



City of Bristol

BRISTOL, CONNECTICUT 06010

DATE: March 28, 2014

TO: Mayor Kenneth B. Cockayne
Bristol City Council

FROM: Bristol Planning Commission
John Soares, Vice Chairman

RE: Re-Use of Memorial Boulevard School

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John Soares", is written over the "FROM" field of the letter.

In September of 2013, the Bristol Planning Commission was asked by the City Council to create a plan for the re-use of Memorial Boulevard School (see attached). Since that time, and with the assistance of its professional staff, the Commission has gathered and reviewed a variety of background materials about the school itself, studied the re-use of similar vacant schools elsewhere, conducted a tour of the building, and held several public work sessions – including two well-attended listening sessions in January – at which a variety of re-use options were suggested by interested members of the public.

After considering all of the information compiled and reviewed by the Commission – including the city's current Plan of Conservation and Development – the Planning Commission recommends the following regarding the re-use of Memorial Boulevard School:

- That Memorial Boulevard School be converted to a multi-purpose facility containing at least two of the following uses:
 - An arts center that contains a theater, gallery space, studio space, and classroom space to accommodate activities such as performances, rehearsals, displays and education/training. (Noteworthy examples of facilities that may serve as models for a local arts center/organization include the Niagara Arts and Cultural Center (Niagara Falls, NY), the Ridgefield Playhouse (Ridgefield, CT), and Artscape (Toronto, ONT).)
 - Co-working spaces, small business start-ups, business and technology incubators.
 - Institutional uses such as government offices or educational facilities which could include a welcome/visitors' center, museum, veterans' facility and/or a new city hall.
- That the city initiate the nomination of Memorial Boulevard School for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places and the CT Register of Historic Places.
- That the city retain ownership of Memorial Boulevard School (both the building and grounds).
- That, as the next major step in this process, the Mayor and Council consider establishing a task force/working group to investigate in greater detail the potential management, operational, and maintenance issues associated with such a multi-purpose facility, including financial considerations, parking requirements and opportunities, the facility's relationship to Veterans' Memorial Park and Boulevard, and its location as a gateway to downtown Bristol. To assist the task force/working group in its efforts, the Planning Commission will gladly share all of the information it gathered at its listening sessions in January.

It should be noted that the Commission's recommendation is consistent with the following provisions of the city's current Plan of Conservation and Development: (1) to "[r]etain city-owned properties, such as schools, rather than selling them, if the city determines that there could be a future need or an alternative municipal use for the property (Policy #6, Public Facilities and Services), and (2) to "[e]stablish a centrally located, multi-purpose facility to provide performance, display, meeting and administrative spaces for the city's cultural and community organizations (Recommendation #2, Historic and Cultural Resources).

The Planning Commission wishes to extend its appreciation to the Mayor and City Council for having been given the opportunity to participate in this process.



City of Bristol
Office of Town and City Clerk
111 North Main Street
Bristol, Connecticut
(860)584-6200

September 11, 2013

Alan L. Weiner, AICP
City Planner
111 North Main Street
Bristol, Connecticut 06010

Dear Mr. Weiner:

At a meeting of the City Council on September 10, 2013 it was voted to refer the Memorial Boulevard School back to the City Planner and the Planning Commission to create a plan.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Therese Pac".

Therese Pac
Town and City Clerk

TP/dml

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