

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE SOLDIERS HOME
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL
Wednesday, August 31, 5:30 - 7:30 PM
MEETING HELD AT COMMUNITY ROOM, OLD MAIN**

Meeting Materials:

[Presentation Deck](#)

[Agenda](#)

[Consensus Report](#)

[Chapel, Theater & Governor's Mansion Restoration Feasibility Report](#)

ATTENDEES:

FIRST	LAST	ORGANIZATION / COMPANY
George	Banda	Veterans Community Relations Team
Daniel	Bauman	Office of City of Milwaukee Mayor
Jon	Beck	The Alexander Company
Peter	Burgelis	Milwaukee County Board
Tim	Carpenter	State Senator
Melissa	Cook	Retired, Hank Aaron State Trail
Mark	Curran	Mueller Communications
Jeremy	Ebersole	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Alex	Eginton	WI-SHPO
Robert	Hansen	Office of Congresswoman Gwen Moore
Carlen	Hatala	Milwaukee Historic Preservation staff / Story Hill Neighborhood Resident
Ariel	Hemke	Northwestern Mutual
Howard	Hinterthuer	Vietnam Veteran
Jayne	Holland	UWM Military and Veterans Resource Center
Elizabeth	Hummitzsch	Mueller Communications
Kathy	Kean	Historic Milwaukee, Inc.
James	Madlom	Mueller Communications
Mike	Malloy	Veterans Community Relations Team
Dr. Michael	McBride	Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center
Dawn	McCarthy	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Nick	Migan	Allume Architects
Daina	Penkiunas	Wisconsin Historical Society
Andrew	Stern	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Paul	Truess	Office of Senator Ron Johnson
David	Uihlein	
Peter	Zanghi	Milwaukee Preservation Alliance
Claire	Zellner	Veterans Community Relations Team

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I. Welcome and Introductions

Jeremy Ebersole, Milwaukee Preservation Alliance

- Jeremy Ebersole, Executive Director of the Milwaukee Preservation Alliance, welcomed attendees and thanked CAC members for their dedication to the Soldiers Home and the progress that has been accomplished to-date. He expressed excitement to continue to work with the group moving forward.
- He outlined the goals for the meeting: (1) update the group on where we are, (2) hear from CAC members about their reuse ideas for the Chapel, Theater and Governor’s Mansion and (3) what they’re hearing in the community. Jeremy shared that this feedback will be used to align the consensus report with current needs in order to inform decision making about the future of the buildings.

II. Chapel, Theater, Governor’s Mansion Update

Jeremy Ebersole, Nick Migan, Daina Penkiunas and Mike Mullen provided an update on the ongoing RFP process for the rehabilitation of the Soldiers Home chapel, theater and governor’s mansion.

- Jeremy highlighted the major success of the restoration of Old Main and 5 other buildings into housing for homeless and at-risk veterans.
- He shared that the project received numerous awards including the highest preservation awards from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Wisconsin Historical Society, and is being held up nationally as a model for public-private partnership, preservation, and veteran care.
- The new goal is to leverage this success and the addition of many new residents to the site to bring similar results to the Chapel, Theater and Governor’s Mansion.
- Jeremy explained that in recent months, the Milwaukee Preservation Alliance commissioned a study to determine the feasibility of rehabilitation projects for the Chapel, Theater and Governor’s Mansion.
 - The goal of the feasibility study was to determine financial feasibility of rehabilitating and potential reuses for these vacant buildings, with the ultimate goal of leveraging the study as part of the VA’s anticipated future release of an RFP for these buildings.
 - Jeremy shared the key finding of the report: that the rehabilitation of the Chapel, Theater and Governor’s mansion *is* feasible.
 - The restoration is financially feasible because of the availability of a capital mix of federal historic tax credits, state historic tax credits, new market tax credits, construction/permanent loan, deferred development fee, Save America’s Treasures grants, capital from the WI Economic Development Corporation and a private fundraising campaign.
- Jeremy shared that the path forward for these vacant buildings can be either the issuance of an RFP from the VA to seek a qualified developer or entry into a sole source agreement with a qualified developer.

- Jeremy shared high-level details about each of the vacant buildings:
 - The Governor's Mansion is in need of the smallest amount of rehabilitation out of the three buildings. It's been vacant for only a few years.
 - It would require \$2.6M to restore
 - Potential reuses may include housing or offices
 - The Ward Theater's exterior has already been restored. Its interior is protected from the elements.
 - It would require \$10.8M to restore
 - Potential reuses may include event space, conference center, or performing arts venue
 - The Chapel is in the most desperate need of rehabilitation.
 - It would require \$7.2M to restore
 - Potential reuses may include event venue, conference center or performing arts venue or gym / fitness facility
 - Mike Mullen of the VA reiterated the VA's support of reusing the vacant buildings.
- Daina Penkiunas of the Wisconsin Historical Society walked CAC members through potential reuses that may be possible with the use of Historic Tax Credits, which protect the integrity of historic buildings. She indicated that some adaptations to the building - such as expansions for accessibility reasons - would be permitted.

III. Consensus Report Alignment

Elizabeth Hummitzsch of Mueller Communications led a discussion of unmet veteran needs and the potential for these needs to be met through the reuse of vacant Soldiers Home buildings, using the CAC's original consensus report as a guide to the conversation.

- The group discussed each section of the consensus report, noting the importance of leveraging the Soldiers Home buildings and grounds as a place of healing and transition into civilian life.
 - Additionally, many in attendance indicated the importance of the grounds providing a centralized space for veterans to receive services and support.
 - Many indicated they would like to see the District once again be its own fully functioning community, so that veterans living on the grounds didn't have to leave the District for day-to-day needs like groceries, etc.
- The majority of the group indicated they would like to see the theater reused as performance space.
- The majority of the group indicated they would be interested in a potential fitness facility as a reuse possibility for the Chapel; a cafe / coffee shop space was also discussed as a desirable reuse.
- The group discussed the potential for the Governor's Mansion to serve as a mental health resource space - so veterans can receive those services in a more calming environment than the hospital.
- As a next step, MPA will distribute a survey to request more detailed feedback. Leveraging this feedback, MPA will update the consensus report for CAC feedback and for future sharing with the VA.
- CAC member David Uihlein indicated his concern over the state of the Chapel, and the need for immediate stabilization. He committed to providing stabilization funds if the VA can find a way to accept funds for this purpose.

IV. EUL Rehabilitation Project Update

Jon Beck, The Alexander Company

- Jon Beck shared that the rehabilitated buildings (Old Main, Administration Building and duplex) are fully occupied and that there is a wait list.
- He emphasized the success of the project, the financial complexities of the project and the potential for the success of the project to inspire action on the remaining vacant buildings.

V. Wrap Up

Jeremy Ebersole

- Jeremy thanked members for attending, indicating that meeting minutes and a survey would be distributed in early September.

VI. Adjournment, Optional Tour

Jon Beck of The Alexander Company led CAC members on an optional tour of Old Main