

**MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING
BRANSON BOARD OF ALDERMEN
AND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD,
LODGING ASSOCIATION AND THEATER ASSOCIATION
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2002
1:30 P.M.**

The Board of Aldermen of the City of Branson, Missouri met in a public informational meeting with the Branson Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, Board Theater Association, and the Lodging Association in the Council Chambers of the Branson City Hall on September 26, 2002 at 1:30 p.m..

Mayor Schaefer called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance, and Don Stephens gave the invocation.

City Clerk Williams called the roll as follows: Dick Gass, Larry Taylor, Mayor Lou Schaefer, Ron Huff, Eric Farris, and Bob Warlick present. Stan Barker absent.

Staff 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, Communications Director Jerry Adams, and Planning/Development Director Don Stephens.

Mayor Schaefer welcomed everyone to the public meeting to discuss the location of a Convention Center. As you all are aware, the Board of Aldermen unanimously chose the Branson Hills site and directed staff to begin negotiating with HCW on a development contract. Mayor Schaefer then turned the floor over to Jim Langham, President of the Branson Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Langham, 3235 W. Hwy. 76, spoke on behalf of the Branson Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce Convention Center and Visitors Bureau thanking the Board for calling this special meeting. Mr. Langham asked that everyone listen to all sides of the issue with an open mind, then as a community come to a consensus for what is best for the community as a whole.

Scott Hall appeared stating he had been meeting regularly with a group of concerned citizens, that call themselves the Branson Tourism Industry Coalition, and they had a "Declaration" for the Board which Mr. Hall read. Mr. Hall then presented a copy of the Declaration, list of those signing the Declaration and copies of the signed Declarations for the record.

Mr. Hall said the Coalition urged the City Council to agree to work in conjunction with the Convention Center Task Force, which was appointed by members of the business community, and represented those endorsing this statement. The Task Force would work

with the City in all aspects of Convention Center planning, funding, and marketing. Mr. Hall then indicated he had several questions he would like a response to.

Despite assurances made by many of you privately that you would not vote on August 27 to award the Convention Center site, you did. I would like to know what new facts or evidence came up to make you change your mind?

Answer: Alderman Huff stated that as Presiding Chair at that meeting he believe he said, “I know that expectations are high in the community and that we would make a decision that evening.”, and also said, “We may or may not get there”. Mr. Huff indicated he did not know any time that it was said “publicly” that a decision would or would not be made at that particular meeting. He then stated he did not think anything particularly happened right after the break to change our mind. It was the third public meeting on the proposals and after the presentations by the consultants, I arrived at my decision. Alderman Warlick also addressed the question, saying there were no expectations on his part. I told people that I didn’t expect the Board to take any action. However, after seeing the presentation, I couldn’t see any point in delaying the action any longer. So, I came up with the motion that was passed unanimously.

The second question by Mr. Hall was: Does there currently exist an independent unbiased study which analyzes the feasibility of a Convention Center, and does the study analyze all sites available to determine the best site and most successful for the community?

Answer: Administrator Dody replied, “No”.

Mark Weitz, 386 Dalton Drive, addressed the Board stating, “Today represents a very pivotal day in our community. There is an opportunity before us, and you have taken action to move us forward on the Convention Center. It is a project that will benefit the entire business community, and I hope that the questions that need to be answered can be so that we can move forward together on a project that this community needs. I would like to ask of everyone, to give this project its due consideration and give it some opportunity to move forward to fruition. Can we do the same Convention Center and Downtown Project, if we take out one of the elements? No, it changes the whole economic mix. We have a site and an opportunity from a group that has offered us 200 acres for free, and another 40 acres for recreational needs with a ballpark. If we bring in a Convention Center that will hold 2,000 people, yes, we do need a Convention Headquarters Hotel next to it. The size estimate is 250 to 300 rooms. That is going to mean about 500 people staying there and 1500 people staying in other hotels, eating in our restaurants, and enjoying our fine shows. The existing hotel rooms will help support this facility, along with the lakes, the streams and the soft adventure that our area offers. As well as, the friendly community that is the Branson we have all come to love. If we want to bring this forward, we are all going to have to work together. Springfield is building a Convention Center, maybe we can come in within a year of theirs. I think this is much too precious for us not to work together.

Mike Woody, 549 E. Valley Drive, Ozark, Mo., Director of Sales for Silver Dollar City spoke stating he was here to represent their viewpoint on this very important issue. Mr. Woody stated he thought it was important that their collective thoughts were captured in a document and read it to the Board.

“First and foremost Silver Dollar City Corporations encourages the community to work together to develop the best plan for the proposed Convention Center project. Silver Dollar City supports the City of Branson actions and the handling of this projects. I want to make sure that you hear that clearly as a collective input from our company. A number of Silver Dollar City representatives have closely followed the process, and we believe the City leaders are working diligently to do what is best for the community. We also believe it is in our community’s best interest to study more than one site. As in our own business practices we believe solid decision must include comparisons of like situations. In simple terms – weigh apples to apples and then determine the best plan. We would encourage the further study of at least two sites in order to help the community to understand the final decision, and an impartial third party should provide the data and study. Collectively we should formulate factors that would help determine the best long term site criteria that would include the current and projected access and infrastructure; the financial profile as it relates to the feasibility of the project; the economic returns, risks, and rewards to the community; the opportunities of adjacent land development.”

Mr. Woody also stated, “Silver Dollar City offers to help fund the additional study that would allow the City’s current RFP to remain intact – while giving the community information pertaining to the above criteria. Additionally information from other tourist-based communities should be gathered that evaluates locations and economic impact of Convention Centers in those areas. Economically and strategically speaking we must work together as a community. Seek guidance and data and weigh similar situations with the resulting decision, based on fact not emotion.”

Parker Stone, Reeds Spring, stated he was opposed to making a decision of this magnitude without looking at all of the options and trying to make the best educated decision. I am supporting an educated census that everyone could conduct and that would support the City.

Gerry Lowther, 544 Foggy River Road, Hollister, Attorney representing the group that has asked for this meeting. This group includes all but two or three of the theaters, the Hotel/Motel Association, the Receptives, and many businessmen. The backbone of this community who have been very successful. They have knowledge that could help you in this determination. Mr. Lowther indicated he had met with the person he considered the most knowledgeable man in this area about Convention Centers, and what it boils down to is, location, location, location. You have got to be certain that you pick the right location.

Mr. Lowther went on to say, “If we get a fair and impartial independent nationally known feasibility study firm to determine and advise us where this should go and why it should go there. These people know every Convention Center in the country, so why don’t we get the benefit of their thinking. I believe that if you will open this up and have all the

sites studied, every single person would fall right in line behind you. We could present a united front to Jefferson City and could all work together for the good of Branson. When you are making a decision you can't make an intelligent decision unless you know all of the facts. The more facts you have the better decision you will make, and that is why we are saying let's open up and have the possible sites studied, and let them advise us."

Ann Stafford, 3440 W. Hwy. 76, addressed the Board thanking them for giving everyone the opportunity to make their concerns known. Mrs. Stafford stated, "The Board members were not just the Board of Aldermen, but are personal friends, people they have turned to in times of need, people they have celebrated victories with in the past. So she hopes they will accept her opinion in the spirit it is given: trying to help find what is best not just for everyone in the room, but what is best for the next generation. Her primary concern about the Convention Center was not the location. If we do not meet the challenge of properly funding operations and marketing of such a building, it really will not matter where it is located. In the world of good marketing, mandatory preliminary studies are done to determine the need for a product; identifying the market for that product, and the cost of penetrating that market. Missing that stage of planning is the most often made mistake in businesses today, especially here in Branson. My experienced opinion is that a recipe for disaster is to build a beautiful building away from the major entertainment district with no significant marketing dollars." Mrs. Stafford then indicated she had several questions to ask.

1) What detailed information has the City garnered concerning the cost of operating a Convention Center, and has the City identified the source of revenue to fund operations and continued upkeep of the building?

Answer: Administrator Dody replied, the next step would be an examination level study done by the City's consultants, CS&L to answer those questions. These questions are extremely important for the underwriting of the bonds. CS&L will do their examination level studies, and a company will follow them, which mostly likely will be an accounting firm to certify that study. That is about a four to five month process to go through, after the site is selected and the determination is made. The study will determine the very questions that you are asking. In fact they must be done before Solomon Smith Barney, or any underwriter, will write the Bonds and try to sell them. It is a mandatory process that the City must go through. If the City decides it needs \$100-million dollars for Bonds, there is a whole series of steps that must be gone through in this independent analysis, before the City can issue any Bonds. If it is not affordable, the Bond market will not lend the money to the City.

2) Mrs. Stafford then asked, what detailed information does the City have concerning what the cost of marketing and selling this facility, and has the City budgeted the appropriate marketing dollars? Where will the money come from?

Answer: Rick Huffman with HCW stated, "In his proposal an operating budget was done for the size of the Convention Center stated in the RFP. There are \$4-million dollars of funds allocated towards pre-opening in marketing that Convention Center and \$1-

million dollars a year allocated. I can't answer the question of once it is built. It would be coming out of the operating budget of the Convention Center then. I'd ask Terry; would the City be willing to commit annual appropriations to market the Convention Center outside of tourism dollars, if needed for marketing the Convention Center? Mr. Dody answered, "Yes". The City should keep all its options open. It's very difficult to say, if it be a bigger bang for the buck to use some of the Tourism Tax dollars for the Convention Center. We have to ask the question, where are all the dollars best spent? So, the City would certainly be willing to appropriate dollars as necessary. Would some of the Tourism Tax Dollars be used in the future? I don't think anybody here can definitively answer that.

"The thing I would like to clarify again, is that the questions being asked are in the process of being answered. The studies are programmed into the process. We can't go to Solomon Smith Barney without answering these very questions. You are assuming the City is not going to go through that process. I want to make sure the audience knows the City is absolutely going through that process. Solomon Smith Barney representative, can tell you that the City will not get one dime of Bond money until it goes through that process. The City has not gotten to where you believe they have gotten, and we have to go through that process. You are very correct, but we're not there yet, and it has to be done before we can go forward," stated Mr. Dody.

3) Mrs. Stafford's next question was: From the CS&L Study, it is pointedly stated that we have a low to moderate interest as a Convention site in the world of tradeshow and conventions. The study further states, it will take significant marketing dollars to change that fact. Has all members of the Council read and digested this Study that is in place?

Answer: Alderman Gass answered he had read it but hadn't digested it all.

Mrs. Stafford said, "She begged for everybody to read Section Four and to really try their best to understand what it says about the potential Convention market, and the survey of actual conventions. We are being told that this project and the downtown project are important to Branson to generate new customers, so important that the City is willing to commit well over \$100-million dollars of public money, in fact our tax base will have to be pledged to meet this financing. Therefore, these developments, especially the lakefront, should be designated as an attraction, and each business should pay the 4% tourism tax. This is the only fair way for them to participate in driving these new customers to Branson. We are tax generators, not just collections, and every day we pay that tax out of our pockets because tour operators are not concerned with our taxes. They just want the final price. People shopping in a retail establishment don't have a clue what the final price of an item is until they are writing the check. Shows and hotels do not have that luxury, our pricing is tax included, and our market price will only bear so much." In conclusion, Mrs. Stafford read an article just printed in "Successful Meetings Magazine" on where the trade show and Convention industry is today.

David Willard, Hollister, addressed the Board saying, “He has been a receptive operator in Branson for ten years and has been looking forward to the time when Branson had a Convention Center to fill. The receptive industry is ready to fill the seats. If you build it, we will see that they come.”

Chris Lucchi, 104 Brookside, addressed the Board thanking them for scheduling this meeting to give everyone a chance to speak. He stated that, “When John Connelly announced a Convention Center a few years ago, there was no controversy. The intention was to revitalize the existing businesses who had been in the midst of a difficult economic environment. The project has moved from the Remington to Branson Meadows, to Branson landing, then Mel Tillis Theater, and now Branson Hills, and we have learned very little more than we knew when John Connelly spoke here. We have the CS&L Study, and it tells us we will not be attractive to National Conventions. We are more attractive to state groups and will fair pretty well with Smurf Markets. It shows the average groups will be 300 to 320, which is approximately 120,000 per year. This is news that should encourage us to proceed cautiously with a cost-benefit study, a competitive analysis and a very careful location selection. The Council intends to study only one site, and that site completely changes the original objective of the Convention Center. It’s not surprising that many developers applaud your change of objective, but what about those industries who bring the visitors to town? Those are represented in this booklet handed out to you. The summary of this book is an attempt of our coalition to do a survey. We faxed 640 faxes to members of the Chamber, and 184 have been returned signed. 169 of those support the Declaration, 12 disagree, and 3 had no box signed. The profound, social and economic impact of your decision deserves more study.”

Mike Combs, 2316 Shepherd of the Hills Expressway, addressed the Board as the First Vice-President of the Branson Area Lodging Association. Mr. Combs stated, “They have surveyed their members and voted to support the Declaration. They feel it is in the best interest of the business community to do more studies. There needs to be an independent survey that would take more sites and not just the one site. Mr. Combs also stated, for the record; \$2 ½-million dollars cannot do an adequate job to market a destination. Most places use \$10 to \$12-million dollars. If you start subtracting from the \$2 ½- million dollars, then you are just going to take the whole town down with it. I just want to reintegrate that the Lodging Association feels that there has not been enough studies and it needs to be an independent study. The community leaders and the City needs to pick an independent company to do a viable study.”

Administrator Dody suggested that maybe since everyone is focusing on an independent study, some information should be shared regarding what it really means from the City’s perspective and what must be done legally. Mr. Dody stated that if Silver Dollar City wants to pay for a study, and if the community wants to get together and do that, that is one thing. But that study, when it comes to issuing Bonds is going to be meaningless. The City has to go through its procedures by issuing an RFP to select a consultant to do the study, and it doesn’t matter where that is paid for, but understand the City has to go through the RFP process, not the community. It takes about 45-days to put the notice in the paper, get the responses, allow fair and equitable response time, then make

a selection. Then go through a selection process based upon certain criteria to determine who that consultant will be. When it comes to doing a study, a site study is only the first process. The next level that the consultant has to do is called an "Examination Level Study", that then has to be followed by a Liability Firm to certify the "Examination Level Study". All of that has to be done before it is submitted to Solomon Smith Barney or whomever the underwriter is. There are only three or four firms that are qualified to do those types of studies. If we did go out for an RFP, CS& L could very likely respond and still be, in a fair and equitable evaluation process, the best consultant to do the comparability studies and the complete examination level studies. Mr. Dody then asked David Livingstone of Solomon Smith Barney to comment.

Mr. Livingstone stated that just to reiterate what Mr. Dody just said; "You start out in this process with a broad brush study to see whether the project makes economic sense, and CS&L did a study like that last year. It basically showed that the Convention Center, the retail, the hotel is going to generate more than enough incremental tax revenues to pay the debt service on the City Bonds, plus the City's operating costs; far more to cover that debt, which gave us the initial comfort that the project was viable. The next step is to go hire a developer, and hopefully the development plan laid out shows the revenues more than covers the City's debt, plus the debt service in the City Bonds, which is done by CS&L or somebody else. If the study does in fact verify this, the next step is to do an "Investment Grade Rated Study." A study that the investors who are looking to lend the City money, read and review. That study would have to show the same thing the first two studies do, that incremental revenues generated are going to more than cover the costs, plus the debt service on the Bonds. There are four big accounting firms that evaluate how Convention Centers, retail stores, and hotels will perform, and what the tax revenue they will generate. I would say the two firms most qualified are CS&L and ERA. I believe that if the City went through another process, you would be left with ERA and CS&L. CS&L are well regarded in the market and considered independent."

Administrator Dody then reviewed the seven-week timeline that has been proposed and indicated the June 1st date represents a deadline for the State TIF application. If we have not finalized our State TIF application by June 1, 2003, we lose the ability to obtain it. We must start through the application process again, and there are a number of people in here that can tell you we probably will not be successful in getting a State TIF again. This is probably our only opportunity to get a State TIF. So, the risk is if we don't make the June 1st deadline, then we can be assured of not getting the State TIF. When we talk about going out for another study, what you have to keep in mind is there are a lot of other components involved in selecting what is the right place. Does the right place determine the very best site, or is it a good site that is also financially. That is part of the criteria you need to think about. We can take the time to select the very best site, but we will never build a Convention Center there, because we won't be able to finance it. Or, is one of the options to pick a site that may not be the best site, but will work and is financially.

Alderman Huff inquired if the State TIF could be worth as much as \$40 to \$50-million dollars in revenue? Administrator Dody answered the financial modeling shows that over a 23-year period, it would equate to closer to \$50-million dollars.

Alderman Taylor asked what the first year's projected revenue is, and if they were conservative figures? Deanna Schlegel stated the projected revenue is between \$13 and \$14-million dollars the first year; and yes they had trimmed down the developer's estimates considerably and are very comfortable with these numbers.

Alderman Taylor then asked what the debt service requirements were for the first year, and if the ratio continues through the projected years? Mrs. Schlegel answered without knowing the exact amount of the Bond issue, the debt service requirement for the first year would be somewhere around \$9-million dollars, and that the debt service was stable, and the revenues are projected upward from there.

David Livingstone also stated the debt service stays at \$9-million dollars a year through out the life of the Bonds, but the revenues increase from \$14-million dollars up to \$23-million dollars. There is one other component which isn't in these numbers, the operating costs, subsidy that may have to come later on for the Convention Center.

Chris Myer with Myer Hotels discussed portions of the CS&L Study and read a portion of a paper written by Haywood Sanders of the Department of Urban Administration at Trinity University, called *Building Hopes in the City –Convention Center Follies*. Mr. Myer then asked, what are we trying to accomplish with the Convention Center? Do we have specific objectives?

Answer: Alderman Huff replied, "I don't know if we have any specifics. But, I am sure that one of the objectives is to broaden or diversity or visitor base to bring in some of the visitors we haven't been able to attract up to this point; such as the Baby Boomers and those people who would be new to Branson. If we have a Convention Facility, we could expose those people to what Branson has to offer, and hopefully they will return and bring their families with them. That is one of the primary goals, in my opinion."

Alderman Gass replied, "A couple of years ago when I sat on the Board at the Chamber there were about 600 requests received for Convention people to come to Branson, and we could not help them as we did not have a Convention Center. That is some of the people we are going after."

Mr. Myer then asked, "If there was any specific research on how many incremental new visitors will come to Branson based on the Convention Center?"

Answer: Alderman Huff replied, "Our CS&L Study will give us some of that information as to what our market is going to be and what kind of mix we will be able to attract. Isn't there something in the study that says 120,000 visitors?" Administrator Dody said, "CS&L did a Preliminary Study for the City to see whether or not it was even feasible to go forward. We are confusing a Preliminary Study with the full study, which will have to follow at some point and time. A lot of detailed questions you are asking will have to be answered, but that study you keep referring to is a Preliminary Study to satisfy the Bond Underwriter."

Mr. Myer asked if it wouldn't be wise and prudent for us to do a site analysis before we spend the estimated \$55-million dollars, which is the City's portion of the Convention Center?

Answer: Alderman Warlick responded, saying "From what I'm hearing today, it may be more advisable to do a study of whether the community even wants a Convention Center." Alderman Huff said it depended on how you define best. One thing for certain, it has to be a viable project, and it has to be able to be financed.

Mr. Myer then replied, "I would encourage the City to continue to listen to the community, because if we don't get it right the first time there's not going to be a second time. We need to get it right the first time."

Rob Hall, Grand Palace, addressed the Board saying he wanted to speak about location. Location may or may not be the most important idea, but in doing the research they tell you one thing: location, location, location is the most important thing. Mr. Hall then asked, "With a decision this big what is the harm in slowing down and taking our time with this very big, very monumental decision?"

Answer: Alderman Huff replied, "This amazes me. We have been going through this process for over a year. All we heard was, 'Why don't you guys get off your duff and make a decision?' Now it is time to slow down and revert the decision. We make our decision on fact, the information we have and the advice of our consultants and research. We think this is the right decision. I don't know how else to put it in perspective. We are only beginning to negotiate a redevelopment contract. Before we ever sign our name on the line, it has to be a viable project that is going to produce the results we hope it will."

Alderman Warlick replied, "There is a misconception in the community that we picked up where we left off November 30th of last year when negotiations fell apart with the Jacobsen Group. We have started from scratch. We are not yet to the point of where we started in earnest last year, much less to the point where we left off. So until we get further into this, we can't answer some of the questions we are hearing today."

Alderman Farris replied, "Mr. Hall, you are very correct with real estate, location is the key. It is especially a key when it comes to issues with putting down a project that is totally privately financed or totally publicly financed. What we have chosen to do is to do a public/private venture, and we sent out an RFP nationwide and solicited developers to be a part of the project. So none of the locations not in the RFP's can be considered by us at this point, short of going out for yet another RFP."

Alderman Gass replied, "This is a tough decision. Branson is looking to build a Convention Center and everybody wants it in their backyard."

Mr. Hall then said, “From the beginning, one of the primary mission statements of a Convention Center was to support the existing businesses in Branson. It sounds like you are shifting from supporting the existing business in Branson to a position with the Convention Center creating a business, is that true?”

Answer: Alderman Huff replied, “I don’t agree. I think these projects will be an economic stimulus for the existing hotels, theatres, attractions, restaurants, and retails. I really don’t buy into the fact that there’s going to be an explosion of development out there and the strip is going to die out. There are lots of locations where you can put this, but we have picked the best location for the future, and I think we are all going to prosper by that.”

Alderman Taylor replied, “It all starts with the financing on a project. What we are seeing at this point is that under the revenue we will have from this, with the project at Branson Hills and in conjunction with the lakefront project, it will be financiable. That is the first step we have to make and move forward as to the location. The time element of having on-going continuous studies is an element of cost. We have a responsibility to make a decision and to continue on as officials to do what is best for all the businesses in our community. I feel we have shown prudence in our responsibility at this point, and I think we will continue to do so.”

Alderman Warlick replied, “I don’t think there is any consensus among anyone here that we are trying to create new competition for the existing businesses. We are trying to stimulate existing businesses. What we have in front of us is an opportunity. I don’t think anyone is trying to create competition, but if you are able to start with a clean slate and build something that 20 years from now will still be adequate, that is what we are trying to do.”

In closing, Mr. Hall stated, “This is my personal opinion and my business’s opinion. I do appreciate being given the opportunity, and whether the Grand Palace is considered for a site or not – for me it is a more important issue of making sure that I give the respect to my employees, the people that work with me, to do exactly what I am doing in speaking up for the best position for Branson, because we all live and work here.”

Cindy Merry, Reeds Spring, addressed the Board stating she was a marketing consultant for several businesses in Branson. Mrs. Merry said, “I hope you would listen to what a lot of people who have been here a long time and have helped build the town are saying, take a cautious step just a little bit more. It appears we are moving forward to build a building without really examining the marketing process, the location. I just want to encourage you to pay attention to what we have offered you today.

At this time, Mayor Schaefer announced a five minute break.

Mayor Schaefer reconvened the meeting back into open session.

Tricia Price, 2068 Bird Road, addressed the Board commenting that Mr. Dody had said we could take the time to find the best place, but we are being rush because of the TIF money. Should it not be where it would economically support our community, or is this all over money?

Answer: Administrator Dody answered, “I was expressing that we could take the time to locate the best spot in Branson, and when we get done, we will know where the best spot in Branson is, but we will not be able to afford to build a Convention Center. The TIF is a necessary vehicle. It is the only vehicle unless this community wants to raise taxes or go through a GO Bond Sales Tax, or if you wish a Community Improvement District on the strip. The TIF money is reality monies. We could get that without there being an extra tax on the community. If we don’t get that, we will not be able to afford to do the waterfront as proposed and a Convention Center. My point was, we can go through the process of selecting the correct site, but in the end the chances are highly probable that we won’t be able to afford to build on the best site as we have lost the TIF because unfortunately the time line imposed upon us.”

Mrs. Price then stated we have had a year to decide on this. Don’t you think that was long enough to know where it was going?

Answer: Mr. Dody said one of the comments that was made was why are you letting the developers drive this project. Mr. Dody then stated, “Without the private developer willing to put their private dollars into the total project, there is absolutely no way the City can afford to do these projects. The developer has to work with us as a partner just as the state has to work with us as a partner to create the production development that will create the additional revenues that will fund the public portion of the project. If the developer is not willing to build or is unable to build because we put restrictions on them or whatever, then they are going to walk away. As soon as they walk, we have no means to finance our public portion of the project. There is a synergy that has to exist. It is not just the City saying here is the site we want to build it on, let’s build it. In this project right from the very beginning we have always attempted and continue to do so, to raise no new taxes to get this done. It is through Tax Increment Financing that we are able to generate the marginal revenues that will pay for this without levying any new taxes on the community. That has been the goal of the Council from the beginning.”

April Dodge, 174 Church, Hollister appeared saying she just wanted to comment on her ideas on a new Convention Center. Mrs. Dodge stated, “The idea of a Convention Center is to bring people into town and help the community and support the existing businesses. From what I have heard, I don’t see a lot of studies that have been done to support any of those ideas. I believe that putting the Convention Center in Branson Hills s going to draw away a lot of business from our community.”

Bill Hagler, Expressway Lane, indicated that a selection committee was formed, and they went through the sites and at the end of the process a recommendation was made that Branson Meadows was the best site, and then the committee was disbanded. Then we came up with the Branson Landing project. The money you have spent would have built

Branson Meadows, which would overlook the lights of Branson. It has shopping centers, several hotels and a theater within a block and a half. You forgot about that, focused on the Landing project, and why? You need an independent study to see exactly where you need a Convention Center.

Alderman Huff replied, “I would like to comment a little on that because your sequence of events there is not exactly what happened. There was an Ad Hoc Committee that put together a site to be studied. They selected Branson Meadows as that site. Then they went through the process of selecting a consultant to do a study on the Branson site. They selected CS&L. That study was never done on the Branson Meadows project. So it was determined after some meetings and open forums to postpone indefinitely the feasibility study on the Branson Meadows site and to proceed to initiate on the Landing site.”

Mr. Hagler asked, “But what happened to the Branson Meadows site? You could have had a Convention Center in Branson, and it could already be marketed.”

Answer: Alderman Farris replied, “We don’t know that because we never did a feasibility study. We don’t know if that site would have worked. We are trying to develop and construct a Convention Center without raising taxes, which is what this City has always wanted to do. Is to do it on a public/private type and not raise taxes. That requires a developer, and it is very developer driven. To this date, we have not had a single developer step forward and say I want to develop a Convention Center in Branson Meadows. None of the developers included Branson Meadows as part of their plans as wanting to develop.”

Mr. Hagler, “What about Branson Landing? The Australians were going to buy that, and you took it away from them.”

Answer: Administrator Dody, “Contrary to what you may think, the Australians were not going to build that privately. That is a misnomer that has gotten out. The Australians were never going to build that privately, not one single dime of their private dollars were ever stated in a public meeting to go into the project. The Council made a decision that was unrelated to the waterfront Convention Center, to purchase that property because that land was ready to be disassembled November 30th. The predevelopment decision gave the City the option to and the right to purchase that assembled property. The Council made a decision not based on whether or not a Convention Center was going down there, but was it in the best interests of the City of Branson to go ahead and purchase that land for the future of Branson, even if nothing happened down there as it was currently purposed. Some people have said that the City made a big mistake by not condemning that property. It would have been absolutely impossible for the Board of Alderman to withstand the public pressure of trying to condemn thirty-three pieces of property. It would have taken years of litigation to get through all of that, and the public pressure would have been enormous. They made the decision to take that opportunity for them, and that is when they unanimously decided to. Every Alderman voted on purchasing that property, even if a Convention Center never happened.”

Answer: Alderman Huff added, “It was appraised by a nationally recognized appraisal firm that had no connection at all with Branson, and the appraisal came out more than what we had to pay for the property.”

Mr. Hagler stated, “I still think the Convention Center should be built where the people of Branson have made their money, and they can utilize it with funds, because they are the ones that are going to have to pay for it. I think the Convention Center should be built first.”

Steve Presley, 404 Judy Street, Branson spoke, “I do appreciate the Council taking the time to listen to the community. The really initial question this group has asked for is to step back and take a look at the overall best possible site. Terry raised a very good question earlier in the feasibility of a Convention Center, is it the best return on our dollars for this community. There have been many, many meetings with members of this Council and members of past Councils with community members that have been concerned about the size and scope of the project’s purpose here. So to say, where has everybody been through this process? I would like to just remind you, and the rest of the Council that there have been concerned citizens along in this process. Go back to the community, and ask is there anyone else in this community that would like to donate acres for park land and for community use? Is there anything that exists that we have that could be utilized for that? If that is something that is really important to the community, go back to the developers and ask, is that something that could be considered even if the Convention Center isn’t out there?”

Answer: Administrator Dody replied, “That land was made available before the project. No matter where the Convention Center is located that land is offered as a gift to the City. Yes, we looked all over this community, and there have been a couple of other sites. The problem is not the willingness to gift land to the City for the recreation center. The problem is finding forty acres that is flat enough to develop around here. This one happens to have the best ingress and egress. It was offered before it was ever a part of this project development process.”

Mr. Presley continued, “Good, I hope that works out and comes through for the community, because the parks and recreation are very important. The financing is what is important in this process. Does that make good business sense to just go borrow, because we can do that and really push to the max what we can afford to do? Because you have the ability to borrow that money through a bonding process, I just wonder how sound a business decision to make in it. In closing, I know there will be questions, because I think you are selling yourselves a little short. You were talking about the Council not withstanding the public pressure. From what I have seen to this point, and I don’t mean to be negative, you guys are selling yourself short. You have withstood a lot of public pressure here today and through past meetings. I will be honest with you when I look at your faces up there, I don’t think we are making any headway today. I think you guys for some reason have made the decision. I hope you came in here with an open mind. All the community is asking for you to consider is: 1. Can we afford to build a Convention Center? 2. If we can, what size should it be? 3. Let’s look at the best overall location.”

Answer: Administrator Dody addressed the comments, “Again I would like to reiterate the question: Can we afford it? Which has to be answered. Bond underwriters are not going to loan this City one dime or raise one thin dime from the bondholders if we can’t afford it. We are talking about feasibility studies, and where it should be, and doing the right thing. We keep sliding off to the side, overriding the TIF issue. I say that because if the TIF goes away then again the right location for a Conference Center becomes a mute point. The real question of all of you out there is, first of all do you really want a Convention Center, and then you have to dialogue into this the importance of a TIF. The importance of the TIF is the length of time we have available to us. It is unfortunate that it seems like we are rushed and being forced to recognize this deadline date. We need to decide how important is the TIF to us, and do we recognize that if we don’t get the TIF that we don’t get the Convention Center.”

Mr. Presley responded by asking if the community as been asked if they would support a Convention Center. He believes there are enough smart people in town to say yes. The next question would be cost. Would the community support a Convention Center through property tax or sales tax or is there a different option? Are any of these options viable?

Answer: Administrator Dody responded, “It is clearly cheaper to go out for General Obligation bonds. Right now the TIF bonds will run us about 6 ½ percent. We could get GO bonds for about 4 ½ percent. The City has the mechanism to get that money cheaper than what we are looking at, because we are looking at a way not to raise taxes. We would be pledging the full face and taxing the authority of the City in case it became necessary to raise property taxes not sales taxes. There are always the options of creating Community Improvement Districts, and we would have the legal authority under state statute to raise sales taxes.”

Mr. Presley stated in the process of laying out the case: what are the risks; will it be a success; are the projections of the developer correct; and how much money is going to come in? Hopefully the group here is looking out for the best interests of the community. Looking at different opportunities as far as the Convention Center. Consider if the TIF is not there. I applaud the Council for making the decision and buying the lakefront, but step back and look at a phase project that doesn’t commit the money and is still bondable in the right scope. Maybe not the size we are considering, but a phase at a time. It seems like the decision is based on money from the state, but is it the best business decision? I don’t know if it is for the community.

Alderman Huff responded, “We have no intention on borrowing more money than we have too. We have always kicked around the 100,000 square foot Convention Center, but we haven’t gotten to that point to determine what our needs are going to be down there. It could possibly come out to be that we would only need 50,000 square feet. We are working through that process. We need to look to the future, and if we only build 50,000 square feet, let’s be sure we have the capability to expand in the future.”

Alderman Warlick asked, "Is there a site that you're aware of that your coalition could agree on for the Convention Center?"

Answer: Mr. Presley responded there is not. The group is asking for an overall study. The site is secondary to whether we should be building a Convention Center or not. There are things we could do to target the Baby Boomers and what this community has to offer them. The product is here with the lakes and everything. We just haven't had the money to get to those people.

Alderman Warlick questioned, "If we were to go to a GO Bond or any kind of tax increase to pay for this, what do you feel like the citizens would support?"

Answer: Mr. Presley stated the first step is if we can afford to build it, and what size it should be? Then the site process should be from an independent study. CS&L is an independent firm. What's the cost of that study?

Answer: Administrator Dody, "If we were to continue on with Branson Hills?"

Answer: Mr. Presley, "Say a study to go back and look at feasibility and site selection."

Answer: Administrator Dody, "Multiple sites? It would easily approach \$200,000."

Mr. Presley stated a second study may not be needed to back up the first study. That is a lot of money. We need to make sure of those studies, because we all know sometimes they miss. The community needs to come together and work out the best option and not be driven by Jefferson City, and their time frame. Don't let that time line drive a decision that is not in the best interest of the community.

Mr. Dody responded, "Just to make sure it is clear, the dollars they were talking about, those funds can't be used for advertising?"

Mr. Presley confirmed he knew that. We have never gone to the County for marketing. The tourism tax is great but is there another opportunity with general funds? Let us show you what can be done with that in generating additional traffic and going after the Baby Boomers to make a difference for this community without near the risk.

Jim Thompson, 220 Branson Hills Parkway, Branson spoke, "A couple of years ago the community felt the reasons our visitors and their friends were coming to Branson, Missouri were changing. We have started a long very expensive process to determine the feasibility and long-range effects that a Convention Center would have on Branson. I thought that this community and everybody up here felt like the general public thought that we needed a Convention Center. We went through site selection, evaluations, and a long process, with meeting after meeting. Now we have reached a point in this process where our team of experts chosen by you and our City staff will provide the answers that are required to take the projects to the start of construction or depending on the expert's opinion; it may not start at all. I would like our staff members and Aldermen to explain

the steps and the process that will be taking place from now until what I hope will be a groundbreaking ceremony for our Lakefront Project and our Convention Center project. It's time for our community to unite, support our City and our Aldermen, and let the experts do their job. Get the study done, get negotiations with HCW done and get both projects underway. Don't let this opportunity get away."

Jim Wilson 3027-A West Highway 76, Branson commented that what has been lacking is communication and trust. What is needed is a third party study, perhaps someone that can help clear the air, someone that can help build trust and improve communications. If this has been done already, please prove it.

Larry Melton, 102 Vixen, Branson spoke, "Why is the group just now showing up? The questions they are asking is, where is the best location, and how are we going to afford this thing? Those questions should be of paramount importance to all of us. I am relying on the experts to come and tell us if we can afford it or not. We are not at that stage in this process. There are only so many locations in Branson that will accommodate a Convention Center. There are only so many landowners that are willing to donate their land to the City for that purpose. We have a developer that brought in Branson Hills and says I am willing to invest millions of dollars in that property and to put out the Convention Center in addition to the millions of dollars he wants to develop down on the Lakefront. If you recall there is a stipulation subject to all of these feasibility studies. They aren't saying we are going to Branson Hills to build this whether you like it or not. They are saying let's move forward. It not only has to pass CS&L and the Board. It has to pass the guys with the money. They are going to ask questions we haven't even thought about asking, because they are the ones putting up the money. HCW chose Branson Hills for several reasons. Plenty of room for the Convention Center, enough land to accommodate surface parking, smaller sites that we have discussed before have smaller lots for parking garages. Parking garages are real expensive. You can add millions to this Convention Center just by adding parking garages. At Branson Hills we don't have to do that. The property offers highway 65 visibility, golf course and sewer. The property we are talking about adjoins an existing sewer line. Branson Hills offers a four-lane diamond interchange. The large number of tractor-trailer trucks that are required to service these exhibitions require large turning radiuses. Branson Hills was a close second to Branson Meadows. It is not like this is an after thought. The conventioneer is going to come to town, and do their convention and do whatever they ware going to do, and they are going to look at the list of things Branson has to offer. It may be the lakes; it may be the million square feet of factory malls we have. It may be a lot of things, but they are going to choose what they are going to do. They are going to go back home and tell their family and friends. It has to make economic sense or it will be a negative for this community. These guys haven't approved Branson Hills. They have approved to start doing the studies to see if this thing makes any economic sense. I'm going to ask the theater owners to talk to your representatives and ask the hotel owners to talk to your representatives. Those that are representing you as a whole and maybe you can rethink this process."

Steve Critchfield, 7807 Cozy Cove Rd., Branson commented, “Due to our public fighting about a site, I’m afraid we are going to lose two of the best long term growth projects this community has had an opportunity to track in 10 years. I don’t think that just collecting tax dollars from our visitors necessarily gives someone a veto on this project or the City’s future. I’m having a hard time understanding the arguments. Let’s not study this project to death. I see Jordan Valley Park being developed along a narrow ditch of water. I see their Convention Center being built near only one hotel that would be within walking distance; yet, we haven’t heard other hotel owners located on South National, Glenstone or Highway 65 complaining about the project. In fact, I believe they have agreed to increase a bed tax to help fund the project. This City has hired some of the top specialist in the industry to guide them in the planning of these projects. The elected officials of the City based on hours and hours of study and council from these experts, voted unanimously to move forward with this project. A vote that cost these gentlemen friendships, family strife and peril to their business, but they still believe they are doing the right thing. I think this pro-strip group owes an apology to the Alderman and City staff for effectively attacking their motives and/or their intelligence. I pray we don’t look back in time and remember this day as the day we began our path in becoming another Rockaway Beach.”

Steve Sharer, 2325 W. Hwy. 76, stated, “I am in favor of a Convention Center, and I am also very excited about what you have proposed for downtown. I think that is going to be a real welcome addition when it happens. I do question the location of the Convention Center and the scope of the project. A good part of my career has been involved in dealing on a daily basis with Convention Planners, Association Directors, and I can tell you that when they look at a site for their conventions it is very competitive process. I believe that for a hotel Convention Center and the hotel to be effective there is a number of components involved and I believe location is the key. I travel back and forth to Minnesota frequently to oversee our hotels there. In order for that Convention Center there to be successful, and it is, it’s a lot more than being a Convention Center in terms of holding just conventions. The key to its success in this particular community of about 90,000 people was that it had a lot of other shows. It had Craft Shows, Camping Shows, Auto Shows, Home Shows. It was a multi-faceted facility. It had a Performing Arts Center, a Hockey Arena. It was located in the heart of the community on the downtown waterfront. That’s what made it viable. We worked diligently, over the fourteen years I was there, as a community with the City to make it happen. You don’t always get as many conventions as you want, and it takes a number of years to get up to speed where you need to be to have the conventions to get part of their placement cycle. They run in cycles. It is our hope that the Convention Center would bring this to the community, and it is my hope that if it is in the right location, over a period of time that will happen.”

Jim Thomas, 3431 W. Hwy. 76, spoke stating, “What has built Branson are these fine people right here with these businesses, free enterprise has taken care of it. When you start dipping into public money to finance private enterprise and start competing you just might say you are touching on socialism. Anytime you use public funds to compete with private industry, something is wrong. What I would suggest to this Council, is to do what you have done well, and do good and get out of the idea of getting into private business. I

might point out that we have today, in my estimation, the largest Convention Center in the Midwest. Every day, 50,000 tourists convene into Branson, not for a building but because of the work that these people put their heart and soul into over the years. Are you listening to these people today? These people represent hundreds of employees who are part of this community. They aren't here to be heard, they are out working, making a living for us, but we are suppose to be protecting their jobs and their paychecks and their families. I don't need to labor anymore on the subject. I'm asking you, are you listening? These people are the backbone of this community. These people who are the owners; it's not just Highway 76 who is trying to make it a special interest. Join with them so that rather than to reject what they are wanting to do, join with them. Put it on their back to make the right decision with the Council so that you as the Council are represented by the will of the people not developers. Why don't you kindly back away. We'll support you backing away. Go to work on the Branson Landing. Make it something we are really proud of rather than putting us into a hole that we may never come out of."

Gayla Roten, 119 W. Pacific St., addressed the Board saying, "A lot of the questions and concerns that have been voiced today are exactly what these gentlemen are about to do. They are about to go into feasibility studies; they are about to do the studies, the surveys. The information that we all want, but a site had to be picked to have that information and gain that knowledge or it would be that we have to go back and pay again and start over again on another location. We are all in this together, and it can benefit every one of us. We can move forward as long as all the information comes back that it can be supported by this community. We need to allow this to move forward so our questions can be answered." Mrs. Roten then asked, "Through the studies that we are doing on the Branson Hills site, will it come back and tell us if we should do it or not?"

Answer: Administrator Dody responded, "It will tell us whether or not we should do it on that location."

Mrs. Roten then asked, "Can it tell us by the feasibility study, by the size, how many more people it will put in our community?"

Answer: Mr. Dody responded, "Yes, that will be one of the things that will be looked at."

Mrs. Roten inquired, "Will it tell us how large our tax base will grow, and the number of people that it will bring?"

Answer: Mr. Dody replied, "That is correct."

Mrs. Roten asked, "Will it tell us what size of site should be built? Can we have a third party do a survey on that information? Could somebody else loot at that study and make for sure that the information is the best?"

Answer: Mr. Dody answered, “It will be done. There is actually an ERA as a liability firm will have to follow up, actually there is a fourth party. SS&B will do the final analysis, looking at what CS&L and ERA takes a look at and what they certify. The SSB gives the final decision on that process.”

Mrs. Roten then stated, “All afternoon we’ve been hearing that the two projects are tied together for the downtown development, and it is through a TIF. Some people believe that downtown, the Branson Landing project and downtown will not help them at all. That is so incorrect, and that is so wrong. Silver Dollar City helps all of us, and how far is it out? Presley’s Theater, Jim Stafford’s Theater, At the Hop, they all help us. Branson Landing will allow us to do that, and this Convention Center will allow us to do that. We have it all in our hands to move on to the next level, and we are fighting among ourselves of a location going behind our back door and in front of our back door. We will all benefit, and we will be looking back ten years from now, and we will be on our second expansion or third expansion of the Convention Center. I believe we need to allow them to do that, because they have the information to move forward, but they will share that information with us as progress happens.”

Kurt Engelbrecht, 425 W. State, Springfield, said “His heart, soul, and livelihood has been based in Branson and Silver Dollar City for 18-20 years. The people that have gathered here and really spoken in opposition to, not what you are trying to do, but the way you are going about doing it. Think about it. They have had more contact on a daily basis with the customer that you want to attract. Either they have sold and brought to this market or a prospect that they are trying to convince to come to this market than any of the experts that you have called into this room. It is really amazing that my Bible says before you begin a project count the cost. Not after you get into the project. The other principle that I really like is ‘Do no harm’. I have never heard anything of an attitude other than one of, we want to help; we want to be involved in this process. The reality of it is, that what they are asking is to be part of the process. They are asking that you have an opportunity not only to take the information from the experts that you’ve gathered around you but also to take advantage of the historical knowledge and experience they have had in this market. My suggestion is that you come back to this group whose really reaching out to you, to say, let’s see if we can agree on a specific objective, and then when we do our feasibility study, we can ask the experts to tell us if that’s our objective; if that is what we want to have happen, and is this facility going to help us accomplish that objective? We really want to seek some wisdom here. We really want to do what’s best for Branson. I encourage you to use the functional authority that they have, the historical knowledge and experience. You have a group of caring, concerned businessmen that truly are looking out for the vitality of their business community and for the long range good of Branson, and I cannot figure out why you would not pass a resolution that says, ‘let’s sit down with a representative and see whether or not there is a potential to move forward from this point on with a certain degree of unity.’”

Dean Dutton, 3454 W. Hwy. 76, spoke stating, “I happen to be of the opinion that those things that are in our best interest as business owners and operators are also in the best interest of Branson. I am grateful to you to allow me the opportunity to take a few

minutes of your time and express some of my views. Branson already has substantial convention facilities and does substantial convention business. I have some concerns about whether we should commit public funds to build a new Convention Center. I haven't been convinced that it is worth it. If the decision is to build a Convention Center, I believe central to the answer of the question of what is the best site, is what will be most effective in bringing new business to town. If we want to maximize new convention business we have to optimally exploit Branson's most attractive feature. What is the overwhelming reason why a convention would choose Branson over an alternative site? I believe it is because of what Branson uniquely has to offer. The thing that Branson is unique for is that it is the live family entertainment capital of the United States. I cannot understand, not just opinions against but animosity towards, putting the Convention Center, if not on Hwy. 76, very accessibly close to Hwy. 76, because that is the heart of the entertainment district. Let's try to be thoughtful and wise. If the decision is to go ahead with the Convention Center, place it in a better location than on the extremity of Branson.

Gary Groman, 230 River Point Rd., Hollister, stating, "This has truly been an amazing afternoon. The majority of what I have heard is questions whether or not we actually need a Convention Center and strongly urge a study in that regard along with location and other things. I personally think it is good advice. Until this afternoon, I thought I was one of the few people in this town that wasn't really convinced we needed a Convention Center. I'd like to see a study. On the other hand, if you choose to stand by your original decision, I will fully support that process. Because I respect you as individuals, I respect the process. You've given me every chance to say what I've had to say and everybody in this room has had the same chance whether you took it or not. You've had the same chance. It's the amazement that this town has the potential to gain 1.45 million new visitors because of the combined project. Can somebody tell me what it is estimated that the Convention Center will bring in? How many new visitors are we figuring to bring?"

Answer: Rick Huffman replied, "The figures in the proposal as proposed in the RFP are 1.1 million visitors to the lakefront and around 400,000 through the Convention Center."

Mr. Groman then said, "Folks, we are talking about 1.45 million people that we are gambling with here. Do you want to let \$50-million dollars go down the tubes? Can we afford the project without the \$50-million? Set up the study group to study the Convention Center if you want; if it can be separated. The stats that I look at say the number of new visitors is pathetic; it has been dropping. We need new visitors, and the way I see this is it gives us a chance to do it. If the lakefront is going to give you twice as many new visitors, that's what we ought to concentrate on. If we have to do both together, to get the current financing, then we have to take a look at it. We have to say, can we compromise at all? I just hope a year from now we aren't saying we have met the enemy, and it is ourselves."

Mary Sanford, 1006 Santana Circle, Reeds Spring, addressed the Board saying, "It seems like if we don't pick the best site, and we pick the second best site, that down the road the \$100-million dollars that it takes to actually build this Convention Center is going to be a loss to all of us. We all are going to be paying for it later. I don't understand why

we can't take the little bit of money that it would take to be able to conduct the survey to find out if we need to have that Convention Center. How big it should be, and where it should be located. To put \$41-million dollars into a project that goes sour, and it's our money that does it. I would think that we would want to take a little bit of money to make sure that that is the right decision. I support the group, to a least find out what we need to do, and why we need to do it. Rather than to rush forward and be sorry we did it later because we are too much in debt to be able to go on." Mrs. Sanford then asked, "Why did we not have a type of study, an overall study, to find out if we needed a Convention Center; how large that Convention Center should be; and where that location should be?"

Answer: Alderman Warlick answered, "The simple and the short answer is that part of that is yet to come. As far as the size of it, and whether it is financible."

Mrs. Sanford then asked, "Was there ever a study done in the beginning that was to point us in a particular direction of this particular site?"

Answer: Alderman Warlick replied, "Yes there was. This was the second choice of the community group that studied sites that were available two years ago. The process has been done, and done, and done."

Mrs. Sanford inquired, "Wouldn't it be better to have that Convention Center more located to where the businesses that are here could benefit from that?"

Answer: Alderman Warlick answered, "You're going to put the 1.45 million people in the current golf courses and hotels. I'd love to see it. I'd love to see it work that way. Unfortunately, with the information we've had to choose from, we've chosen what we believe to be the best site."

Alderman Gass stated, "No matter where this Convention Center goes, a hotel is planned with it. No matter where you put it. It's not just that one site; if we were to pick another site, there would be a hotel with it because that is in the RFP."

Mrs. Sanford stated, "One of my biggest concerns also, is how long it would actually take for the customer that is at the Convention Center to be able to get to the other businesses that are already here in Branson?"

Answer: Alderman Warlick answered, "You put a huge Convention Center in the middle of Hwy. 76, I don't care where you put it, if it gets out at 4:00 in the afternoon Hwy. 76 is going to look just like it does at 10:30 on Sunday morning. If you put it where we are proposing to put it, you've got alternate routes. You have a number of spots you can disburse that traffic. I don't think you are going to create near the traffic jam with those people getting there that you would if they had one entrance to come in and out of somewhere on Hwy. 76."

Alderman Farris stated, "I was in Myrtle Beach last month; it was my first visit there. I was interested to see how it compared to Branson. The Convention Center is

about 8 miles from the theater district, and about 8-10 miles from the Airport. They have two really nice commercial developments. One is called Broadway on the Beach, that's down the road about 1 mile. The other is called Barefoot Landing and that's probably about 5 miles from there. According to the paper, that Convention Center is doing well. It quotes the head of marketing, and he talks about that there were some concerns before it was built and some thought it was just going to be a white elephant, but people were very pleasantly surprised. It says, it's created new tax sources, new jobs, new economic activity. That's the most important thing, and sales taxes for the state and local economies."

Mrs. Sanford stated, "I don't necessarily agree that it needs to be on the 76 Strip because of the traffic congestion that is already there. I tend to believe that it should be closer to the strip because of the idea of being able to stimulate the business that's already there. Most people that are coming in from conventions, it seems like they would be flying in, or in groups. If they were to do that, once they get here, either everybody has to go to the same place or what type of public transportation would we have to be able to handle that? We don't have public transportation in place to handle what we have now."

Answer: Alderman Huff stated, "Most of our research indicates that most delegates would come by automobile."

Mrs. Sanford then stated, "I don't understand why the Landing Project, the lakefront, and the Convention Center are together for the TIF money?"

Answer: Administrator Dody stated, "When the application was made, it was a Convention Center project and the Bill that went through the General Assembly says that it is a Convention Center project. Consequently, right or wrong, they are tied together or the Convention Center is tied together with our TIF application. We can't separate it now without going back for a brand new TIF application. That is the position we are in. Like it or not, it is contingent upon the waterfront and the Convention Center being seen as one project by the State of Missouri for the TIF purposes."

At this time Alderman Huff asked Gail Myers if he would be willing to support a Convention Center on the lakefront if land became available?

Mr. Myer replied, "That is a thankless question to ask me at this point and time because there are tons of variables. I understand all the positives. I also understand all the negatives, but I can't get past the hotels within six blocks and the reality is there aren't any good hotels within six blocks that are going to help you make that a competitive advantage. I would love to answer that question, I just need more information."

Alderman Huff then asked, "Do you think the community needs a Convention Center?"

Answer: Mr. Myer answered, “Yes. We have to have some specific criteria to make it work. I want to get back to my question of are you willing to allow us to study and find the best Convention Center site together? Are you willing to give us the opportunity to succeed together?”

Alderman Taylor replied, “We are trying to work together at this moment; we are trying to listen, and we have tried to listen to all the different points of view of this process, and the amount of knowledge I have gained since I have been here. My initial concern there, and has always been, is that from a financial standpoint the project with the Convention Center located in that crucial part of real estate was not viable, was not a financial project. We have to be realists in this; we have to say what is financible, and what can be bonded. In a municipality we have the responsibility to you and to all of the community to do what we feel is best for the community. If we feel as a body, that a continuation of a search for the ideal spot for this project is going to jeopardize the economic development, then we have to move forward, and do what we feel like is best for the City as a whole. We are concerned that the TIF funds may not be available if we continue to have delays. That may put this all in jeopardy. We want to work together. I will continue to ask the hard questions of trying to get to a point that I feel as an elected official is best for the community. I’m showing a willingness to listen, but as far as to this point but as for allowing to have an ongoing debate on this issue, no, I will not.”

Mayor Schaeffer replied, “We can’t lose the financing for this project, or we are going to lose the whole project. If that’s the will of the people, to lose the project, we are well on our way to it. We are replacing all of those old resorts with new businesses, with a boardwalk, with new entertainment for the community. I think it would be the greatest thing to ever happen to Branson, for the strip, for Silver Dollar City, including for Rockaway Beach, Hollister, and Kirbyville, because it is bringing in more people. I am for building and getting it done and having the financing to do it. I’m 100% in favor of what this Board voted. I’m 100% in favor of moving on with this project.”

Alderman Huff stated, “As far as working with the community, I am perfectly willing to do that in anyway, shape, or form. I feel pretty much the same as Alderman Taylor does I see that it is an endless process, because I don’t think that these groups have a best site that they can agree upon. Time is a killer in this project and we could just drag this out until we have nothing. I was not elected to look out for what is best for Ron Huff and his interest; I was elected to do what I feel is right for the community as a whole. I think I made a right decision, I’m sure I made the right decision. I am hopeful that the information that we get from our future studies will back my decision up on that, so that’s where I stand.”

Alderman Farris replied, “We have been here 5 ½ going on 6 hours and this Board has a lot of respect for its constituents, your friends, and neighbors. I believe that there is respect for what this Board does and that this Board is trying to do the right thing. We always need to accept input, and what I’ve heard today has been so wonderful because they have been able to be here and submit their ideas. We have two regular meetings a month, come every single meeting and we’ll listen to your ideas every single meeting. I encourage

you, and your comments are always very much appreciated. I'm willing to work with the community. I'm willing to listen to the community. We've listened a lot today, we're going to listen a lot in the future. There are going to be issues this community needs to give us input on, and help us, and help the developer, marketing, location, all those things. If we decide one way and we move forward, that is going to have to be the decision. If we go through a process and if we get to the end of that process and we listen whole heartedly to the experts into the feasibility, and we weigh all those things, and we do whatever decision we do as a Board, will you treat that as we have worked with you and worked with the community?"

Mr. Myer replied, "When you develop the compelling argument, then it's going to be the slam dunk. I'm here to tell you, the Lodging industry is united. After that last meeting, they were as ticked off as I have seen them in 10 years. I don't think you have a project. You need the TIF money, and I don't think you have a project. We have to get passed that quickly. We have to get to the solution business. State your question again."

Alderman Farris replied, "You asked for a commitment from each of us, as to whether we would work with you and the community. I have said yes, and I think the fundamental issue is what you would consider to be "work with". If we all go through the process, and we make a decision at the end, and we either move forward or we do something different, will you consider that as "working with you and the community? I don't think we all know what it means to "work with".

Mr. Myer answer, "If we could all agree on eight or ten people from the community and the Alderman, that is fifteen people to agree on a compelling argument, I don't think it is that daunting of a challenge. If we have the compelling argument and you came to me with all the facts that said this is the right place. But right now what we are hearing is, we don't know if this is the best site but it's the only site that we really can pay for. I don't think we can make the decision on the TIF. I don't think you can make this decision on the Convention Center based on the TIF. I think time is of the essence for the solution. The perfect site will never be a site where you have to build a new destination to be competitive. You have four overbuilt markets, and those are the guys that are paying all the bills. That's the issue that we have skirted around for years, and I think it's time to bring it to a head.

Alderman Huff stated, "So, the perfect site can't be Branson Hills, and it can't be the lakefront?"

Mr. Myer replied, "I just don't see that Branson Landing downtown gives you a competitive advantage, because of the lack of hotels within 6 blocks that can service the customers.

Alderman Warlick stated, "It's hard for us to look at what you are proposing as a solution. It occurs to me that I haven't heard a compelling argument that this town wants a Convention Center.

Mr. Myer replied, “A long time ago, I stated that I was sure that I was in the minority, as somebody needed to convince me that we needed a Convention Center. We have huge obstacles to competing effectively in that market place.

Alderman Warlick replied, “I’m buying in on the Convention Center need based on faith in the businesses that have built this community, and they are saying to us that they feel that we do.

Alderman Gass stated, “This is a tough, tough night. It’s a tough decision. That’s why we are here to make those tough decisions. I’d like to make a decision for all of you, and agree with all of you, but I can’t. I’m concerned about whether this thing is going to work, whether it’s going to pay for itself. We aren’t that big of a town, it’s not that far to drive across town. We have to pay for this. We have a developer that is willing to get involved with us, we have a TIF District we can establish unless something happens. If we put it in Branson Hills, those folks are going to come to your theater, they are going to come to every restaurant in town, and they are going to fill some of these empty hotel rooms, it’s not that far. I think we have to go forward, and I think we’ve made a decision, willing to work with the community. I have to stick with our decision.”

Alderman Taylor stated, “I would like to have a strong compelling argument. We will always be available to listen to the community. For us to say, we are going to go down another road now, at this crucial juncture, it will jeopardize the project completely. It will jeopardize it in a way that will not allow us to approach Jefferson City in the future concerning TIF funding. We have the burden of trying to do what’s best for the community as a whole, taking all aspects of this under consideration. The major aspect of this is the financability and the funding. I feel like we will always be available to listen, and to listen very intently on what you have to say and what the community has to say as a whole, but we have hard decisions to make and there is a lot at stake.”

Mr. Myer stated, “I think that if the community is divided, politically, there will be no project. Fundamentally, have we made a change to unite the community? I will help however to make that happen.”

Alderman Huff answered, “If you would give us the opportunity to further this process, do our research and our study, we’ll give you that compelling argument. This thing works both ways, we’ve got to be able to move forward.

Alderman Taylor stated, “I appreciate your comments, you left us with one thing and that is that you are going to work with us and help us and I just want to thank you for that too. We do not need people in our community purposely trying to drive a wedge between us and between people of different areas in our town. If those things can be minimized, if not eliminated, if you could go back and try to assist with that, that would be a healing of a wound in our community right now.”

Lee Larscheid, 92 Westwood Drive, spoke stating, "I think that we need the Branson Landing project. If we lose one, we probably lose them both. I was here about 3 months ago suggesting to this body how they might evaluate the process, going through a matrix, a spreadsheet, take all the applicants, go through the RFP, and then weigh everything based upon the major items and then arrive at a decision. I think you followed the process so I can't sit here tonight and say that you error because you followed the process. If you follow that process and do the weighing, and do what the consultant said, then the answer you arrived at would have to be the right answer. When I look at the possibilities of between 1.1 and 1.4 million more people coming into town that can help my business, their business, I would hate to have that side because of the division that happened within the community. I would ask the City to put together a wide paper explaining the TIF. How it works, what is involved, the numbers we've got here, and let's start going from some facts here. The facts are that if we don't get a TIF, we have nothing. If we have nothing, where are we going to get 1.4 million people? That is the bottom line, it's not saying that there is any right site. We are looking at a convention facility that could maybe bring in 3,000 to 4,000 to 100,000 people and if Branson Landing project could bring in 1 to 1.2 million people we are looking at the biggest project down here that is really going to be our survival as far as going forward versus a Convention Center. We've taken a little bit of the package, which is the Convention and beat that to death and ignored the fact that the other projects aren't going to happen anyway. The Convention doesn't have to be perfect. We have to have a good Landing project that will be the draw of the destination. We need to find ways to work together here to make it happen. That's what I'm asking for, let's work together, you make a decision."

Dan Ruda, 1245 S. Wildwood Drive, spoke stating, "We all need to be a little more tolerable of each other. We need to be frank and get to the point. We all need to forgive each other a little bit because we all share in that blame a little bit. We also need to be a little tolerant, we've all made some mistakes. It's human nature, you can't think of everything, when you do deals, you forget stuff. So, let's be tolerable of each other because that word that those two were tied or that the lakefront was tied to that Convention Center, we probably never really made that clear via the media. There is some confusion, nobody's fault, things change, so you have to forgive each other and go on. We also made a mistake, in my opinion, in putting the Branson Hills site in there. I don't think it's where the Convention Center ought to go. It's not the competition. I don't like the site. Why don't we build something we need, a Convention Center, down on the lakefront, maybe a little smaller, something that we can use that will help and show some synergy to that commercial development that we are going to have down there. Something that we get that economic engine on the lakefront, give the downtown community what they need, and we don't waste money. Take our time on figuring out where and what this Convention Center ought to be and if it's not with TIF money, so be it. I think we all need to put our thinking caps back on and figure out how to solve it and let's make the right business decision."

Alderman Gass replied, "If you put a small one on the waterfront, and we are successful in our marketing, we have to add on to that over the years, where does that put us? To look for another location, is that correct?"

Mr. Ruda answered, “Yes, I am saying maybe it is something that we need today that will make money. Maybe we let CS&L tell us what to do with it. That would be my concept, let’s do something and maybe learn from it. What I’m suggesting is a concept that adds something to the Landing that is a \$5 million add that we think has a good chance of being a possibility.

Rick Huffman, responded, “The present study shows, downtown is the best location. I believe if we had an independent study done, it’s going to come back and say that again. The problem has always been the size. We are already going to have a hotel downtown, if you build 30,000 square feet, this is the amount of conventions we feel you can capture in your market. If you build 50,000 we feel you could capture this, if you build 60,000, if you do clear span versus column, it makes a difference. If you want to build a 30,000 square feet flat floor space with some dock space and maybe the facility is 60, 80, 100,000 square feet, they will tell you what you are going to capture in those dollars. I’m willing to work with the City, work with Dan, Gail, Chris, whoever it might be, to look at these types of alternatives, not to lose the whole deal. If we lose the whole deal, I think we have failed. I’m willing to work on it.”

Gail Myer stated, “I think we need to look seriously at about 15,000 square feet of Convention Center space downtown, non-contiguous to hotels, and I’m willing to work on it. I believe that a stand alone Convention Center would be a good thing, and would possible satisfy your TIF requirements.”

Jerry Klint spoke stating, “The ability to finance a stand alone Convention Center is probably negligible at best, if you do not attach a Convention Center hotel to it. If you build a 15,000 square foot building down there and decided to hang a shingle on it that says, “Convention Center”, it may not necessarily be a Convention Center. I think you have to go back to the deal you have in front of you.”

Administrator Dody stated, “It’s a great idea. We have been talking about exactly the same thing and seeing if there was a way to acquire additional property for parking and for the facility down there, not necessarily sitting right on the waterfront because that is probably not the best and highest use for that land right on the waterfront. The TIF is already in place, it hasn’t been approved but it is sitting there and the State likes the project and there is probably little opposition if we keep it looking just as exactly like we presented it. It doesn’t matter that we don’t have 100,000 square feet of usable floor space, if we have 40,000 or 50,000 usable floor space on an Expo Center that would probably still cut it. The idea of scaling it down and find space down there to put it and getting the required parking and get a hotel attached or extremely close proximity to it is a very viable solution and one that would solve a lot of problems.”

Raeanne Presley addressed the Board stating, “I can’t speak for the entire Theater Association but I think it does sound like some type of workable solution. I would never want to be involved in any attempt to deceive Governor Holden. If we say it is a Convention Center, it needs to be a Convention Center. I like this idea better than almost every other one I have heard. I think it is worth exploring, but I think we need to do it quickly.”

Gayla Roten spoke stating, “Now we have a lot of people here in the community saying the same thing and it’s kind of exciting. We are going to get a wonderful lakefront project, great retail, great anchors, big business, but if the community can support that, let’s start moving forward. Let’s get that TIF. When we ask questions, we need to be fair, we need to be where we know that they can be answered where it is not a bias party. I hope that we can all move forward and proceed on the Branson Landing project maybe with a down size Convention Center and a TIF.”

Gerry Lowther stated, “Let me be sure that the Council know exactly where you stand. We have all got to get together or we are losing this project. The worst thing you could do is go in that room and make a decision to plow straight ahead. We’ve got to get together. I would suggest to you that maybe a half dozen people from the group I represent and some of the Councilmen get together for a think tank. Think of the idea that they just came up with here today off the top of their head. The more thought we give this, the better solutions we will arrive at. We’ve got to pull together just like the song. ‘United we stand and divided we fall’. We can’t afford to fail.”

Ross Summers, Executive Vice President of the Branson Chamber of Commerce, addressed the Board stating, “Jim Langham Chris Lucci, Gail Myer and myself just had a brief discussion in the hall and here is the conclusion we have come to. Rick seems to back the idea that Mr. Lucci has come up with. If Gail and Chris can confirm to the Chamber that they will back this idea, Jim and I will recommend to our Board that the Chamber approve the idea as long as it conforms to the TIF requirements and we believe that we can get a positive vote from the Chamber of Commerce.”

Mr. Huffman stated, “As far as HCW is concerned, we are willing to work with the Chamber, Theater Association, Lodging Association on the same solution on that idea. We’d like to go to work on that right away, we would like to have somewhat for a consensus from the Theater Association and Lodging Association and know a little bit in support on this a little bit prior to this weekend just so we could get a message out.”

Jim Langham, 1335 W. Hwy. 76, asked Mr. Myer, “In your best opinion, do you think this is a workable solution with the other organizations that has been proposed here tonight?”

Mr. Myer replied, “Yeah, we are making progress. I don’t think it is fair to ask these people to commit for the Lodging Association or Theater Association, I think we should go back and sell it.”

At this time Mr. Langham thanked everyone and stated, “If there is nothing else, I appreciate the Mayor, Aldermen, our City Administrator, City staff, and all the citizens that came out tonight for taking this input and sharing this information. It was a great town meeting, it took a long time but I really appreciate everybody coming by.”

Steve Weyhr, 3551 Shepherd of the Hills Expressway, stated, “A year ago we started this and we are right back where we started from, a downtown Convention Center. Let’s go for it guys.”

ADJOURN:

At this time Mayor Schaefer entertained a motion to adjourn. Alderman Huff moved to adjourn, seconded by Alderman Farris. Voting aye: Gass, Taylor, Huff, Farris, and Warlick. Nays: none. Barker absent. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.