

Civic center revisions approved

By BOB FELL
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The Civic Center Plaza Corp. board of directors finally approved the concept of the revised plans for the civic center complex Friday but not before nearly two hours of argument over the number of meeting rooms and the location of some on a second level.

The architects, Craig Associates of Rapid City and The Spitznagel Partners of Sioux Falls, had been instructed at the last meeting to add four more meeting rooms to the six in the preliminary plans. The board also sent the architects back to the drawing board to include space to house the Chamber of Commerce and Convention-Visitors Bureau.

To accommodate the chamber and add the four meeting rooms, they had to put about eight meeting rooms on a second level above the administrative area and exhibit-dining hall. While the second level concept added about \$100,000 to the cost, the architects commented it did give the opportunity for a more attractive interior design.

The board spent little time discussing the sports arena or auditorium, centering its debate on the exhibit hall, administrative area and concourse connecting the two structures.

Wally Steele of The Spitznagel Partners explained the architects elected to place some of the meeting rooms on the second level because they did not want to block expansion of the exhibit hall-dining area to the east. With the administrative area on the west and all 10 meeting rooms on the east, the exhibit hall could not be expanded, he said.

The board was split 5-1 on the concept with Dr. Larry Lytle stating he did not object to the two-level concept but to the added cost. Mort Wilkins, Bill Abernathy, Pat Tracy, Ron Campbell and Robert Apa generally approved the concept but also had some reservations about the cost.

Wilkins said the plan presented would be outstanding for a city the size of Rapid City or, for even a larger city like Omaha. But, he said, he would like a "safety valve" in case the bids came in too high. He suggested postponing, or bidding separately, on the exhibit hall until it was pointed out it is planned to double as a banquet hall.

Marv Peterson of The Spitznagel Partners said it would be possible to "slice off six feet at a time" to bring costs down. Wilkins pointed out, however, that every time the board sent the architects back to the drawing board it meant another month delay and delay is costing money because of inflation.

Apa said the board is going to have to "accept what the architects are telling us so they can go ahead with final plans."

There was some argument over the need for 10 or 11 small meeting rooms, but Mayor Don Barnett, board president, said he feels that number gives the flexibility needed as a selling point to attract conventions.

plan to attract conventions.

Tracy noted that most conventions are held between May and September, while school is not in session. It is possible, he said, that some convention meetings could be held in the new Central High auditorium and meeting rooms.

The space for the chamber offices, which will include space for the Convention-Visitors Bureau and an office for Western South Dakota Development Co., also came in for some discussion. It was the first time chamber officials had seen the plans.

Estimated cost to the chamber for about 7,000 square feet of space would come to about \$262,000 but Bob Barbour, chamber president, said the chamber could not afford another \$100,000 on top of that because of the added cost for the second level meeting rooms.

Other estimated costs at today's prices with an inflationary factor built in are \$4.3 million for the sports arena; \$2.97 million for the auditorium; \$1.85 million for the exhibit hall, convention area, concourse and administrative offices; and \$940,000 for a joint-use energy plant, including heating-cooling nets out at about \$9.6 million after deducting the chamber office costs and the school's share of the energy plant.

The school would share in the cost of the energy plant at an estimated \$425,000.

The total price tag for the civic center complex and energy plant comes to more than \$10.3 million but out at about \$9.6 million after deducting the chamber office costs and the school's share of the energy plant.

The sports arena, which is in the working drawing stage, will seat 10,500 including 5,300 moveable bleachers and the theater is being designed to seat 1,750. The exhibit hall will have about 15,500 square feet of open space and could accommodate about 1,300 at a banquet.

With the approval of the plan as presented, the motion also included instruction for the chamber officials to meet with the architects over the weekend to finalize and approve plans for the chamber offices.