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## Architects chosen for Cornelius Arts Center

Carrie C. Causey Oct 5, 2017

CORNELIUS – Malcolm Holzman said he will never be able to design a building in his hometown of New York City that will have anything like the prospective impact the Cornelius Arts Center can bring to this area for decades to come.

Before jetting off to receive an award across the country, Holzman accepted the chance for his company, Holzman Moss Bottino Architecture, to work with Charlotte-based C Design to design and develop the new Cornelius Arts Center.

“My view of your project is it will do something quite spectacular for your community,” Holzman told town commissioners during their Oct. 2 meeting where they approved the Pre-Design Architectural Services Agreement. “In my own town, I’ll never get to make a building like this. I could never imagine the same impact. ... I know the project is significant to this community.”

C Design and Holzman Moss Bottino Architecture were chosen after a detailed search narrowed the options down to 12 applicants from local and national architect firms. C Design, led by Rob Crane who also attended the Oct. 2 meeting, will be the architect-of-record for the center.

Choosing the architectural firms to spearhead the project is another in a list of accomplishments toward making a new Cornelius Arts Center come to fruition.

An initial task force grew into a nonprofit with a board of directors, according to Cornelius Mayor Chuck Travis. Justin Dionne was also hired earlier this year as executive director for the center.

The Cornelius Arts Center will be located in downtown near the police station where the mill currently stands. The 1.85 acres was purchased by the town, which will have an owner and manager business model with the center.

It is aimed at being a nonprofit arts facility used for education and entertainment. It will be funded in part by a \$4 million bond approved by Cornelius voters in 2013 for downtown redevelopment projects, though planners are in the process of getting grants and other fundraising mechanisms.

Greg Wessling, chairman of the Art Center board of directors, said choosing the firms was a milestone for the group, calling the project about people, about community and about everyone in the greater Lake Norman region.

Unlike other projects where finding the lowest price is the goal, finding the right firm was based on qualifications, Travis said.

“Out of the request for qualifications were four incredible firms,” he said. “We could have selected any of them. We chose an architectural team of leading firms to get us where we want to go.”

Holzman Moss Bottino Architecture has designed nearly 300 cultural, civic and academic facilities in towns and cities throughout the United States. Among the local venues are parts of Spirit Square, including ImaginOn: The Joe and Joan Martin center in uptown charlotte. He is a member of the “Interior Design” Magazine Hall of Fame and the American Institute of Architects’ College of Fellows.

Marley P. Carroll, who is part of C Design, is also a fellow of the American Institute of Architects. The firm's most recent work includes expansion and upgrades to the Charlotte Douglas International Airport. It also won honorary design awards for work at YMCA Camp Thunderbird's Duke Energy Pavilion and the Piedmont Natural Gas Rockingham Resource Center.

"One of the things we wanted to make this project about is community," Crane said, adding they want to focus on an economical design.

Holzman said he wants to make sure every bit of the building can be used. Though planning is still in its early stages, among the ideas are a flexible space theater, ceramics studio, gallery space, classrooms, a digital lab, food services, gift shop, community or special-events room and an outdoor plaza suitable for performance events.

Because he wants to customize it for the area, Holzman wasn't able to answer Commissioner Dave Gilroy's question about what other place Holzman has designed that would be similar.

Now that they've been chosen, the firms plan to start a 90-day work period with workshops to meet with individuals and workgroups as well as to look at the site to come up with a formal design of what the Center could look like and how much it will cost.

"We don't have all of the answers yet," Mayor Pro Tem Woody Washam said. "We have a lot of input to get from our citizens. We need to define what it's all about and what we're looking for – a truly Cornelius and Lake Norman regional-type facility. That's the expectation it has to be."

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