



Village of Biscayne Park Commission Agenda Report

Village Commission Meeting Date: October 6, 2015

Subject: New Log Cabin Dais Proposal:
Residents Build it for Cost (Charlie
Easton, designer and project manager)

Prepared By: Commissioner Barbara Watts

Sponsored By: Commission

Background

The Commission has not yet seen the new designs with price estimates it requested be proffered by McKenzie Construction; nonetheless, it might safely assume that the dais, even if a modified version of the original one, will still be a substantive expenditure, probably in the \$18,000-\$20,000 range, if not much more; if the Commission chooses to go with the original design (sans “chinking”) but make it moveable, the price still would be well over \$20,000, and with other choices, over \$ 25,000. Whichever way it goes, the Commission will be spending an enormous amount of residents’ tax dollars—dollars that could be used for additional employees at the Rec. Center and in Code Enforcement; for enhanced, aesthetic lighting at the Ed Burke Park that would improve evening walking conditions and that could mitigate some safety concerns (something that might benefit a much larger number of residents than would a dais); or put into the Village’s Reserve Fund (which to my mind, needs bolstering).

As the Commission has not yet come to a clear consensus about what it wants, and the design of the dais still is not set, I would like the Commission to consider another dais proposal from a long-time resident, Charlie Easton (116th Street), who has offered (with the help of a few other skilled and experienced wood workers/ carpenters and a few other volunteers), **to build the dais without charge except for the cost of the materials** (and, perhaps, procurement of them—to be explained below)—thus, with **no labor charge whatsoever** (which is the bulk of the cost of any such commission).

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Charlie is an artist/woodworker who designs and builds furniture, cabinets and the like. When discussing the matter of the dais with him, he thoughtfully commented, “The Log Cabin was built by the residents of the Village; the dais should also be built by the residents.” Indeed, this would be fitting, and appropriate and in continue a tradition (our podium, with the Log Cabin city emblem affixed to it, also was built by a resident some 30-40 or so years ago).

People often say heartfelt things but fail to follow through. Not the case with Charlie. He and I have discussed the matter (a week’s time delay a week because of my FIUwork/health/BP commitments). When talking, Charlie brought up all sorts of things that the Commission has not yet thoughtfully/fully considered, such as the dais’s height, and the possibility of making it slightly curved so that Commissioners could more easily see one another from one end of the dais to the other; the various ways in which end tables could be made so as to adjoin the dais and, if desired, stand alone; having the end tables be slightly shorter than the dais, which might be slightly raised so as to enhance sightlines between Commissioners and residents (and how this could be accommodated with chair heights and/or riser); how the front of the dais would be designed to conceal its wheels . . . My many objections, prompted by fear of costs (given the McKenzie charges for changes such as making the dais portable), were met with, “of course, that can be done [and economically],” without a blink of the eye. If designed from the start rather than in retrospect, many things are possible; and, if the labor is *gratis*, the cost will not rise to the amount of \$20,000 (+ ?) dollars.

We also discussed materials—which the commission has not really addressed except to say that a laminate surface on the top would be preferable. I cannot find mention of the kind(s) of wood to be used in the estimates we have received, so haven’t a clue as to what kind of wood will be used. I won’t conjecture—but that is something that we need to know, in detail.

Charlie likes to work with mahogany—understandable, as it is beautiful. During the meanderings of our discussion, we came upon another possibility—one that would be utterly and especially suitable for Biscayne Park—**incorporate some of our own history by using the natural materials that the Park itself can provide: the wood from our “Australian Pines”** (one, two or more of which soon will have to be felled). These trees may be on the invasive list, but their wood is beautiful. One large slab or two joined together or a mosaic of pieces sliced from a burl could result in a one of a kind, beautiful dais top, one that is rustic and thus in accord with the Cabin, but also one that is modern, in accord with the era in which it the dais was constructed (for the use of wood slabs in furniture look at the work of George Nakashima (www.nakashimawoodworker.com)).

This area was originally rock Pineland. Granted, our “Aussies” are not really pine trees, but they are part of our history; let us consider making them permanently and noninvasively a part of it, by using their wood for our dais. When they all are gone, future generations will remember them because of BP’s unique, artful and beautiful dais, built by its residents, as was the Log Cabin and Podium—visual assertions of what has been and what should continue to be community ethos of the Village of Biscayne Park’s residents. We may have to wait a while for the planks felled from our “Aussies” to dry—but what the hurry? We’d be making something special and unique for our Village.

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I acknowledge that the Commission gave the contract for the Log Cabin's restoration to McKenzie Construction, to my knowledge, an estimable firm and, as well, its President, a BP resident and very nice man. However, this does not mean that a change order cannot be made (legally possible), especially when we have an offer from a qualified resident (and other residents, similarly skilled, and volunteers) to do the work for cost.

I spoke with my brother, Larry, about this, who, later, sent an email, a phrase from which I quote (as he said it succinctly): **"economics, aesthetics and ecology clearly point the way** so what's the point [of not seriously considering/accepting this proposal]?"

As I mentioned at a previous Commission meeting and in an email to some residents, I thought that on the matter of the dais, we should take heed of the classical adage, *Festina Lente* ("Make Haste Slowly"—my short explanation: make progress, but only with appropriate deliberation, for acting solely "in haste" one risks making major mistakes). I encourage the Mayor and Commission to keep *Festina Lente* in mind when considering the dais issue yet again and, this new proposal, which is one made with deliberation, one which will greatly reduce the amount of tax dollars expended on it, and one which may well bring the Village renown for a host of reasons.

Fiscal / Budget Impact

Cost: Approximately \$5,000 or so for materials (depending on what Commission decides; perhaps more (or less?) for using our Australian Pine—will try to find prices before Comm. Meeting). **Savings:** Approx. \$15,000-23,000.

Recommendation

Decide to accept proposal by Charlie Easton through Barbara Watts that the Log Cabin's dais be built by residents under Charlie Easton's direction, with further consultation regarding design and materials based on discussion of his proposed designs and alternatives.

Attachments

Examples of Charlie Easton's work and some rough sketches of possible designs for dais. To be attached. Rendering and more detailed designs to be presented at meeting.

(Maria, I'll forward Charlie's emails with image files to you shortly after I send this Agenda item item; I know that my home computer has not the capacity to send Charlie's emailed materials in attachments in this document.

Maria Camara

From: Barbara Watts <watts720@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2015 3:12 AM
To: Heidi Siegel; Maria Camara; Archives; Barbara Watts; Susan Weiss
Subject: Emergency/Last Minute Agenda Item Addition
Attachments: Agenda Item Request2015DAIS.docx..doc

Please add to October Comm. agenda. This is a very serious proposal that should be considered. It deserves more time than the three minutes allowed in "Good and Welfare."

It need only the additions of the files that I will shortly forward as "Back-up" Information.

Nothing else needs to be added and nothing needs to be retyped. If I've typos and/or grammatical errors in what I've sent--I can live with them even if they go into the "public record." - So, this should not take all that time to add to the Oct. agenda.

I could not have mentioned this as a potential agenda item a month ago and do not think that this should be a reason for its exclusion from the Oct. agenda.

Hope that we can "stop the negativity" and realize that disagreeing in part of democracy and that we all want (I hope) the best for BP, now, and in the future.

off the high horse and w/ hurting arms.

best, b.

p.s. will be home in a.m. (Mon.) if you need to reach me.













