

Holiday Display Task Force Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 31, 2007

City Hall, 300 LaPorte Avenue

Meeting began at 5:05 p.m.

Guests: 1 guest attended (*Coloradoan* reporter Kelli Lackett)

Observers were invited to comment and Kelli said she is doing background research for an article about the Task Force's recommendations to City Council.

Tess reviewed the meeting agenda with the Task Force. It was agreed that the editing team would work on the final nuances of the wording of the final draft recommendations 'off-line' after this meeting. The Task Force was asked to read the document and email any feedback to Tess by Friday at 5:00 p.m. The discussion items for the agenda tonight include:

1. Greenery – yes or no?
2. VA Symbols
3. Museum panels or 3-D displays

The group discussed the Agenda Item Summary (AIS) and possible changes to language on page 4. The group agreed to use Karen's paragraphs instead of Seth's on everything except the VA Issue. It was suggested to use "artwork" instead of "graphics" to distinguish between a sculpture which may be housed within the Museum and a poster of the sculpture may reside in the display panel outdoors.

The language for the location of the exhibit should be changed to say "on or near Museum grounds" because it is unclear how far the Museum grounds extend and where they merge into the Park. (City Code prohibits unattended displays in parks and natural areas). The City Attorney's Office will review any final resolution for consistency with other Code provisions.

Regarding the educational display with all the symbols which will be placed on or near Museum grounds:

1. Some members expressed a view that many Christians do not view a Christmas tree as a Christian symbol. It was suggested that a cross or a crèche with a star be used instead of a Christmas tree.
2. Keep in mind the ethnicity of the figures in the crèche; perhaps make them middle-eastern descent since the original people were from the middle-east.
3. It was suggested that it may be more appropriate to represent 'light' with a star on a crèche rather than a star on a tree. Trees with white lights will be kept in other settings around town.

Greenery on City Buildings

- Greenery has connotations with light in other traditions; this refers to unadorned greenery
- While greenery is not a religious symbol, some members thought that it still represents only one faith tradition and thus, does not meet the spirit of diversity that the Task Force is trying to achieve. Others pointed out that greenery has been used prior to Christianity and an

unadorned wreath can represent other winter holidays. Some wanted color on the wreaths to add aesthetic value, but some thought that wreaths with red bows symbolize Christmas.

- It was suggested that trees, wreaths, etc. are all part of a larger marketing effort by retailers to make more profit. They appeal to the majority of Fort Collins residents since most probably consider themselves Christian and/or do celebrate Christmas. It would not be good to exclude that large majority of residents if all references to Christmas are removed.
- Tess asked if the group agreed to the wording on page 5 (“The exterior of any City building may be decorated with white lights, secular winter symbols not traditionally associated with any particular holiday [snowflakes, icicles, etc.], and unadorned garlands of greenery [not decorated with ribbons or ornaments]”) and they agreed ‘yes.’ Additionally, add wording to the paragraph to specifically say “does not refer to wreaths.”

VA Symbols

- The group discussed the pros and cons of using the VA list of approved symbols of beliefs. This list was the starting point used by the Task Force, but is not intended to be an ongoing reference list as to ‘approved’ or ‘not approved’ religions for future years when the City has to determine if another display should be added to the existing ones.
- The language should be changed to stop any restrictions tied to the VA list so it’s not an exclusive list for the future. The subgroup will fix the wording of this section. Museum staff has excellent cultural staff who will use their training and background, along with the Policy, to make decisions in future years.

Educational Panels at the Museum vs. 3-D Displays

- Some sections of the article in the October 29, 2007 *Fort Collins Now* newspaper were misleading as the quotes from the group may have been taken out of context.
- The Museum staff is excited about the Task Force’s ideas to include human-sized educational panels (back-lit posters). The Task Force would encourage the Museum to evolve to 3-dimensional displays in future years. Keep in mind the question of scale; probably don’t want to privilege one vs. the other with different sizes.
- Perhaps the Advisory Group could work with the Museum, raise funds, etc. to do 3-D displays in the future.
- Some are hoping the DDA follows the City’s lead about exterior building decorations, educational displays, and fulfill what the community wants at a public venue.
- It was noted that community ceremonies in Old Town Square promote more economic activity and spending in Old Town than ceremonies at the Museum would. It would be detrimental to the local economy if year-end spending decreased.
- By use of a straw-pole, the group decided to leave the language ‘as is’ and not specify 3-D nor preclude it. The future Advisory Group will work with the Museum on this issue. The City Manager will decide on the role, number of members, etc. of the Advisory Group. It will not be an official City Board or Commission.

Wrap up

- The Task Force Recommendations will go to City Council on November 20 at 6:00 p.m. Tess will inform the members when she anticipates it will be discussed on the agenda, most likely not before 6:30 p.m. Tess will ask Seth and Howard to sit with her in the Staff area of the Council Chambers to answer Council’s questions. Tess will prepare the PowerPoint.

- The Task Force is on the meeting agenda for the Downtown Development Authority for December, to explain/clarify Council's adopted Resolution. Task Force members, as individual citizens, can speak to the Council or DDA with their opinions, but should clarify that they do not speak on behalf of the Task Force.
- Individuals on this Task Force can express interest in serving on the Advisory Group.
- The City Facilities Department is planning to use some of the money allocated for decorations on the new Police Building and Northside Aztlan Center to buy white snowflakes and winter symbols, and will begin to transition the decorations on other City facilities. They may use wreaths this transitional year, but no bows.
- Rabbi Gorelik is planning a Menorah Lighting at 5:00 p.m. on December 9th at Coopersmith's.
- Plymouth Congregational Church is hosting a community-wide Thanksgiving Service on November 18th at 3:00 p.m. People of all faith traditions are invited.
- This concludes the meetings of the Task Force.

Meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.