Tuesday, April 29, 14

Lane County Commissioners

RE: Land swap study with the City of Eugene for the Courthouse

I came to speak with you about the history of Lane County and how this subject is very important for today’s meeting. The discussion is the moving of the courthouse to High Street and the intent and responsibility for the “Courthouse Square” which we call the “park blocks” a term borrowed from Portland. It is the Lane County Courthouse Square, like all seats of county governments we were given a county square as the symbol of the seat of Lane County’s Government.
This is a major problem. The history of the “Lane County Courthouse Square” land donation was the inducement for Eugene to become the seat of Lane County. The Square is a part of the intended complex. Having the Courthouse off the square and on High St. is a violation of the intent and the history of Lane County.
This is a divisive ploy by the City to support the tearing down of the existing Eugene City Hall which is a significant Architectural Historic piece. The proposed replacement City Hall is so small that for the next 20-40 years it will sit on a large, one full block of on grade parking. Enticing Lane County to build their new, unfunded and maybe never funded Courthouse on the High St. Portion of the site will allow the City to avoid their own ordinance and make Lane County responsible for this large parking lot until a Courthouse is built. Then for the City to hide behind the Farmer’s Market as the Honey to sell this idea is a serious mistake.
Experience says that often political planning is often not by physical planning.
I believe a consultant’s physical planning study could prove that the outdoor seasonal and expanded farmer’s market or open space and an indoor farmer’s market built along the W. Park St side of the site plus the Courthouse expansion could all be accommodated on the “butterfly portion” of the Courthouse Square.
The architect for the “butterfly structure” told me that the site was noted in the land donation that the site was to be maintained as open space. It was concluded, at that time, that the low structure could be defined as open space. Clearly the donation was for County Government’s use and open space. Swapping land with the City cannot be within that intent?
The new Lane County Courthouse built on the “butterfly site” could then still be connected with the 1960’s courthouse converted for other Lane county uses, Harris Hall, the PSB, the tunnel with parking to the North parking structure (which is structured for 4 more floors) and the existing Sally Port. It would contribute to the “County Complex”.

When my firm designed the PSB the wing that runs North and South, parallel to the existing courthouse it was structured for 2 more floors to accommodate a future court
expansion. The floors between the buildings are lined up and could easily be connect.

This is an important decision before the commissioner’s. It appears innocent but has major consequences to Lane County’s History, the Community’s history and the remaining community history of our culture and the build environment.

Lane County’s Courthouse on High St. 1 1/2 blocks from Lane County Square is a very serious mistake and nothing in this “swap” would benefit the County it only relieves the City of the current mistake it has made in it’s direction for the new City Hall.

I urge you not to spend any more time on this matter.

Otto P. Poticha FAIA, NCARB
PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY
Lane County & City of Eugene
"By 1928, the market was hopelessly overcrowded; with 80 stalls available, 90 to 115 producers were on hand every day the market was open."

- Market Days
against all Claims and
In Witness whereof we
Mary Skinner his wife ha
ve hereunto set our hands a
and date above written.

C.E. Skinner
Mary Skinner
NEXT STEPS

- Presentation to Council & Commissioners
- Develop proposed process, timeline, deal points
- Joint Public Hearing on concept
"We have been trying for a long time to break down old barriers and show that we are true friends of the people who live in the country around Eugene. A public market will cement the city and county together and, for both, will prove a good business proposition."

- Ray Goodrich, 1915