

**APPROVED MINUTES** of the Joint Meetings of the City Council and the Recreation Commission of the City of Rye held at the Recreation Department February 19, 2004 and February 23, 2004 at 6:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

STEVEN OTIS, Mayor (Feb.19 only)  
ROBERT S. CYPHER (Feb. 19 only)  
MATTHEW FAHEY (Feb 19 [late] and Feb. 23)  
DUNCAN HENNES (Feb 19 & 23 – 6-7)  
ROSAMOND LARR (Feb 19; Feb 23 [6-7])  
HOWARD G. SEITZ (Feb 19 [at very end] &Feb 23)  
Councilmen

ABSENT: FRANKLIN J. CHU

ALSO PRESENT FROM THE RECREATION COMMISSION:

DOUG FRENCH, Chair; Frank Adimari; Bobbi Billington (Feb. 23 only);  
Doug Carey; Bart DiNardo; Tom Fendler; Scott Florio )Feb. 23 only)

OTHERS ALSO PRESENT:

Bill Rodriguez, Recreation Director (Feb.23 only);  
Sally Rogol, Recreation Dept.; Rex Gedney, Architect;  
Al Vitiello, Construction Consultant (Feb. 19 only);  
City Manager, Paul Shew (Feb 19 only).

On February 19, 2004 Mayor Otis called the meeting to order and called the roll. A quorum was present to conduct official City business. Because some of the Council Members were unable to attend, the meeting was continued on February 23. At the second meeting, only three members of the City Council were present. The agenda was the same for both meetings: discussion of the reconstruction and renovation of the Damiano Center and tour of the facility. Douglas Carey took minutes for the first meeting; the City Clerk was present to chronicle the second.

1. Introduction and Welcome (Doug French)

*The Issue:* The Recreation Commission seeks Council approval of the next lowest HVAC contractor for the construction of the Damiano Center, the lowest bidder having failed to produce adequate bonding. The project does not require additional funding but a reallocation of funds within the project (\$40K deducts; \$20 forfeited deposit from HVAC low bidder; and \$65K from accumulated funds in the Recreation Gift Catalog account). The Commission needs the approval for the HVAC contract (9% of the total) from the Council in order to proceed with the project.

*Workshop Objectives:* To fully inform the Council on the Damiano Project; to obtain Council feedback; determine actionable next steps; and set a dialogue in motion prior to the next City Council meeting.

*Objectives of the Commission:* to ensure this is a positive step for the entire community; that the project stay within budget; and that a quality building meeting public recreation needs of the community for the long term is built.

2. Building Walk-Through and Building Usage (Sally Rogol)

Those present were given a tour of the facility from top to bottom, showing the various rooms in use, the storage and administrative space. Both floors are handicapped accessible; rented out to anyone who wishes to use the space (charges vary; some groups have no charge); used about 360 per month by a myriad of community groups ranging from after school; pre-K, seniors, quilters, Weight Watchers, Rye Youth Council, etc.). There is scholarship money for some users (last year, \$10K for campers, made possible by groups such as the PTO's, PBA, Lions Club). The large space (which is inadequate) is used by many groups including seniors (1/week for the full group-there are 450 members and they can't be accommodated), Wildside gatherings, step aerobics (can only accommodate 35 – there is more demand), birthday parties, etc. Some (seniors, pre-school) used the facilities all day while school is in session, then after school activities take over. While the schools are being reconstructed all activities that have been able to spread out to the various schools will have to be brought back to the Rec. Department. This will be a small strain, but a serious problem two summers from now.

3. Funding, Finances and Philosophy (Doug French)

Significant amounts have already been spent on this project (\$200K for design and project management, \$108K in interest on the bonds paid to date, and miscellaneous fees of about \$50K for a total of \$432K. This money will be lost if the project does not go forward. If the project is delayed it will cost about \$700 to re-start (additional soft costs of \$150K; potential higher interest rate, \$300K; escalating construction process of 10% per year \$200K, new building codes and regulations, \$50K). The total cost of this project is \$2.9M. City government is charged with keeping a community together through various service interactions. Parks and recreation is a large part of those service offerings and it is not just sports; those services require capital improvements as investments back into the community. Damiano was built 45 years ago; we need to look to the next 45 years in order to live up to the principles of public recreation and grow with the changing trends and priorities in, the community (youngest and oldest segments of Rye's population is growing; by 2030 1/3 will be seniors, the Rye Seniors group has doubled in the last five years; increased female participation, increase in school age enrollment, increase youth at risk, childcare needs, increased demand for specialized and select programs, etc.). Since it was built, Damiano has evolved from a teen center to a recreation center to a community center.

The Commission's mission remains the same: to provide quality leisure services through a comprehensive program of activities and facilities management; its goal, to provide services and programs from pre-school through senior adults that benefits the individual, family, and community while striving to be cost effective and efficient.

In answer to questions about increased costs to the City (debt service, for example) the Recreation Commission feels they will be able to increase revenues by bringing in more people. The bond issue took into account increased interest and operating costs.

4. Presentation of the Center Design and Floor Plan (Rex Gedney, Architect)

The Damiano Center is the primary multi-purpose recreational building in Rye and also supports the administrative offices of the Recreation Department. Built in 1959, a one-story addition was constructed in 1964. In 1988 plans were developed to expand the building, but the referendum to fund it was defeated. Various improvements (totally ca. \$250k) were made in 1992, 1995, 1996 and 1999, but the present building no longer can accommodate the needs of the community. Based on recommendations of a Master Plan (see below) a series of plans were developed leading to the 12,200 sq.ft. addition presented to the voters at the first 2002 referendum. That plan was defeated and a second plan, requiring only 10,157 sq.ft. (less activity space, smaller staff offices and less storage) was presented and passed. This plan was put to bid twice, both times unsuccessfully (bids came in above budget), so adjustments and revisions (mainly architectural and engineering changes, but not reducing the sq. footage) were made and the project was re-bid, this time within budget (including the contingency funds). A great deal of due diligence as been done in terms of rock borings, soil tests, etc.; the figures are within a small percentage of those estimated by an outside estimator (NASCO) and the City's estimator (Al Vitiello) so the City is confident the building, if allowed to continue, will be on budget and on schedule (i.e. completed in a year). Weather permitting construction could begin by about March 15. When asked about the need for having a larger room for activities, it was explained that many groups grow to way beyond the present capacity (Seniors once a week/ Christmas and Easter parties, Wildside).

5. Evolution of the Master Plan (Sally Rogol/Bill Rodriguez)

The Master Plan has been an extensive process beginning in 1998 and including three important elements that helped to build support and director for the referendum: Steering Committee, citywide focus groups, community wide surveys. All groups were designed to include as wide a range of citizen input as possible. Expanding the Damiano Center was the #1 priority. Once a consultant was hired the Steering Committee met monthly for 15 months; the survey produced a 20% return indicating a willingness to pay more taxes to see improvements. The first referendum included three parts (fields, Damiano and the walking trail). It was clear that the walking trail and the size of Damiano were issues in the defeat of the first referendum so once these changes were made, the second referendum in June, 2002 produced a 68 to 32% vote in favor of the plan. A great deal of effort was put into the plan prior to making the decision to go to bonding.

6. Alternatives (Doug French)

It would be fiscally responsible to continue with the plan as it is. The needs analysis has been made, the design created the concept approved (by City Management, the Recreation

commission, user groups, City Council, Finance Committee and the voters); the specifications are within budget and we are ready to go. The needs continue – attendance is growing, the senior group is growing (the McDonald Building does not meet their needs) and the community needs this community center. Will the plan be obsolete soon if the growth rate continues? Perhaps, especially as today’s elementary school “boomers” reach the middle school and need a place to hang out. The needs are there – there is more volume and more diversity and the community wants more for everyone. Of course there are financial limitations and things change rapidly. We have to be ready for what comes along. Accepting the second lowest HAVC bid does not add to the total cost of the budget for the project; it lowers the contingency from 10% to 8%. Given the thorough due diligence we are confident this will be sufficient. Frank & Lindy (second lowest bidder) is a big and reliable company in whom the City has faith. In conclusion, the Commission feels the addition will be good for the measurable quality of life and will embrace those who can’t afford alternatives. Being busy and full is a good thing – they just want to be able to be busier and fuller.

7. Adjournment

The first meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 with the agreement that they would meet again on Monday, which they did. Mr. Hennes was given the presentation from 6-7; the same presentation was given again for Mr. Seitz and Mr. Fahey. The order of the meeting on February 23 was slightly different, but the content was the same. The February 23 meeting concluded with the tour and ended again at approximately 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan A. Morison, Secretary  
(with the assistance of Doug Carey who took  
notes at the first meeting)