

Appendix H to the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Site of the Research Park

**Note: In this email, Robert Weygand's responses are in red and Peter Alfonso's responses are in blue CAPS.**

**From:** Robert Weygand [bobw@uri.edu]

**Sent:** Monday, April 27, 2009 2:10 PM

**To:** peteralfonso@uri.edu; swallow@uri.edu; 'Tom Frisbie-Fulton'; 'Celest Martin'

**Cc:** 'Robert Carothers'; 'Provost'; 'Ann Morrissey'

**Subject:** RE: Research Park questions

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**From:** Peter Alfonso [mailto:peteralfonso@uri.edu]

**Sent:** Friday, April 24, 2009 3:06 PM

**To:** swallow@uri.edu; 'Robert Weygand'; 'Tom Frisbie-Fulton'; 'Celest Martin'

**Cc:** 'Robert Carothers'; 'Provost'; 'Ann Morrissey'

**Subject:** RE: Research Park questions

Stephen AND Celest: My responses are in caps below.

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-----Original Message-----

**From:** Stephen Swallow [mailto:swallow@uri.edu]

**Sent:** Wednesday, April 22, 2009 6:21 PM

**To:** peteralfonso@uri.edu; 'Robert Weygand'; 'Tom Frisbie-Fulton'

**Subject:** Research Park questions

Peter, Bob, Tom:

Several committee members have asked that I pass on some comments/thoughts/questions.

I am not sure exactly how the committee will use your responses within the scope of our charge, but I hope you can provide information so some of the concerns (extraneous or substantive, as the case may be) might be mitigated.

- (1) Peter seemed to indicate that the 2007 consultant had interviewed 30 faculty in developing the research park plan. The committee had hoped to receive whatever material is available from those interviews. Please send what you have.

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT I AM THE ONE WHO SAID THE ABOVE. THE CONSULTANT WAS COMMISSIONED BEFORE MY ARRIVAL. ALTHOUGH THE NUMBER 30 SOUNDS FAMILIAR TO ME I SUSPECT THAT EITHER BOB OR TOM MAY BE THE SOURCE.

- (2) We have found conflicting information on the substance of the Master Plan or other site plans for the North Campus (or vicinity). Can one of you give us the specific link or report that most reliably defines proposed sites for North Campus

academic or non-academic buildings, sizes, and, especially, projected time-frames for actual construction or consideration of next planning steps.

The land holdings north of Flagg Road known as the Tibbits Farm was acquired after the 2002 Master Plan was completed. The William McDonough Master Plan of 2002 can be found at <http://www.uri.edu/pspd/planserv/masterplan/kingston/TreeFrame.htm> This plan proposed the build out of academic buildings in the North Campus. The plan stated no timetable for the academic buildings rather it was a guide for building development when funds were available for the construction of these buildings.

- (3) For item (2) one (small?) area of concern is where the Chemistry (Chem/Physics?) and Nursing buildings might be placed. How firm are the plans?

We are currently out with an RFP for the design of these buildings. We will use the 2002 Master Plan as our guide but there has been no design decision as of this date for the placement of these buildings. The chemistry Building will come first. The program for Chemistry has grown from earlier suggestions but the funds available may reduce the scope of the building that can be built. It is just too early to tell where we will finally arrive on the design.

- (4) Bob's earlier email about the financial model for academic and non-academic financing (various bonds) did not seem to argue for or against a site(s) north or south of Flagg Road. Is that correct – that the financial model does not affect the choice of locations? Issues of transitioning buildings from private use back to public (academic) use, partially or wholly, are not affected by location, correct?

The siting does not have an impact on the use. The manner of financing does have an impact on the degree of private use of a public building.

- (5) There are questions regarding the risk about the success of a research park. Proximity is put forward by many credible sources as critical. Yet the issue cuts in several directions.
- a. Why isn't the first selling point of URI the existence of URI faculty who create attractive prospects for collaboration, or actually generate the seminal ideas for start-up businesses?

I ARGUED MORE THAN ONCE THAT THE QUALITY OF OUR RESEARCH IS CRITICAL BUT IN ITSELF IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO SUSTAIN R&T PARK. I HAVE REFERRED TO THIS PREVIOUSLY AND ARGUED THAT PARTICULARLY WITH THE STRATEGIC ADJUSTMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE IN PAST TWO YEARS NOW IN PLACE THAT OUR RESEARCH PROGRAMS ARE FLOURISHING. FOR EXAMPLE, GRANT AND CONTRACT AWARDS FOR FY09 ARE AT RECORD LEVELS. WITH SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH PROGRAMS THAT ARE ATTRACTIVE TO THE MARKET IN PLACE, WE'RE READY TO FOCUS ON R&T PARK.

- b. Aren't these faculty already here, such that a quarter to half mile distance is "close" and it's walk-able or proximity is "easily" mitigated with a shuttle? For example, we received comment from a pharmacy Assistant Professor who currently runs a small business in Connecticut; enabling that business to move to the intersection of Plains and Flagg Road would beat Connecticut.

THE R&T PARK IS A BUSINESS PROPOSITION. WHILE WE HAVE SUFFICIENT EXCELLENCE IN SCHOLARSHIP, FOR EXAMPLE, SO DO OTHER RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS AND THEIR R&T PARKS. WHILE WE ARE GOOD WE ARE NOT A TIER 1 RESEARCH INSTITUTION AND THUS NEED TO MAXIMIZE OUR POTENTIAL TO ATTRACT BUSINESS PARTNERS FOR THEIR BENEFIT AND FOR OURS. A CRITICAL COMPONENT IN MAXIMIZING OUR POTENTIAL IS TO BEST LEVERAGE THE NEW RESEARCH FACILITIES IN THE NORTH CAMPUS SUCH AS CBLS AND PHARMACY BY IMMEDIATE PROXIMITY. THE FIRST BUILDING IN THE R&T PARK COULD ALSO LEVERAGE AND THUS BEST SERVE CBLS AND PHARMACY. THUS A BIG ISSUE FOR US IS TO MAXIMIZE OUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.

- c. I think the committee clearly hears the concern about corporate symbols and a park identity, but if the park must first spring from the faculty/student intellectual resources, some on the committee see proximity as feasibly mitigated in order to save an asset for other research and teaching that also contributes to URI's reputation and has a proven presence at URI.

#### NEITHER PROXIMITY NOR URI RESEARCH EXCELLENCE ALONE WILL SUFFICE

- d. Some committee members are looking for "stronger evidence" about the number of faculty who are planning collaborations through a research park. We have primarily heard from a few members of Pharmacy, and some committee members are therefore thinking that an initial building on the south side of Flagg Road could be even closer to Pharmacy and allow the collaboration concept a chance to prove itself.

I WAS ASKED BY STEPHEN AND CELEST TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE PROXIMITY ISSUE AND NOT A LIST OF FACULTY WHO WOULD USE THE FACILITY. THUS, I PROVIDED STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FROM SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR WHO IS A KEY PLAYERS IN MARYLAND (THAT IS GERMANE TO OUR DISCUSSION AT LAST MEETING), FROM THE MANAGER OF A BUSINESS IN NC R&T PARK LOOKING TO MOVE NORTH, FROM A NATIONAL DESIGN AND BUILD CONSTRUCTION COMPANY INVOLVED IN CONSTRUCTION OF MANY R&T PARKS AROUND THE COUNTRY, AND FROM A VP RESEARCH WHO WON THE ANNUAL AWARD OF THE ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH PARKS. IDENTIFICATION OF COMMITTED FACULTY IS A FUNCTION OF THE PARK'S CORPORATE PARTNERS. FOR EXAMPLE, IF WE HAVE LIFE SCIENCE FOCUS WE WOULD NOT EXPECT MANY ENGINEERING FACULTY TO BE INVOLVED UNTIL WE HAD ENGINEERING CORPORATE PRESENCE IN THE PARK. WE CAN ONLY ASSUME AT THIS POINT THAT OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS WOULD INCLUDE AREAS SUCH AS BIO-TECH, PHARMA, ENGINEERING PARTICULARLY RELATED TO DEFENSE AND HOMELAND SECURITY. I MADE ONE CALL TO PHARMACY AND ONE TO ENGINEERING AND DID NOT SEEK TO PROVIDE YOU WITH A LONG LIST OF LETTERS FROM FACULTY. THIS IS ABOUT CREATNG A SPACE FOR OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS FROM SELECT MARKETS THAT REPRESENT OUR SIGNATURE AND EMERGING RESEARCH PROGRAMS TO BECOME FULLY ENGAGE WITH APPROPRIATE FACULTY FOR THE BENEFIT OF BOTH.

- e. Several committee members have had URI and non-URI people discuss with them, individually, whether the stated imperative of walking-distance proximity is, in fact, an indication that the risk at URI is so high that there are more fundamental problems with a research park. Some committee members come back to (5a) above: Aren't we necessarily selling our intellectual resources first?

RESPONSES TO 5A AND 5B APPLY HERE. IN ADDITION, WHILE THERE IS ALWAYS BUSINESS RISK INVOLVED I WOULD NOT ADVISE CONSTRUCTION UNTL WE HAD IDENTIFIED SUFFICIENT RENTAL INCOME AND PERHAPS OTHER REVENUE STREAMS TO MEET THE DEBT SERVICE. I HAVE NEVER CONSIDERED THAT THIS WOULD BE A STATE FUNDED PROJECT BY RATHER MANAGED BY THE URI RESEARCH FOUNDATION. THUS, THIS IS NOT A "BUILD IT FIRST AND THEN EXPECT PEOPLE TO COME" INITIATIVE.

- (6) Is there any other compromise that can be offered, using land other than NW-1 (century-old upland forest)?
  - a. Even ecologists other than Frank and Keith are saying that taking 11 acres of NW-1 is equivalent to taking it all; some of those other ecologists have suggested sites that infringe on other areas of the north woods, but leave the NW-1 area alone and well-buffered. Some of those suggestions would imply issues with DEM wetland regulations, but some would not. Obviously all would alter the proximity of a park, but some sites would support the cohesiveness of a park identity that is also desirable. Some faculty are making the case that the proposed compromise of 11 acres cannot be viewed as a viable compromise due to the special demands for landscape-level science that NW-1 supports.

b. Thus – what other compromise might your team offer?

I AM VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THIS REQUEST. AS YOU KNOW, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS OFFERED TWO SIGNIFICANT COMPROMISES AND THE OPPOSING VIEW HAS NOT BUDGED. ONE REASON THAT GREAT UNIVERSITIES ARE INDEED GREAT IS DUE TO THEIR HISTORY OF FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION COOPERATIVE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT. IT'S DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITHOUT MUTUAL COMPROMISE, NOT ONLY FOR THE R&T PARK INITIATIVE BUT FOR WHATEVER ELSE MIGHT COME OUR WAY.

FOR EXAMPLE, I WOULD THINK THAT CREATING AN ECOLOGICAL BUFFER AROUND 11 ACRES IN ORDER TO PROTECT 150 ACRES IS WORTH CONSIDERATION AND FIGURING OUT.

I BELIEVE DR. RUDNIC POSSES THE MOST CRITICAL QUESTION IN HIS EMAILS TO STEPHEN. THAT IS, WHAT ARE THE LONG TERM NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES TO THE UNIVERSITY, THAT IS, ALL OF ITS FACULTY AND STUDENTS, OF NOT HAVING EITHER 1) R&T PARK, OR 2) WHAT IS NOW CALLED THE NORTH WOODS. AND, WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO MANAGE EITHER ONE IN SOME WAY IF IT WAS NOT SUPPORTED. IT'S WORTH READING AGAIN.

IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT BEST SERVING THE INSTITUTION. BOTTOM LINE FOR ME THAT URI WOULD BE BEST SERVED BY HAVING BOTH.

I had hoped to make this message briefer. I hope this fairly shares the conversation with you. I appreciate your patience and response(s), as does the committee.

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