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Boca Arts Center Deal Moves Forward and Ag Reserve Catches a Break



By [Randy Schultz](#) April 14, 2022



Boca Arts Campus rendering; photo courtesy of Luxigon Los Angeles

In four months, Boca Raton likely will approve the lease that would allow construction of a performing arts center at Mizner Park.

After a surprisingly short debate during Monday's workshop meeting, city council members and representatives of the Boca Raton Arts District Exploratory Corporation (BRADEC) worked out their two remaining differences. Barring something unexpected, the lease and development agreement will go to the planning and zoning board in July and the council in August.

[As I reported last week](#), three issues still separated the two sides before Monday. Deputy City Manager George Brown, however, began by saying the provision about insurance coverage for the project had been resolved.

That left the length of the lease and how much money BRADEC would have to raise in cash—as opposed to pledges—toward the endowment for the center's operating expenses. Council members want to avoid a scenario in which the complex can't sustain itself and the city has to take it over, as happened 12 years ago with the Mizner Park Amphitheater.

BRACDEC wanted a 94-year lease of the vacant 1.8-acre site next to the amphitheater. City planners recommended 50 years.

Brett Egan, president of DeVos Institute of Arts Management, is BRADEC's consultant. He told the council that BRADEC is having "delicate negotiations" about seven-figure and eight-figure donations from people who are considering "their legacy and their family's legacy."

A 50-year timeline, Egan said, would be too short. Future councils might seek different naming rights after the lease expired, as he said is happening with a part of Lincoln Center in New York.

Without the "leverage" of that longer lease to give donors "a level of seriousness, Egan said, "we fear that the project would be laughed out of the room."

Mayor Scott Singer said the longer lease gave him "heartburn." He questioned whether the effect on fundraising would be as dramatic as Egan suggested.

A majority of the council, however, agreed with Egan. The lease would be for 74 years with two, 10-year renewals.

Having received that concession, BRADEC's attorney said the group would concede to the city on the amount of cash required for the reserve fund. BRADEC's many supporters in the audience clapped.

The fundraising goal of roughly \$120 million remains ambitious. Construction can't begin until BRADEC reaches certain thresholds.

If the group succeeds, however, Boca Raton will have an arts complex that includes a revamped amphitheater and rivals many of the country's best regional cultural draws. And with the Boca Raton Museum of Art as part of the cluster on north end, Mizner Park will become the cultural hub that the city envisioned three decades ago.