

9.9.14 Planning & Economic Development Committee Attachment B

Update on the Skä·noñh – Great Law of Peace Center

Many people have asked us about the progress and status of OHA's development of the Skä·noñh – Great Law of Peace Center (the Center), our new Haudenosaunee heritage facility on Onondaga Lake Parkway in Liverpool. As you probably know, OHA assumed management of the site (previously known as "Sainte Marie Among the Iroquois" and often commonly referred to as the "French Fort") through a License Agreement with Onondaga County (the owner of the site) effective January 1, 2013 thanks to the commitment and encouragement of County Executive, Joanie Mahoney, and the unanimous support of the County Legislature. OHA named Dr. Philip Arnold (Syracuse University professor in the Departments of Religion and Native American Studies) as the Founding Director and Daniel Connors, of OHA, as the General Manager.

"Skä·noñh" (pronounced ska-no) is an Onondaga welcoming that means peace and wellness. The purpose of the Skä·noñh Center is to make use of an under-utilized county asset to fill a heritage tourism and educational void in our community regarding the fascinating and important Native American history of Onondaga County that has had a direct and monumentally influential impact on our American way of life. It will include permanent exhibits with interactive audio/visual technology, a temporary exhibit gallery, a retail store, and walking trails with interpretive signage.

Phase One (2013) of the Three Phase (2013-2015) project included many components, such as:

Academic Collaborative: As an educational institution, OHA wanted to ensure that the Center would provide an authentic Haudenosaunee perspective based on the oral history tradition. Dr. Arnold was instrumental in helping us create an academic collaborative consisting of the Onondaga Nation, OHA, Syracuse University, LeMoyne College, Onondaga Community College, State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and Empire State College. The collaborative, under the direction of Dr. Arnold, is charged with overseeing the content, narrative, and educational programming of the Center.

Conceptual Development: The Center will be the first of its kind to present the Haudenosaunee perspective of its own history and values through the oral history tradition of the Longhouse according to the Onondaga Nation, the spiritual and political center (known as the "Central Fire") of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, consisting of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca, Cayuga, and Tuscarora Nations. The Center will be an oral history experience for the visitor, as Haudenosaunee people tell their history and values as they have been expressed from generation to generation. Interpretation of Wampum Belts, the official Native American method of recording history, will play a large part in the documentary support of the narrative at the Center.

Thematic Development: The main themes presented in the permanent exhibits will begin with the concept of Skä·noñh – a welcoming message that introduces the visitor to the oral history tradition and the importance of language in maintaining a culture. The Creation story and the Thanksgiving Address will highlight the strong connection between the Haudenosaunee and the environment. The Center will explore the Great Law of Peace, which was established on the shores of Onondaga Lake creating the first representative democracy in the west and forming a major influence in the formation of our country and its governance. The Center will also present the Haudenosaunee perspective on European/Native American contact and colonialism with an emphasis on local contact represented by the recreated 17th century Jesuit Mission of Sainte Marie de Ganentaha. The permanent exhibits at the Center will end

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with a summary of the many ways in which the Haudenosaunee have contributed to, and influenced, our American way of life.

Facilities Assessment: As we are creating the Center within an existing building envelop, we needed to determine what parts of the facility could be used and what needed to be altered or changed in order to re-purpose the site for its new use. A general condition assessment of the facilities was also done.

Inventory: An inventory of all available collections for the new Center needed to be made including art, artifacts, documents, objects, photographs, and an inventory of current and potential retail products were compiled by Dan Connors.

3013 Events: Dr. Arnold established two primary events during Phase One to raise awareness about the Center and to engage the community; a Haudenosaunee Lacrosse and Cultural Festival, which drew thousands of people and an academic event of seminars and lectures that drew standing room only crowds for each session.

Development Plan, Time-line, and Business Plan: Dan Connors was responsible for defining the 3 Phases of the project, the schedule for each phase, and a Business Plan to create a sustainable operating agenda for the Center upon its completion.

Fundraising: We also needed to raise money to fund the planning phases (1 & 2) before determining a budget for Phase 3 (Construction and Implementation) of the project. Phases 1 and 2 have been completely funded, thanks to Onondaga County, the Onondaga Nation, New York State Council on the Arts (through the Regional Economic Development Council), Syracuse University – Departments of Religion and of the Humanities, and the Office of the Chancellor, LeMoyne College - Office of the President, Onondaga Community College – Office of the President, and many private donors too numerous to list here, along with in-kind support from a large group of volunteers.

OHA is now well into Phase 2 of the project, which includes the development of detailed content and narrative as well as the selection of collection items to be used to support the narrative. Native American consultant, Richard Hill, has been engaged to oversee these components, which are being reviewed and edited by the Academic Collaborative. Phase 2 also included our community-wide survey and many community input meetings that helped inform the design and content of the Center. Working drawings are also being developed during Phase 2 by architects, King & King, in collaboration with Exhibits And More, the Center's exhibit design firm. A budget for construction has been determined and, as of this writing, contractor bids are being reviewed. Planned events during 2014 are already scheduled and promise to be even more exciting and popular than last year's. Please check OHA's website and other updates for more information on the Wooden Stick Lacrosse Festival and the Center's 2014 academic symposium, "Indigenous Perspectives on Museums and Cultural Centers".

Phase 2 also includes raising money to construct and implement the designs formulated during the first 2 phases. Depending on the success of our fundraising efforts, we expect to begin the construction and implementation component (Phase 3) early in 2015 with an expected completion date of fall, 2015.