

FAMILIES ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
LMDC – 20th floor
June 1, 2004 – 5:40 pm
BRIEF SUMMARY OF MINUTES

This meeting was the first discussion regarding the Memorial Center Advisory Committee's Report for the Memorial Center. The Advisory Committee's Report was mailed to all families (approximately 4,000) in the LMDC database with an attached comment sheet to be returned to the LMDC. Family members will be able to make public comments on the report during the entire month of June. Recommendations can be made either by individuals or groups.

Ms. Contini discussed the Memorial Center Advisory Committee's research, including visits to the World Trade Center site and Hanger 17, and its talks with Sara Bloomfield of the United States Holocaust Museum and the documentary filmmaker Ric Burns.

The Memorial Center Advisory Committee felt that authentic artifacts were more important than duplicates and reenactments, as they felt a sense of authenticity was necessary.

Family members then debated if it was appropriate to discuss terrorism at the Center. They decided that this was an extraordinarily sensitive subject. The Center must convey the story of the events of September 11th, however, it cannot make the terrorists martyrs. Some members of the group felt that the Memorial Center should not discuss the terrorist's ideology. Other family members believed that there was a difference between interpreting Islam and interpreting terrorism, and that visitors to the Center would be best served by a fuller depiction of the terrorists.

Ms. Contini discussed exhibitions at the Memorial Center. The focus of the center would be the stories of 9/11/01 and 2/26/93; the events, the people, the support, etc. Primary artifacts would include salvaged remnants, oral histories, video recordings, audio recordings, and other sources. The Center might possibly include personal stories and tributes to every victim of the attack, with consideration given to incorporating personal objects paired with images and other biographical information.

Family members also discussed the possibility of displaying a "sign-post" where visitors approach the Memorial Center. This sign post might be an artifact or remnant from the building that reminds visitors why they are there and conveys the authenticity of the site. Artifacts at the Memorial Center could include remnants of lost artwork. They should also include items that dealt with evacuation, rescue, and recovery. Ms. Contini stressed that some artifacts and images might be disturbing for some visitors. There was also reference in the report of some type of participatory opportunity, within the museum, where visitors would have a chance to express their own experience on 9/11 and how they were affected.

The family members then discussed their concerns of losing space in the Memorial Center to structural components like the chiller plant. They also discussed the possibility of having the PATH train make a sound or somehow signal to passengers that they are traveling over the South Tower footprint. This suggestion would have to be discussed with the Port Authority as well.

The families also suggested that the Memorial Center include the perspective of companies that were located in the World Trade Center such as Cantor Fitzgerald. They also debated the merits of a possible rotating exhibit that would include items from each victim. A permanent display for each victim, like the memorial at Oklahoma City, is also a possibility.

Family members agreed that, like the U.S. Holocaust Museum, the focus of the Memorial Center should be on the victims. A member of the Family Advisory Council suggested having computer terminals at the Memorial Center in which visitors could look at images, text or video, from or about individual victims' lives.

The families also expressed concern the Memorial or Memorial Center do not have a memorable and unique feature that might be considered groundbreaking compared with other famous memorial designs. Ms. Contini said that this concern was very constructive, and that the group should think about what stands out in their hearts and minds when they visit other museums, monuments, or memorials that make them want to return to the site.

The family members again stressed that the memorial must individualize each victim. There was also concern that some remnants of 9/11, like the south tower footprint, should not be treated merely as artifacts in an exhibit, as these remnants are indeed sacred.

The meeting closed with final concerns from family members regarding the names of the new towers that are to be built on the site. The names should not be similar to "World Trade Center One" or "World Trade Center Two", as those were the names of buildings that are no longer on the site. There was also concern about the title "Interpretative Museum," and that this component might be better referred to as "Memorial Center."

The meeting was then adjourned.