

Ricky Renfro, 108 Fern St., Branson, MO, said his question was on finance. What if we have an economic downfall like what happened after 911? It does make sense to put it out at Branson Hills to get in and out with the traffic.

Chuck Pennel asked the Board to consider separating the projects as he was concerned about the Convention Center and urged the Board to move forward as soon as they could on the lakefront because the downtown needs to get kicked into gear.

Mark Weisz, 386 Dalton Drive, said he believes what is being brought before the Board from the HCW Group on the Branson Landing project is world class. Bringing other generators of business that can bring more people to town that will shop in all the stores, go to all the theaters, and spend time in the motels. Branson should get on with the downtown project and let HCW start that process by negotiating the development agreement with the Board. Mr. Weisz also said he believes the future of this town is very much in line with the Convention Center being in Branson Hills. Should the Convention Center go there, they can make it of a size that is sized correctly so our town and community can afford to pay the bill today but also have the opportunity for it to grow into what we need in the future. Whatever is done on the Convention Center, he asked the Board to consider very strongly it's access, our future, and the vision that it will take to meet not only today's needs, but how we need to do Phase II a few years from now, which would be another Council's decision.

**Doug Erickson, visitor from Ridgefield, Minnesota, said he has been coming down to Branson for 6 or 7 years, looking at this as a place to retire and has been watching what has been going on as far as the Convention Center. Two things to throw out as cautions from the twin city area, the reason he loves this town is the safety. What happened with the Minneapolis Convention Center was a mushroom in the sex industry. The areas that used to be accessible to children and parents no longer allow children to go there because of the harassment and the solicitation that goes on. Once the industry is there, getting rid of it is impossible. Laws and ordinances need to be put into place before the industry comes. As an engineer, he sees that the City is gambling millions of dollars on the waterfront while the Corp of Engineers is gambling millions of dollars on Taneycomo. Mr. Erickson also voiced concerns about the City investing millions of dollars in the flood plain, and he's not hearing a lot about that when the Corp of Engineers is trying to minimize the flood.**

**Ron Herschend, 1211 Hwy F, addressed the Boarding stating, as you move forward in this process, great wisdom is needed in selecting the right team and determining where and when the Convention Center goes in. The most important job before you is selecting the right team, with the right team you will get the right facts. You'll make the right decisions; the project will come in on budget and will be a project that will work. The Convention Center needs to deliver what convention planners and conventioners want, whatever that is. If you build it in the wrong location, and it doesn't have the amenities that conventioners want, the conventioners won't come back. You need to plan for the future. Other cities have done that without moving a great distance out on vacant land. For example, Kansas City Airport being 2 ½ hours out of town. In choosing your anchor tenants, Mr. Herschend encouraged the Board to get a guaranteed amount of tax revenue. Mix and brand name is important critical key to success is that the anchors add value, more than just sales tax, they can bring visitors. Brand names bring more than just sales. They bring many potential customers and marketing.**

**Dan Ruda, 1245 S. Wildwood Dr., said the Convention Center process started to solidify our well being and to ensure the economic well being of the existing businesses. We need to make some major decisions, look at the significance of it and what it really means. We've spent \$32-million dollars down on the lakefront, and we are looking at spending another \$27 million on infrastructure to go along with the concept, that is a lot of money. We are also looking at an additional \$55-million dollars north of town. Mr. Ruda said he likes to bring new projects into town, but also understands the risk in them. He talked to 100 significant tax paying business owners and managers primarily along the Hwy. 76 corridor, where the majority tax base is in this community and what was asked was, "Do we understand as a community that we are going to have to support it with annual appropriations to guarantee that they will be bought?" There are a lot in the community that do not understand that. What we have to commit to in order to build the Convention Center is that we are going to give our guarantee as a community that we are going to pay it back. From no less than 100 significant business owners and managers spoken to over the last couple of weeks, almost without exception, they have a strong passion that the Convention Center should be on the Hwy. 76 corridor, with good common sense reasons why it should be there. Those are the people that built the community; they**

are the people that spent the money, labored, marketed, brought people to town, took care of them, asked them to come back, and paid the taxes. If we're going to commit our name and our signature as a community to repay this debt, which we are, then we should listen to the people that are going to pay that tax. The voters and residents will pay, but the vast majority, the people that will feel the pain, are the business owners. With that regard, Mr. Ruda asked the decision be made to put it on the strip. The developers, Mr. Huffman worked really hard and spent a tremendous amount of money, and has done a great job in putting together a great presentation. He did a superb job, but at the same time, we have other developers that have other proposals, and lets make a decision. We have all heard that 98% of Convention Centers require subsidy. That means we are going to have to pay something in or it won't work. So if we are going to do that, as a community, which is the decision you are getting ready to make, then let's give the benefit to those people that have built the community, have continued to build it, that are enabling us today to make the decision on the lakefront, to have already spent \$32-million, to spend another \$27-million, to take the town to the next step, lets give the people that are paying the taxes that have brought us here today, that are probably going to take us to the next step, let's give them that benefit.

Maddie Frankie, 816 Valley View Drive said she doesn't like traffic jams but loves Branson. She believes the most precious thing we have are the people that keep coming back. Mrs. Frankie said she has lived on the lakes, and does not see the beauty of Lake Taneycomo. If it floods, there is so much to be considered. We do need the lakefront developed and we do need a place but remember the people that live here. We need to cultivate the precious jewel that we have, safety, love, friendship, and some family values. A Convention Center is dirty, because they have to bring in and take out the trash. On the lakefront would be where the trash is coming and going, so the whole town has to look down on the trash and the trucks. In Branson Hills you can hide the back side so you don't have to see the trash and the trucks, downtown would be too congested behind the businesses. You think you want it there. It would be more aggravating than you realize.

At this time, Mayor Pro Tem Huff made a statement that it was a unanimous consensus of the Board that they would not consider any additional parcels of land that were not submitted by the RFP deadline. Mayor Pro Tem Huff then asked if there were any questions or comments from the Board.

Alderman Warlick then said, based upon the information submitted in the RFP's, as well as, that which has been presented in both the public meetings and visits with members of the community, he moved to direct staff to begin negotiations with HCW on both the Convention Center project in the Branson Hills location, and the lakefront project. Alderman Barker seconded the motion. Mayor Pro Tem Huff asked for any questions, comments, or discussion from the audience.

Ron Herschend, 1211 Hwy. F, Branson, asked if that motion will preclude the Council from looking at a different site. Alderman Warlick replied that it did. Mr. Herschend asked if they were making a decision tonight on both the developer and the location of the Convention Center. Alderman Warlick replied that the developer

presented a location in the RFP. Mr. Herschend stated he had heard they were considering putting at least two of the developer projects together and combining them into one and that they were going to make a decision on the developer only, and now they were putting both those decisions together. Alderman Warlick stated that the location that was presented by the developer had one location only in the RFP. Mr. Herschend said the audience heard there was to be some consideration of putting HCW and one of the other developers together who had presented a different location for the possibility of a better development. Alderman Warlick said the Sansone-HCW blend only applied to the lakefront project which involves Mr. Sansone's group on lakefront leasing and was included in the HCW proposal.

Raeanne Presley, 404 Judy St., said it was her understanding there would be a more detailed Convention Center study undertaken that would encompass the question that we all have as far as size, what conventioners want, and what planners want. She was hoping that at that point we would have further discussion on location. We certainly have all the information from the Convention Center Committee that worked so diligently just the year before last, and it was her hope that as you move forward with this developer we would consider a more complete study and perhaps then consider the wishes of a lot of business owners on 76 and possibly consider a location out there. Mrs. Presley said she was afraid this motion would make a Convention Center study pointless. Alderman Warlick stated that it was his understanding that CS&L would do a study as that was required for the bonding, and if it didn't match up, the Board might be right back where they were and that was all part of the negotiations.

Michael London, 1620 Miller Dr., said he heard the original purpose of this entire endeavor was to help the existing businesses. Representatives of the existing businesses have come before you tonight to ask you to consider an alternative site than the one that is in the HCW proposal. That proposed site has not been studied versus any alternative sites. It has been brought up as a proposal which admittedly meets the criteria used to judge the proposals. Independently, it has not been looked at as to whether it is the best site for a Convention Center. Mr. London asked the Board to reconsider, and stated he believed the Board could move forward by electing to go into negotiations with HCW, but believes it best serves the existing members of the community by leaving open the option of the Convention Center site.

Ron Herschend, 1211 Hwy. F, reminded the Council that it was Mr. Huffman's group and Rick Graf who said the lakefront was the only place a Convention Center would work. Then Mr. Huffman did a presentation that said the right place for this development was the Mel Tillis Theater, and now you are asking us to go with this developer with the third right location. Mr. Herschend said he believed the audience and the community has a right to be concerned about a motion that ties the developer to a location that doesn't seem to make sense.

Chuck Pennel, 353 Quincy Rd., Kirbyville, said he didn't have a favorite site for the Convention Center. His criticism all along has been that he didn't feel like the lakefront was the place for it. It seems to him that we all are moved by developers. We

have a plan, a proposal, sent out the RFP's to these developers, and they didn't go with what we wanted but came up with a different plan. He hopes the decision is weighed and not jumped into.

Steve Presley, 404 Judy St., said he was not opposed to the lakefront development but would like to consider the option of separating the two developments. We have two different issues here, the issue of the Convention Center where multiple sites have been proposed. The motion that is on the table right now locks you into something that doesn't give the flexibility to go out and look at other sites through a study. It seems now would be a perfect opportunity to separate the lakefront from the Convention Center. There is no question, this is a great potential for the lakefront, go ahead and choose a developer for that, and table the issue of the Convention Center. Do a little more study with it. It may be the same developer you picked for that, but give them the opportunity to separate out and do differently.

Chris Myer, 157 Country Bluff Drive, stated it would concern him greatly that the Board based their decision on the Convention Center because it was the one in an RFP. His question would come back to, what's the best location? By simply putting it in the RFP, does not necessarily mean it is the best location. When we started this process, there were several people in this community that were on a committee that did go through a selection process based on established criteria, and it seems now that we have somewhat forgotten about criteria, and we are just selecting ones that were in the RFP based on the developer. Mr. Myer encouraged the Board to remove the location. It is very important where it is located, and it needs to be taken out, research done, and then come back with the right location recommendation.

Steve Critchfield, 7807 Cozy Cove Rd., stated the reality is that the developer who's going to risk his \$227-million is asking the City if that's the place he should risk and the place the City should risk their \$100-million, plus or minus. If we are going to pick the site, this thing is not going to get built, we are still going to be talking about it. It's time you decide. You have the facts. You are the elected officials, make the best decision for all of us, and let's move forward and not split this thing up and vote on one and not the other. Let's do it all.

Gary Groman, 230 River Point Rd., Hollister, MO, the developer is not the only one risking capital. There are a lot of people out on 76 that have theaters, businesses, and buildings, that have not only risked capital, but they have risked their life's blood for the last ten to thirty years. Their feelings should definitely be considered. He realized it is a matter of economics and a matter of practicality, but it is also a matter of politics and taking care of the people that brought us to the dance. He has not heard anything against the lakefront, but disagrees that you should open it up to different sites other than those in the RFP. Within those parameters there are two sites that are in the 76 corridor, and those could certainly be considered and would be consistent with the RFP request that went out. Mr. Groman encouraged the Board to award the project tonight to the HCW for the lakefront, but to regroup and consider the two sites and the developers that are out

in the 76 corridor. He doesn't see how you can turn your backs on the people who have brought this town to where it is.

Dave Schaffer, 299 E. Lake, there is more to it than who can fill out the forms best and who can draw the best pictures. Some of us were really impressed with what Ray Braswell said in that you really don't want to make a mistake. It's not possible right now to make a mistake on the lakefront. There is no doubt that the hardest decision in this whole thing is the location of the Convention Center and sometimes it has to be made. That site out there has not been evaluated. How would it slow things down to proceed with the lakefront, and evaluate the sites that are in the RFP for the Convention Center. There is a lot at stake for a lot of people.

Chris Jordan, 203 Cliff Dr., we have a pie that has been sliced up in the last 8 years. What we have seen in Branson from the late eighties to early nineties, to a growth period where competition is at its peak. It doesn't matter where you put a Convention Center, because it is going to help Branson in general. Do not do the lakefront without a Convention Center. We already heard testimony that it takes one to three years to get some big conventions in here, and by building the lakefront prior to the Convention Center it will simply split up the pie that much more. If anything, build the Convention Center and hold off on the downtown until the conventions start coming. On HCW, what an impressive great proposal with 400 new hotel rooms, more restaurant seats, more retail, it's simply adding more accommodations, more retail, and more restaurants to an existing pie that is split, and we are all struggling, we are all competing. However, the conventioners are what's going to pay those \$210 night hotel rooms and hopes that Mr. Huffman has the deep pocket to hold out for those big conventions, because the person that can go out on the strip and get \$69 or \$89 a night rooms will be hard pressed to say it's only half a mile, why should I pay \$210 when I can pay \$89? Let's make a decision; let's move forward, progress. What should we build first? Please think of how much money it will cost to market, and what will it take to fill this convention with 3 to 4 thousand people? They do plan 2-3 years in advance; will we be filling it upon the first month or two months, and if that's the case then let them open together. A Convention Center should be built here, there, or wherever. Don't do one without the other.

After receiving no further discussion, Mayor Pro Tem Huff called for a vote on the motion. Voting aye: Gass, Barker, Taylor, Huff, and Warlick. Nays: none. Absent: Schaefer and Farris. Motion carried.

Alderman Warlick stated he wanted to thank the evaluation team for their efforts. They did an excellent job in investigating and evaluating the materials submitted in the RFP. At this time, Alderman Warlick made a motion to disband the evaluation team as they have completed their mission. Motion seconded by Alderman Taylor. No discussion. Voting aye: Gass, Barker, Taylor, Huff, and Warlick. Nays: none. Absent: Schaefer and Farris. Motion carried.

**Mayor Pro Tem Huff then entertained a motion to adjourn. Alderman Barker so moved, seconded by Alderman Warlick. Voting aye: Gass, Barker, Taylor, Huff, and Warlick. Nays: none. Absent: Schaefer and Farris. Meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.**