

Memorandum

January 26, 2004

To:

Partners for the project to preserve the memory of the Jewish Community of Oradea:

Mr. Filip, Mayor of Oradea

Mr. Luncan, Chief Architect of Oradea

Dr. Chiriac, Cris Museum

Mr. Koppelman, President, Jewish Community of Oradea

Mr. Sivan and Mr. Benedek, Federation of Jewish Communities, Bucharest

From:

Lempert Family Foundation (LFF)

Steering Committee, Preserving the History of Jewish Community of Oradea

Project advisers

Subject:

Preserving the History of Jewish Community of Oradea: Adjustments to Original Plan

=====

Why Make Adjustments?

LFF and the project steering committee have consulted with a number of different groups and individuals, starting with people in Oradea during our recent visit in November, and we have concluded that (1) aspects of our original plan may result in delays and uncertain outcomes and (2) the priorities of the original plan may not mesh as well as they could with the priorities of the Jewish community of Oradea as well as those of Oradean émigrés throughout the world.

In the last five months we have greatly expanded our communications with interested parties.

We are working now to adjust our planning in a way that takes advantage of what we have learned.

We are confident that our new plan will better meet the needs of all interested parties, including, first and foremost, the interests of our partners in Oradea and more generally the people of Oradea. We now have a more accurate understanding of what those interests are, for each of the parties, and we are confident that our revised plan, because it is more feasible, and more multifaceted, will gain more support (both moral and financial) from organizations and individuals in North America, Israel and Europe.

Better Reflecting the Needs of Our Constituencies

Meetings in Oradea, November 2003

Mayor Filip and Chief Architect Luncan of the city of Oradea -- As summarized in the meeting notes (issued by LFF in November, 2003), Mayor Filip made the following points: the key decisions are to be made by the project's funder, i.e. LFF; the goals and expectations for the project must be clearly articulated; the proposed design for the memorial will have to be approved by the Urbanism Commission; the Bihor County Cultural Inspector will be involved in the process; the city can help find local construction professionals.

Leaders of the Jewish Community -- in addition to Mr. Koppelman, we met with Mr. Sivan and Mr. Benedek from the Federation in Bucharest.

Members of the Jewish community, from all three generations.

Oradea journalists and other citizens.

"Man on the street" -- we conducted about 15 interviews mostly in Romanian with individuals and couples on the street of Oradea, asking a number of questions about our projects. There was agreement that a new memorial honoring the memory of the Jewish Community is an important and valuable undertaking

Media coverage (newspaper, radio, TV) in Oradea

Meetings at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, September - October 2003

We have met with directors of various departments, including Advanced Studies, Collections, and Registry.

Outreach Program to Oradean émigrés, ongoing since October 2003

Our program addresses émigrés in North America, Israel and Europe.

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum sent our letter describing our efforts to 600 survivors from Oradea in their registry.

We sent email to 170 émigrés discussing our projects.

Our Website (www.nlempert.org) has been live and active since November, with a total of 1,600 visits to date.

In addition to the four steering committee members we have four official advisors to the project and a number of others have recently taken an active interest in our progress.

There was some media coverage of our efforts in Israel, including two articles in the newspapers and a segment on Israeli television.

We have established a strong base of support for our goals among Oradean émigrés; while there is a divergence of opinion about the specific elements and priorities of our plan, people are in clear agreement about our goal of helping to preserve the memory of Jewish Community of Oradea in a way which furthers the interests of city leaders and citizens.

An important new development causing us to adjust our thinking is the reunion of Jewish Oradean Émigrés that is being organized, scheduled for May 13- 15, 2005.

Rationale for Revised Plan

Original memorial plan does not fit well with perceived needs and priorities

Interested parties in Romania and outside of it consider that there are better ways to help preserve the Jewish Community and its memory than by focusing available resources on a new memorial. We discussed and learned more about the different priorities, including: renovating the Orthodox Synagogue; saving the Neolog Synagogue from further deterioration; creating a museum/learning center as a means to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relevant history and culture.

Approved location for the memorial proves to be controversial

We were delighted by the decision of the City Council (Aug. 27, 2003) to approve the location outside Balcescu Park that Mr. Luncan proposed and that we had agreed might be ideal. In the course of our meetings in Oradea (November 10-12, 2003), however, a number of concerns of different kinds arose. We learned that

The Jewish Federation in Bucharest does not consider the creation of a new memorial in Oradea as a high priority project in comparison to other needs related to the Jewish Community there.

While many in the Jewish Community itself support the idea of a new memorial in their city, the approved location is not considered by many to be ideal. Concerns we learned about include: the location's proximity to nearby venues such as the stadium and the zoo make it inappropriate and vandalism is considered to be a likely problem.

Some of expressed the view that a more central location for a new memorial would better serve the interests of tourism and public relations. Alternative sites discussed include areas near the Neolog Synagogue; the two areas inside Balcescu Park proposed by Mr. Luncan in May of 2003; other yet to be identified locations.

Design contest may not yield a satisfactory outcome in a realistic time frame

We have looked further into the feasibility of conducting a design contest and the likelihood of a satisfactory outcome in a realistic timeframe.

In studying the process of the design contest for creating a new memorial to commemorate the lives lost on 9/11/01, in New York City, we see that a design contest can be a very complex, expensive, difficult process yielding designs which can leave many constituencies unhappy.

We have been in communication with people from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and have learned about their experiences with design contests as well. Here too we have heard about examples of contests that have yielded disappointment and controversy, along with very substantial delays and cost overruns.

What the Revised Plan Must Do

Meet the mission statement requirements (see appendix for mission statement).

Draw more support (moral and financial) than the current plan.

Elements of the Revised Plan

Approvals

LFF and its advisers and contractors are working on certain aspects of the memorial plan and the other plans described below, and we plan to present and submit materials (plans, timelines,

budgets, technical specifications, etc.) for approval by each of our partners. We understand that our proposals must serve the needs of *each* of our partners, and that we must receive the approval of each for these projects to go forward.

The New Memorial

Funding

LFF plans to cover all costs associated with the design and construction of the memorial. Based on its understanding of the priorities of the Jewish Community in Oradea and the views expressed by Oradeans émigrés, LFF does not plan to raise funds for this project; it will direct fund raising efforts to benefit other elements of the plan (see below).

Design and Construction

LFF, working in consultation with its Steering Committee (SC) and project advisers, is in the process of formalizing certain proposed designs, developed by LFF and its designers, graphic artists, and consultants, including architects and engineers. The result of these efforts will take the form of technical specifications, blueprints, graphic and 3-D visualizations and related materials for evaluation by our partners in Romania. We plan to present these materials to our partners in meetings in Oradea we would like to schedule for a convenient time in April of this year. Our hope will be to obtain our partners' approvals of the design and to begin discussions concerning its construction with Oradean firms recommended by Mayor Filip, as discussed in our recent meeting with him.

Location

As noted, the location proposed by the city, adjacent to Balcescu Park, the one that was requested by LFF and approved by the City Council, proves to be controversial on account of its proximity to certain other venues and concerns about vandalism.

We ask our partners for comments and suggestions.

Maintenance and security

Since questions concerning the maintenance and security of a new memorial have arisen, we would like to know what each of our partners proposes in order to ensure that the work will be actively protected.

Timing

We envision that the new memorial will be completed by May 2005, or, at the minimum, that it will have progressed to the point of allowing for a ribbon cutting at that time.

Learning Center/Museum

Description

Over the last several years, the creation of a learning center and Museum has been under discussion by various individuals and organizations in Romania; and recently LFF has discussed the concept with directors of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), to create a substantial museum and learning center that addresses (a) the history of the Jewish community in Oradea from its origins hundreds of years ago until today and, more broadly, (b) the history of the Jewish community in Transylvania and in Romania as a whole.

Given the recently formed international commission to establish the factual history, and other recent developments, we believe that the timing for doing this in Oradea is excellent.

We have confirmed with USHMM that they will support our efforts by providing materials and information for the new learning center, and we are presently exploring contacts with Yad Vashem, the museum of the Holocaust in Jerusalem. We are confident that Yad Vashem will likewise help us assemble materials for the new learning center.

The learning center was discussed with our partners Mr. Koppelman and Mr. Chiriac in our meetings in Nov. 2003.

Funding

LFF will cover the expense for initiating this project, including costs associated with providing materials for the center in its first 12 months of operation, and for fund raising in these first 12 months.

We would like to discuss with our partners ways in which ongoing maintenance of the institution could be funded.

Contents/displays

LFF plans to create a qualified "editorial board" with acknowledged historians and other experts. We will contact and solicit the help of people including Dr. Terez Mozes, Professor Randolph Braham and Dr. Radu Ioanid, each of whom have consulted with us in the past. Other individuals such as Elie Weisel will be contacted as will important institutions such as USHMM, Yad

Vasehm, Bnai Brith, ADL, etc.

We will also consult with leaders in Oradea, including religious leaders from all denominations, artists, academics, etc.

Location

We have discussed the possibility of renovating and converting the old synagogue on Independia Str., currently rented to a certain business enterprise, to house the museum/learning center. This might be a suitable structure in the long term; to renovate it and convert it appropriately is a longer term and very costly project, one which LFF might consider partnering on under a separate set of proposals plans.

We are open to suggestions our partners may have concerning other venues, perhaps ones which could house the Center on a temporary basis, as the eventual permanent home for it is being prepared under that different set of proposals and plans.

Timing

We envision that many elements of the new institution will be completed by May 2005.

Educational Fellowships

Concept

We would like to work with our partners and with the University of Oradea to establish specific guidelines for up to four new fellowships. These would be devoted to the basic goal of developing a deeper understanding of the role of the Jewish people in the history of Oradea and of Transylvania as a whole and to disseminating that understanding through the educational system and through available media.

Four fellowships

We propose to create a total of four one-year fellowships (renewable for an additional year), as follows:

Two fellowships for social studies or history teachers currently teaching in Oradea, 1 at the elementary grade level and 1 at the high school grade level

One fellowship for a university or postgraduate student

One fellowship for a graduating high school student

Funding

LFF will cover the expense for initiating this project, including costs associated with the fellowships for the first 12 months of the program, and for fund raising in these first 12 months.

Proposed next steps

We ask our partners to consider the ideas in this revised plan and to communicate any questions and suggestions to us either in writing or through our representative, Mr. Viorel Lascu.

As noted, above, once we've established a general agreement and your approval to proceed, we would like to schedule a visit in March or April to Oradea to discuss details, specifications, budgets, timelines, etc., concerning each of the three elements.

At that time we will be prepared to make initial investments in each of the programs, through the proper financial channels, so that work in Oradea can proceed.