

Save the Planetarium Fund, Inc.

A non-profit organization dedicated to helping the Novins Planetarium
www.SaveThePlanetarium.org

August 15, 2008

Mr. Michael B, York
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Michael,

This letter is a follow-up of our telephone discussions on August 7th and August 13th. As I had indicated to you during our conversations, over the past several months Save the Planetarium Fund, Inc. has been working to decide what would be the most beneficial way for the donations we have received for the Novins Planetarium to best be distributed to the Ocean County College Foundation for use in the new Novins Planetarium.

Our conversations this past week, as you know, have been a culmination of numerous discussions you and I have had over the past year as to how Save the Planetarium Fund would like to distribute those monies. Always, our first concern was what is best for the planetarium, the students who would make use of the planetarium facility and the general public that would also benefit from visits to the newly renovated planetarium theater.

We have always felt it was important that the community, which had so strongly supported the reopening of the Novins Planetarium through their donations to Save the Planetarium Fund, be recognized by seeing their donations at work in a more tactile way. While we could easily have presented the Ocean County College Foundation with a check to be used towards the general funding of the renovation project, it seemed to us that that would have failed the spirit of the community's gift.

We were hoping we could provide the public with something they could "see, feel and make use of" and know that their contributions provided this specific piece of the planetarium renovation. We felt this would be a more appropriate use of the public's donations, rather than having the public "just know" that their contribution was somewhere in the building renovation.

This line of thinking had developed very early on in the process, when it became apparent that the Ocean County College Foundation, lead by Stephen Leone, and members of the Ocean County College Trustees, lead by Judge Robert Fall, would be soliciting the affluent members of the community for their very generous and much larger donations to the project. We fully believed that their efforts would result in the complete funding of the refurbishment project.

At the urging of the Save the Planetarium Fund and other vocal members of the community the Ocean County Freeholders offered to commit \$2 million dollars to the building refurbishment. Any pressure we had originally experienced, to be the only organization to fund the reopening of the Novins Planetarium, was now off. Also, since it was clear that all the major parties that were now seeing to the funding, *(and were the ones who should have picked up this mantle before we even had to get involved)*, would be successful in fully funding the project, we turned our attention more to educating the public on the value of the planetarium and the need to visit the planetarium when it reopened.

We did not seek out major donors; we sought out the members of the community that would comprise the planetarium audience, students, children and their families, seniors and other community groups. Our donations came from many, many members of the community in very, very modest amounts.

To encourage more participation by these groups, a very generous, concerned member of the community approached us with the idea of a matching gift program. The idea was to help those of modest means make their contributions go farther and possibly encourage them to give more, or inspire the children of the community to actively participate. One thing was clear though. The money provided for the matching funds program was not to be turned over to the OCC Foundation or OCC without a specific purpose of use by the general public. In other words, the donor did not want the funds provided to the matching gift program to end up in the general refurbishment fund. The donor's portion of the money was to be used to further enhance the public's experience when they visited the planetarium, above and beyond what the college had planned for in the general refurbishment of the Novins Planetarium.

Since the beginning of this year Save the Planetarium Fund has been looking at many alternatives to try to best accommodate the desires of our major donor and provide the best use of all our donations to benefit the planetarium and its supporters.

During the last three to four months the college has finally made some decisions as to the equipment they would be purchasing and the architectural design of the planetarium building. After reviewing their purchase and design decisions we saw an opportunity to fulfill our major donor's wishes and our own desires to provide the public with the best value for their money.

While the college had decided what equipment they wanted for the planetarium theater, there has been no attention given to adequate and engaging lobby displays or consideration for the planetariums outreach programs.

Save the Planetarium Fund came to the conclusion that we could meet the requirements of our donor by using the donor's matching funds to purchase unplanned for items for the planetarium lobby and outreach programs. This also meets our desire to provide something that the public could "touch and feel and see" and know that they contributed to these specific items.

The balance of our donations *(the public's portion, if you will)* would then be given to the foundation in the form of cash/check to be used for a specific part of the renovation project. Again, to be used towards *(preferably)* something very visible and noticeable to the public.

To this end, Save the Planetarium Fund, Inc. would like to present to the Ocean County College Foundation our intentions as follows:

Using a budget of approximately \$42,000.00 (*exact figures to be determined when all of our current donations, interest and final expenses have been settled*) we expect to break out the budget in two main groups.

First, approximately \$25,000.00 (*representing the matching gift donor's donation*) would be used to purchase items to be donated to the planetarium for its lobby and outreach programs. These are needed and valuable items that have been overlooked in the planning of the planetarium renovation. The lobby is an important part of the planetarium experience. While visitors are waiting for their show, you have the opportunity to capture their imagination and provide them with new and interesting information to keep them coming back. The following items are preliminary and subject to change, however the major items we feel very certain of at this time.

- 1) A ViewSpace program for the main lobby. This is a very unique and interesting exhibit that will provide visitors with exciting and current information of many different sciences. We would like to provide this exhibit with one or two large flat panel displays, a computer to run the program and a lease for the software for a 10yr period.
- 2) A Touch Screen computer exhibit that visitors can interact with. We would provide the computer and touch screen display and kiosk if needed. Also the software package for content to interact with.
- 3) An Astronaut Photo Opportunity for visitors. We would be looking to provide a life-size mannequin, outfitted in a replica spacesuit, standing before a backdrop of a moonscape that visitors could stand next to and take a picture of them on the moon.
- 4) Possibly in support of the photo opportunity we could also provide a couple of replica spacesuits for visitors to "dress up" in for the picture.
- 5) A "Glove Box". This is a simple item that has two sets of spacesuit gloves attached to a box that you would insert your hands in to see how "easy" it would be to work in space. Inside the box are tools and items that you would try to pickup and manipulate using the spacesuit gloves.
- 6) For daytime outreach programs; a 90mm Coronado Solar Scope, complete with eyepieces and storage case and mount. This is a very high quality instrument capable of providing spectacular views of the sun's boiling surface and incredible prominences. The Novins Planetarium has not had such an instrument before and a scope like this should be standard equipment for any planetarium.
- 7) For nighttime outreach programs; a 12" Meade LX-200 ACF with storage case and mount. This is as big and precise a scope that could be handled by planetarium staff without having to have a dedicated stationary mount. It is large enough that everyone attending an evening event would just have to look through the eyepiece and small enough that it could be managed by one person. The planetarium has had much smaller scopes, all of which were either broken or non-functioning most of the time. A scope of this scale should also be considered standard equipment for a planetarium.

Additional ideas, assuming enough is left over in our budget could be backlit wall display light-boxes with interchangeable pictures of the cosmos. Display cases for meteorites or other valuable space debris. Please note that we would expect the community contributors to receive credit for these items, not our major donor.

For the second portion of the budget, approximately \$17,000.00 (*can be considered the public's contribution. This number may change slightly with final accounting.*) We would seek to provide a check to the Ocean County Foundation for those donations that have been collected by us from the public to go to the Novins Planetarium renovation project to be used for an express purpose as follows:

- 1) As a first choice, we would request that our donation be used to upgrade the seating currently being evaluated, to the next better model. We would like the public's contribution to be used to provide the best and most comfortable seating you could reasonably afford. We think this would be a very practical application of the public's money.
- 2) As a second choice, we would like to see the money earmarked towards carpeting for the main lobby areas. When school children visit they tend to sit on the floor while waiting and receiving instructions from teachers or staff. It would be very beneficial for the children to sit on a carpeted floor rather than some other form of hard surface. The planetarium has always had a carpeted lobby and it always worked out well with the children. It is surprising to see that the current architectural plans do not include a carpeted lobby.
- 3) As a third alternative we would be open to suggestions from the Foundation as to a similar use as previously stated. However, we think that one of the aforementioned options would be our preferred option.

I would like to point out that although we had up to \$50,000.00 available in the Matching Gift Program, the public's donations fell short of \$18,000.00 in Matching Gift donations. The Matching Gift Donor did however provide us with a \$25,000.00 donation in anticipation of reaching this first goal.

Michael, as counsel for Save the Planetarium Fund, Inc. I would like you to forward these intentions to the Ocean County College Foundation so we may begin the process of transferring our donations to the Foundation. We look forward to the Foundations comments on our proposal and hope we can begin the process of getting another step closer to the reopening of the Robert J. Novins Planetarium.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Gamba
President
Save the Planetarium Fund, Inc.

P.S. Michael please extend an invitation to any interested Foundation members to a demonstration of the ViewSpace technology on August 26th at 11:00am in the Technology building at OCC. The demonstration will be approximately 30 minutes long and is being given by Ms. Lucy Albert of the Space Telescope Science Institute. This demonstration had been arranged on request of the OCC Administration, due to their interest in the technology after I had advised them of our interest in providing this exhibit at a meeting I had attended in November 2007.

Cc: All Save the Planetarium Fund Contributors