Civic center directors okay altered concept

By JACK GEIT
Journal Staff Writer

Directors of the Rapid City Civic Center Plaza Corp. voted unanimously Monday to approve a somewhat altered design concept for the $16 million arena and convention center complex.

While they agreed with an architectural proposal to place the three-domed complexes on a north-south line rather than an east-west line, they ordered designer Wallace Sorensen to return to his drawing board to explore the possibility of providing four additional meeting rooms.

The extra meeting rooms are expected to cost another $100,000 or more.

Sorensen told the directors and members of the Rapid City Commission that the original design "was too much on the flood plain, and moving the complex north while retaining the east-west placement would reduce the parking capacity by 2,100 vehicles."

"Fitting" the complexes by 10 degrees, he said, would eliminate the flood plain encroachment and provide parking space for 3,106 vehicles.

As now designed, the complex will be too large for the area's existing convention market on the south end and a 10,500-seat sports arena on the north end. The two complexes will be separated by a convention facility in which seven meeting rooms and a banquet room totaling 8,500 square feet, 240 persons will branch off a 100-foot column.

Sorensen said six of the meeting rooms will total 75 to 80 persons while the seventh has been designed to accommodate up to 275 convention participants.

His figures bothered several directors, and he was asked if more meeting rooms could be incorporated into the design.

"Yes, if you spend more money," he said. "There is space for extra rooms, but it's a matter of dollars and cents."

He said the rooms could be added most easily on the west side of the convention facility, possibly at the expense of a small number of parking spaces. But building costs, he pointed out, are currently reflected in $167 per square foot.

SORENSON said the placement of the arena on the west side of the structure and restrooms in the sports arena on both the north and west sides. Rooms are designed to allow for disposal "in all directions."

Earlier at Monday's luncheon meeting, directors heard the Rapid City Area Chamber of Commerce push for $10,000 to supplement current funding for the operation of the Convention-Venues Bureau and $5,000 to pay for a new five-year promotional program and information brochure.

Convention-Venues Bureau Chairman Nick Dalley said promotional responsibilities for the civic center complex "would be a natural for us."

He said, "We recognize . . . that it's important to have an excellent million dollar facility will not increase that will be clamoring to come to Rapid City. If it is, we should accept it."

Promotional activities must start immediately, he said, because major conventions are scheduled for three years in the fall.

The vice president and event director for the South Dakota Convention and Visitors Bureau said about 100,000 of money will be spent in 1978 to promote the city.

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