

Memo Respecting Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory Task Force Next Steps

From: William Lynch, Chair

To: Domes Task Force

Date: August 30, 2018

I thought it might be helpful in advance of our next Task Force meeting to identify some issues respecting the Task Force's next steps. This memo is designed to assist the process of discussion at that meeting. I think the Task Force may be able to make decisions based on what it knows now that will provide the framework for Phase III consulting and the content of the Phase III request for proposals (rfp). Also, we may want to decide whether all the needs for consulting assistance can be included in a single rfp.

Matters to possibly decide now.

Mission: The Task Force may be able to establish the mission for the future without additional help from consultants. We may also be able to articulate the relationship programs, activities and facilities should have to the core mission of the Conservatory. This might meet Stuart Carron's concerns expressed at our last meeting and be consistent with the advice we received about adherence to mission. The Task Force might also identify who will be the beneficiaries of the Conservancy's programs and why they are worthy of charitable donations.

Organizational structure: The Task Force might decide now what recommendations it will make for altering the organizational structure of the Conservatory. If we decide these changes should be in phases, we should specify them.

Programs and facilities: We may also be able to establish parameters for investments to be targeted (option 4), including facilities, space, features, etc. The Task Force may also want to specify programs and facilities, both inside and outside, we want considered by the consultants, both "eco" and "adventure", as part of consideration of option 5 A/B. We might also specify the extent to which we want the park and neighborhood to be included in the plan considered in Phase III.

Partner possibilities. The Task Force may be able now to specify which partner possibilities should be pursued in Phase III.

Should all of the consulting needs of the Task Force be in a single Request for Proposals?

Fundraising feasibility, the identification and evaluation of funding sources, and partnership opportunities are matters that may require different expertise from that of architects and engineers. Should we treat these needs in a separate rfp, or incorporate them and urge a team response?

These matters are not especially within the purview of architects and engineers but may be something with which a professional fundraising firm and/or a financing consulting firm could assist. We may need to figure out who is it who can quantify the potential revenues and expenses of programs and activities and the impact of the synergies among them on net revenues. Might we need and benefit from the services of non-profit program development consultants?

Should a traditional fundraising feasibility study that includes obtaining responses from potential funders to the case statement be specified in the rfp?

Need for assistance respecting repair and restoration of the domes.

We should also determine whether the Task Force will need the assistance of consultants in evaluating repair and restoration methodology proposals and their estimated costs.

Should we specify in the rfp that the Phase III consultants should work with the County Administration on defining the Domes structural repair and preservation methods and their cost. They should have input to and should review the results of the administration's efforts. Based on their review of previous studies, review of the results of studies now or soon to be underway, and their own independent judgement, they should provide a cost estimate range for the repairs and an estimate for how long it will be before significant repairs will again be needed, together with an estimate of the costs and frequency of inspection and routine and preventive maintenance. Their report should address the timing and phasing of Domes Structure repairs and the impact of them on operations, revenues, etc.

Additional thoughts. The discussion that follows is designed to illustrate what some of the implications may be of the issues addressed above. These are not necessarily proposed for acting on, but only to flesh out some of what the issues are.

Mission. Here is a proposed mission statement that might be considered as a starting point for our discussion.

The rfp should identify the core mission of the Conservatory to be to maintain and improve a horticultural collection available for the public to experience and learn from. The Conservatory will educate the public on the role of horticulture in our environment and its contribution to our economy and quality of life. The Conservatory will provide access to and experience with varied climates and ecosystems and how they compare.

Relationship of activities to mission.

Activities, facilities and programs should be related to the basic mission of the Conservatory and not interfere with or detract from it. They should encourage support for and participation in the core mission of the Conservatory.

Scope of RFP, park and community.

The rfp should specify the area adjacent to the Domes and Green House complex that comes within the scope of the work. The area should include the former Sunken Gardens area and the pavilion and lagoon. A separate fee outdoor area should be included. Schematic plans, installation, maintenance, operations costs and projected revenue for a children's garden and outdoor instructional gardens/classrooms should be specified. Outdoor instructional gardens /classrooms include, for example, gardens that demonstrate green infrastructure establishment and maintenance, bioswales, water management plantings, roof gardens, etc.

Active and passive areas. Both within the Domes building complex and outside it, areas for active recreation and quiet areas should be specified and appropriately separated.

Year-round out-door activity and program areas. Outside areas should be specified for activities year-round. Examples might be sledding, skating, and a water pad or other active water play option for children. Areas for community gardens, therapy gardens, etc., should also be delineated. Possible art installation locations, both temporary and permanent, should be identified. For each of these installation cost estimates and upkeep and maintenance costs should be specified.

Domes Repair and restoration. Maintenance. The plans for Domes improvements should include proposing means for access for inspection, maintenance and repair that have minimal adverse impact on the collection, together with the capital and operations and maintenance costs compared with current methods of gaining access. Opportunities for other improvements (e.g., Canopy walk) to improve access for inspection, maintenance and repair, should be identified.

Repair and restoration goals. Modifications of the Domes to improve access to sunlight, reduce shadows, and otherwise improve how they function should be included.

Space needs. The rfp should specify the desired additional space for education programming. This specification should be made by the Task Force. E.g. Triple classroom space? Similarly, the Task Force should specify the size of a meeting room. Food service improvements should be specified. The Task Force should determine specifications for the level of food service and for when that level should increase. (limited service, full service, etc.) The option of a restaurant that is open outside the hours when the Conservatory is open to the public should be considered, including how to provide access to it

and how to close off access from the restaurant to the rest of the facilities. The business plans for food service options should be included. The same should be done respecting a *gift shop*.

Impact of revenue generating activities. For revenue generating activities their impact on visit time and their relationship to the mission of the Conservancy should be specified.

Partnership possibilities.

The task Force should specify the partnership possibilities to be considered in Phase III. Potential partners should include Boerner Botanical Garden (two sites for horticultural education and experiences), MATC, MMSD, medical institutions and the VA respecting therapeutic horticulture, the Milwaukee County Zoo. Others?

Financing option analysis. Should the rfp specify that consultants are to work with the Comptroller on financing options, particularly respecting bondability of proposed capital expenditures? E.g., Will modifications of Domes to prevent moisture infiltration be “new” and therefore bondable? Should preservation experts be consulted respecting possibilities for historic tax credits? Should financing options include the potential for naming rights and eligibility for Government and private grants?

Staff needs. Should personnel needs be specified to support revenue and expense projections and feasibility of sustainability? Should staff include management, education, fundraising, marketing, communications, horticulture, exhibit, maintenance, food service, event, retail sales, and accounting. Other staff?