Meeting Date: Tuesday, September 23, 2014

Members in Attendance*: Barbara Albrecht, Rachel Belsky, Lynne Brown, Sewin Chan, Jeff Goodwin, Anne Hearn, Michael Hengerer, Angela Kamer, Alisan Leary, Kenny Lee, Larry Maslon, Allen Mincer, Julia O’Connor, Michael Patullo, Rosemary Scanlon, Eero Simoncelli, Heather Skolnick

Members Not in Attendance: Franklin Diaz, Beth Morningstar

*Executive Vice President Alison Leary and Senior Project Director Kenny Lee also attended. Louise Harpman, Clinical Associate Professor from the Gallatin School of Individualized Study, attended as an invited guest of the chair.

1. Comments from the Chair

Chair Larry Maslon thanked Committee members for their participation in the architect selection interviews. He urged the Committee to consider its role and involvement in the next steps in the process; he asked members to consider how this group is different from other groups in the architect selection process and to develop their own set of priorities. Given the wide array of constituencies represented by the Committee and its advisory capacity, Maslon offered that its approach should be as, “Advocates, in a collaborative spirit.”

While discussing the priorities of the SSAC, one member emphasized that this Committee provides an extension of the University Space Priorities Working Group. In addition, because of its broader role in promoting stewardship, one member suggested the Committee should be particularly aware of the responsibility of examining how the building process and eventual use of the Coles Redevelopment building will affect residents. Another member mentioned the importance of faculty input and suggested that, in order to fully understand and respond to their needs, the Committee might consider devising and implementing a consultative strategy in which constituents would have the opportunity to directly voice their opinions.

Regarding the selection of an architectural firm, it was agreed that the chosen firm must be open to hearing constituents’ opinions, while at the same time being able to skillfully present the tradeoffs and compromises that will undoubtedly arise during the design process.
2. **Discussion: Review and Evaluation of Architect Presentations**

The Committee discussed the merits of each of the five architectural firms that presented on September 15 and 17. Particular areas of discussion included:

- Trade-offs between programmatic requirements set forth by the USPWG and the ULURP-defined building massing envelope; also trade-offs between the USPWG programmatic and square footage recommendations with design excellence
- Ability to compare among firms, given varying degrees of design plans presented
- Architects’ treatment of public spaces and building entry points, with particular emphasis on how the performing arts venues might change the focus of the building
- Strategies for allowing natural light to penetrate deep into the building
- Interaction between the Coles Redevelopment building and the surrounding site, as well as the consideration of the community and contextual environment
- Ability of particular firms to interact effectively with various stakeholders

Maslon and Senior Project Director Kenny Lee urged the committee to remember that none of the designs presented were final, nor had they been tested for accuracy or feasibility. Instead, the Committee was urged to focus on their feelings about the ability of the firms to succeed in a long-term working relationship with NYU. Lee also asked the Committee to consider each firm’s responsibility to maintain a collaborative balance, as well as their ability to adhere to the project timeline and identify clear trade-offs for decision by NYU.

Members recognized that several firms provided more detailed presentations of the challenges and trade-offs associated with accommodating the programmatic requirements set forth in the USPWG final report than other firms. Given the inherent complexity, it was noted that there might be compelling reasons (e.g. high-quality design, light penetration, etc.) to deviate from the Working Group’s recommendations, which the Committee would be careful to consider and evaluate as the design process unfolds.

Members expressed that, while particular firms excelled in certain areas of plan and presentation, while others fell short in certain areas, when asked if there were firms that clearly deserved to be eliminated, there was no overwhelming consensus. When questioned further about a recommendation, the SSAC felt comfortable sending all five firms forward to the University Leadership group to make a further decision—with input from the project team and the conveyance of the issues raised by the Committee. The Committee requested that the final decision on a set of finalist firms be conveyed to them, along with a clear and detailed rationale to support the decision. [A confidential memo from Alison Leary was sent to the Committee on September 29.]
Maslon asked members of the Committee to send any additional thoughts or questions about the architect presentations via email, which would then be collated and conveyed on the Committee’s behalf, to the project and decision team.

[NB: The names of the architectural firms are not included in this summary, due to the sensitive and confidential nature of the selection process.]

3. Architect Selection Next Steps

Senior Vice President Lynne Brown indicated that, given the high quality of the presentations and that a clear decision has not emerged, there would be one more round of information gathering/evaluation. This would entail, she noted, reference checks and other due diligence, site visits, answers to follow-up questions about presentations, and another round of interaction with a subset of up to three finalists. A representative from the SSAC will be invited to represent the Committee on all of the site visits and the next phase of meetings with the finalist architectural firms.

The format of these additional meetings was still being finalized, Brown indicated, but a decision on the finalist firms would be reached soon so as to provide enough time for the finalist firms to prepare. She also offered that some part of the interaction would take place at each firm’s office, which could provide useful information about their working style, team dynamics, and past designs. The Committee agreed that this “interactive” next round would be a good approach.

4. Communications Update

[Due to time constraints, the communications update will be provided at the next meeting of the Committee on October 7.]