



Memorandum

To: Human Services Committee

From: Wally Bobkiewicz, City Manager

Subject: Harley Clarke Mansion – Update

Date: November 1, 2013

It is recommended that the City Council: 1) receive this report; 2) refer this issue back to the City Council for further discussion.

At its October 7, 2013 meeting, the Committee directed me to work with representatives of the Evanston Arts Center on potential revisions to its existing lease of the Harley Clarke Mansion. These revisions would contemplate upgrades to the facility as well as mechanisms for the funding and completion of upgrades. Staff has met with the Evanston Arts Center on several occasions throughout October. An update on the Arts Center progress is Attachment 1.

On October 18, 2013, I received a letter from Diane Tecic, Coastal Program Manager for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) regarding the agency's interest in the Mansion (Attachment 2).

I was approached about two months ago by the Executive Director of the Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club about future use of Harley Clarke. He had read the recent press accounts of the City's efforts and told me of interest by the IDNR to consolidate its Coastal Management Program offices from various locations to a facility on Lake Michigan in the Chicago area. This facility would ideally have their offices as well as public space for conservation and education programs about Lake Michigan.

I have spoken several times with the IDNR Chief of Staff Todd Main and Ms. Tecic, including during a tour at the Mansion. After receiving the letter, I spoke with Mr. Main and Ms. Tecic on October 23, 2013 to review it with them and discuss next steps. They agreed to have the letter presented to the Committee for its review.

The question for the Committee is should the City begin more formal discussions with IDNR along with discussions with the Arts Center or work with one or another agency. IDNR is aware of the condition of the building and believe that they have funds to address the facility concerns. The coastal program receives Federal funding for its work with Lake Michigan. If we move forward with IDNR, they would like to sponsor a weekend community planning charrette on how the community best thinks this all might

work. IDNR is interested in main house and coach house. They may also be willing to help renovate the fog houses for joint use for conservation education. They are willing to consider a long term lease of just the buildings or other arrangements as preferred by the City and community.

It is my recommendation that the Committee consider these issues and refer the matter back to the full City Council for discussion and direction.

Attachments

1. November 1, 2013 letter from Evanston Arts Center
2. October 18, 2013 letter from Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Coastal Management Program

160 N. LaSalle Street, Suite S-703 • Chicago, Illinois 60601 • <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/cmp>

Mr. Wally Bobkiewicz
City Manager, City of Evanston
2100 Ridge Ave.
Evanston, IL 60201, #4500

October 18, 2013

Dear Mr. Bobkiewicz,

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) is very interested in continuing investigation and potential planning of a partnership with the City of Evanston regarding the Harley Clarke Facility at 2603 Sheridan Road. The location is ideally suited for the Department's new Coastal Management Program and it would offer many possibilities for increased education and outreach on Coastal and Natural Resource issues.

If the space becomes available and the IDNR were to pursue using the facility as a Chicagoland office, we would plan to consider the following possibilities at the location:

- Centralizing IDNR staff from a variety of different offices and divisions to provide a service center for the local communities.
- Developing a Lake Michigan Coastal Education Center open to the public.
- Maintaining beach and lake access for the public.
- Maintaining a public meeting space.
- Providing a "Coastal Science classroom" for regional schools.
- Lake and resource based concessions/rentals (e.g. kayaks, tours).
- Coastal and landscape restorations and opportunities for volunteering.
- Hands-on workshops and training on relevant resource issues (e.g. native gardens, stormwater management).

In addition to some of the specific ideas listed above, IDNR would like to have a public input process to help determine the needs and desires of the local community if IDNR were to consider relocating there.

We would be very interested in exploring ways the IDNR and the City of Evanston could develop a long-term partnership committed to maintaining and programming this historic facility if it becomes available. There are a number of repairs and upgrades that will be needed right away, in addition to

longer-term maintenance and upkeep issues. IDNR would also need to assess the costs for customizing the space to meet our needs. We believe that a strong partnership with the City of Evanston will improve both our organizations abilities to manage the current and future needs and provide an excellent publicly accessible and beneficial resource for Evanston and surrounding communities. We look forward to continuing the dialogue.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Diane Tecic
Coastal Program Director
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
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