



**Meeting Minutes of the Soldiers Home Historic District
Community Advisory Council**

Tuesday, September 17, 2012, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Meeting held in the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center’s Matousek Auditorium
Prior to the meeting, CAC members were invited to take a tour of the Ward Memorial Theater

CAC Action Items:

- CAC members are asked to help spread the word about the walking tour and encourage their networks to download the app or MP3s and take the tour. **A flyer you can distribute to your group’s members can be downloaded [here](#).**
- We continue to collect stories about the Soldiers Home. **CAC members are encouraged to share their story at SavetheSoldiersHome.com.**
- We have a presentation that we are looking to “take on the road.” **CAC members are asked to let us know if there are any organizations that may be interested in an informational presentation.**

Attendees:

Ralph	Bagneski	Allied Veterans Council
Mark	Baldwin	Washington County Veterans Service
Jon	Beck	Alexander & Co.
Joe	Bova	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Tim	Carpenter	Wisconsin State Senator
Melissa	Cook	Hank Aaron Trail
Matthew	Cryer	Milwaukee VAMC
Megan	Daniels	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Jim	Draeger	Wisconsin Historical Society
Bill	Goralski	Allied Veterans Council
Andy	Gordon	MU Law School Student, Iraqi War Veteran
Carlen	Hatala	City of Milwaukee Historic Preservation
Elizabeth	Hummitzsch	Mueller Communications
Matt	Jarosz	Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation
Rosalind	Johnston	Vietnam Veteran
James	Madlom	Mueller Communications
Dawn	McCarthy	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Laura	Rinaldi	Reclaiming our Heritage/VA Medical Center Library
Genell	Scheurell	Midwest Office NTHP
David	Uihlein	Uihlein Foundation
Jill	Zahn	VA Medical Center Library
Shannon	Boone	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Geoff	Gorowski	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Nick	Migan	Chequamegon Bay Group



Materials Distributed at Meeting:

- [Agenda](#)
- [Power Plant Profile](#)
- [Walking Tour Flyer](#)

I. Potential Changes to/Reuse of Ward Theater

Nick Migan, Project Architect with Chequamegon Bay Group, Inc., walked the group through an overview of potential plans for the reuse of Ward Theater. [Click here](#) to view Nick's presentation in its entirety.

- The VA asked Chequamegon Bay Group (CBG) to develop a plan for rehabbing and reusing the building that would identify programmable space.
- An adult daycare facility has been discussed as a potential reuse.
- Nick explained CBG's approach to looking at rehab and reuse. CBG's goals are to:
 - Be as unobtrusive as possible and try to keep as much of the existing volumes of space intact.
 - Respect and adhere to Secretary of the Interior's standards.
 - Maintain the integrity of the theater volume.
 - Identify primary and secondary spaces, based on the period of significance and character defining features in order to prioritize aspects of the Theater that will stay in tact.
- Nick explained CBG's potential plan for Ward Theater:
 - The stage and first floor seating would be retained, as would the first two rows of the balcony.
 - This would allow for roughly 90 seats.
 - This would be a good size for smaller, community performances, art/performance therapy and lectures/seminars.
 - There would be roughly 7700 square feet of programmable space outside of the theater volume.
 - All changes would be reversible.
 - Murals would be maintained and restored.
 - The theater vaulting would be removed and the underlying frescoes restored.
 - The stained glass window would be returned to its original location.
- The timeline for this project is based on cost considerations and funding allocations from the VA.
 - Complete re-roofing of the Ward Theater has been bid and is out to contract.
 - The VA is a year away from assessing the needs and available space.
 - The VA is several years away from the theater rehab work being complete.
- Following Nick's presentation, the group provided feedback. The following feedback will be shared with consulting parties at the next Section 106 meeting.
 - It might make sense to return the theater to a multi-purpose building being that the building's original intent was multi-purpose.



- It could be more cost effective to build a new building, but there is value to the history behind these buildings, which must be considered when determining whether or not to build new.
- In regard to restoring the building as a sole theater space, there is a need to balance the desire to preserve the building while serving modern veteran needs.
- Some were concerned that many of the services the CAC originally discussed would not be included in this plan, such as psychiatric services, guitars for vets and things that bring people back into the community.
- Concern was voiced for how the changes would affect the acoustics in the theater volume if the blue vaulting were removed to reveal and restore the underlying frescoes.
- There may be programmatic uses we should explore that could utilize the building to its full extent in its current state.
- The VA recreation department, which conducts programming for vets, would probably die for a nice space like this.

II. Section 106 Quarterly Consultation Meeting Report

Genell Scheurell provided an update on the current status of VA plans for the Chapel (Building 12), Power Plant (Building 45) and Old Main (Building 2). [Click here](#) to view her presentation.

- There are four viable options for the rehab and reuse of Old Main, the Chapel and the Power Plant:
 - The VA keeps the building and stabilizes/rehabs and reuses for its own needs. The VA leases the building to a third party through an enhanced use lease (EUL), which only allows the building to be used for programs for homeless or at risk for homelessness veterans.
 - The VA enters into a short term lease with a third party, called a revocable license agreement.
 - The VA leases the building to any person or organization that will ensure the preservation of the historic property for veterans' services (would be done under Section 111 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966).
- Updates on specific buildings:
 - Power Plant
 - The Power Plant building is in severely deteriorated condition.
 - The VA has no money to rehab it and no needs that would be suited to the building.
 - The VA is willing to turn the Power Plant over to an outside party to rehab and reuse it for the service of veterans.
 - There are multiple challenges with the Power Plant, including:
 - It is too small for homeless veteran housing.
 - There would need to be an interested third party and the right mechanism to make it work.
 - Old Main
 - The VA may have a need for additional office space, which could be satisfied by Old Main. The VA, however, is not funding major construction projects. The VA made a commitment that it will take as much as it can of the money that it gets for historic structures and devote



it to Old Main. If funding is authorized, the tower roof and masonry will be repaired. Other rehab projects (main roof, masonry, windows, etc.) will be repaired in future years.

- The VA has indicated that it is willing to lease Old Main or turn it over to a developer for a long term lease.
- The challenges with Old Main include:
 - High cost of rehab
 - Long-term lease for an outside developer
- Soldiers Home Chapel
 - The VA may have a need for additional chapel space.
 - Challenges relative to the Chapel include:
 - Its distance from the hospital.
 - Space limitations.
 - Cost of rehab

III. **CAC Feedback to share at the October Section 106 Quarterly Consultation Meeting**

The group offered specific feedback on VA plans and agreed that the following feedback should be shared at the next Section 106 Meeting:

- The group agreed that the best case scenarios for these buildings would be to lease the building to any person or organization that will ensure the preservation of the historic property for veterans services (would be done under Section 111 of the National Historic Preservation Act).
- Additional feedback included:
 - Using an EUL “ties our hands” to homeless veteran housing, Old Main is a large building to be tied to only one use.
 - Power Plant would make a great place for vets to learn trades/repair of cars/bikes.
 - If we need to prioritize efforts and resources, the Power Plant is the lowest priority.

IV. **I-94 Expansion Update**

Megan Daniels, Project Manager at Milwaukee Preservation Alliance provided an update on the Wisconsin Department of Transportation’s (WisDOT) plans to expand I-94. [Click here](#) to view her presentation, which includes images of what the freeway alternatives could look like from the north portion of the Soldiers Home Cemetery looking south across (or through) the freeway.

- WisDOT is working to expand the capacity of a stretch of I-94 between 25th and 70th Streets—for the purpose of this meeting we will focus on the 1 mile Cemetery Leg between Mitchell Boulevard and Hawley Road.
- The goal is to stay within the current freeway corridor, so that the adjacent graves will not be disturbed, while adding another lane in each direction.
- Two options are being considered:
 - At grade option: Reduce lane width by one foot (from 12 feet to 11 feet) and remove shoulders.



- Double decker option: There three variations of this option:
 - All up: Enable four lanes at grade (the current height) in one direction and “stack” four lanes of traffic going the opposite way on top of the current freeway footprint.
 - This would raise the top of the freeway 30-feet.
 - It could include “cut-outs” in the walls of the lower level so a very limited view between sections of the Soldiers Home Cemetery would be available.
 - Partially Depressed: Enable four lanes in one direction and four lanes in the other by slightly lowering the lanes going one way and slightly raising the lanes going the other way.
 - The lower lanes would be slightly below the existing freeway
 - The top of the upper lanes would be roughly 20 feet above the existing freeway.
 - All Down: Enable four lanes in one direction where the freeway is currently and “bury” four lanes of traffic going the opposite way directly beneath the current footprint of I-94.
- WisDOT committed to not moving any graves.

V. CAC Feedback to share with WisDOT

- The group agreed that its preference is to keep the highway at grade and reduce the lane size to 11 feet.
- This will be shared at the next meeting of the I-94 Expansion Consulting Parties meeting.

VI. Public Outreach Updates

James Madlom with Mueller Communications provided an update on public outreach efforts.

- Soldiers Home Walking Tour
 - The tour was launched and has been very well received. CAC members are asked to help spread the word about the tour and encourage their networks to download the app or MP3s and take the tour. A flyer you can distribute to your group’s members can be downloaded [here](#).
- #MySoldiersHome Campaign
 - We continue to collect stories about the Soldiers Home. CAC members are encouraged to share their story at SavetheSoldiersHome.com. The video testimonial by Congresswoman Gwen Moore was just released. You can view the video [here](#).
- Presentations to interested organizations
 - We have a presentation that we are looking to “take on the road.” CAC members are asked to let us know if there are any organizations that may be interested in an informational presentation.

VII. Adjourn

The next meeting will be called pending next steps and progress.