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Selectmen Say 'Let's See'

Spare The Chrysler Proposal

In one of those rare moments when everyone in a room is captivated by an idea, Josephine Del Deo received selectmen approval to search any means to acquire the former Chrysler Museum for the Town of Provincetown.

Del Deo, lauding the building for its architecture and as a bulwark against commercialism in that area of town, told the selectmen Monday night of the Provincetown Historical Association's plan for a multipurpose museum in the building that first housed the Center Methodist Church.

"What I'm asking you to do is save that part of town," Del Deo said. She underscored her point with a reference to the Lancey House, whose architecture has been destroyed by the addition of three shops to its Commercial Street frontage. "If you let that building (the Chrysler) slide, you are letting the whole town slide," she said.

The suggested plan calls for leasing of the building for the Provincetown Library during the library's two-year renovation, and creating a multipurpose museum with the collection of the Provincetown Art Association, the Group Gallery's exhibitions, historic collections drawn from the fishing industry and the firemen's association, and a center for the PHA.

The selectmen, entirely taken with the idea, voted unanimously to have immediate acquisition as well as leasing investigated.

Joseph Lema, spokesman for the library trustees, endorsed the proposal but said bids on the library renovation had already been opened and a decision about relocating would have to be made shortly.

Press Of Time

The press of time was also foremost in Del Deo's mind. She said the urgency of saving the building struck her while driving here from Orleans, as she realized the numbers of developers that had been making proposals to the First National Bank of Cape Cod.



THE FATE OF THE CHRYSLER? Lancey house before and after

The First National had held the mortgage on the building when it was the Center for the Arts, which unsuccessfully ran a restaurant, theater, art gallery and art school there in the summer of 1974. The bank bought back the mortgage for \$100,000 this June.

According to John Roderick of the bank's Provincetown office, a half dozen developers have made "serious" offers for

the building, which dominates the eastern shopping area of downtown Commercial Street with its spacious setback frontage and bell tower.

Del Deo and four other persons named by the selectmen Monday to form a committee to investigate the museum idea were to have met with bank officials, including bank president Eugene Tellier, this morning in Provincetown.



major changes to the building's exterior, Roderick said, noting that a proposal for a cafe with awnings was dismissed. Most proposals are similar to the CAP plan that failed, and include a restaurant and gallery. He did not know if interior changes would be significant under the plans.

"If the town makes a serious offer to buy it, I'm sure it would be given consideration above all offers," Roderick said.

That was one thing the group at the selectmen's meeting wanted. Town Manager Gardner Benson suggested the town, a \$17.5 million customer of the bank's might get some special consideration or delay of any imminent sale.

Cyril Patrick, a member of the PHA, said the bank might decide to donate the building to the town.

First National has been trying without success for several years to get variance for a permanent East End branch on Snail Road, which is zoned residential. This week their lawyer, Evan Lawson, said the bank planned to file a rezoning article for the spring Town Meeting.

The proposal by Del Deo included financial estimates to lease the building from the bank for two years with an option to buy, and with rent going towards the purchase price. Based on a purchase price of \$135,000, with insurance, furnace repairs and deducting profit from operating the museum and gallery, the proposal would cost \$25,000 the first year and \$20,000 the second, she said.

Del Deo said some of the cost would be offset by saving money otherwise earmarked for renting temporary library space.

In addition, Patrick said cost of renovating the building could be partially paid for by the federal government if the building was accepted in the register of National Historic Landmarks. It has been nominated for the register by the state.

Del Deo said one problem with landmark status was raised by the state inspector, who said this year further alterations to the building would make it ineligible as a landmark.

Named to the committee investigating the purchase are Josephine Del Deo, Salvatore Del Deo, Cyril Patrick, Joe Lema and Adelaide Kenney.

The bank is not considering any offers under \$160,000, according to Roderick. All six of the "serious" proposals were at or above that figure and the "only thing that prevented the bank" from accepting one of them "is our surprise at the number of offers," Roderick said. "We want to consider them all."

None of the six developer plans include