

Special Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, October 11, 2005 - Library Board Room
02:30 PM - 04:30 PM

Minutes of Actions and Decisions of the Board of Library Trustees of the Bellingham Public Library as Authorized by RCW 27.12.210 and SEC. 7.02 Charter of the City of Bellingham.

Board Members Present: Chairperson: Tim Douglas, Vice-Chairperson: Alan Kemble, Faye Hill, Judith Wiseman, David Edelstein

Board Members Absent: None

Library Staff: Pamela Kiesner; Gayle Helgoe; Margaret Ziegler; Gladys Fullford

Others: John Watts, City Council Liaison, Jim Zervas, Bob Ross, Terry Moore

Library Strategic Planning Workshop: Tim outlined the agenda for further discussion on plans for a library on the current site, the options presented by the Bellingham Planning Group, and the Municipal Court site. David mentioned that someone asked him about the Sash & Door site. Judith explained that site had been considered by the site evaluation committee, but didn't make the cut. The limitations and challenges included that it was on the fringe of town, the circuitous route to get there, safety, on a major traffic route, and a likely heavy contamination problem.

Alan asked about Scheme #3 and #5. The Bellingham Planning Group answered it is not negative to block off the side of the current building. Scheme #5 provides for a covered area in the courtyard below parking. The renderings do not show architectural functions. They are volumetric drawings, and are not limiting to future architectural plans. The current building and surrounding buildings would influence the design for a new library. The current building could be remodeled and made esthetically pleasing. The architects discussed the grassy space. Is the perspective that it should remain bowl shape or be a retreat from pavement? Tim suggested something more indoor/outdoor. Bellingham High School and WWU are examples of alternatives acceptable to the community. John Watts said open space can be used or appreciated in passing by. There are concerns of building shadows on an open area. David stated that P.P. Lee Park is underused. If it was filled to sidewalk grade, it could be used more.

Bob Ross had asked Ken Hertz's opinion. Ken said the library should be in the best location for the community. Jim Zervas talked about the importance of the Civic Center Master Plan. Traffic circulation depends on the plan.

Alan said this was a marvelous exercise to show it can be done. A wrap-around could provide a bigger building without encroaching on the open area. Tim likes the idea of framing City Hall with respect and enhancement, as well as respecting the vision of City Hall. He would like to see the open space up to ground level. Fay also likes the wrap-arounds, but is concerned about what happens to the library during construction. David said building additions or remodels are usually more expensive than new construction. John felt the need to build a new building. Reuse of the old building could help pay for the new building over time. John mentioned bringing open space into Lottie Street, and providing parking below.

Tim had a chat with PFD board members. Their preference would be for a new library to be closer to the Art and Children's Museum. However, we are not driven by the PFD plan.

Tim hopes we are able to have an indoor/outdoor space. Judith said most people are looking outside from inside. People would appreciate having pleasant outside views.

John asked if the Board has decided on a site. The Board is still working on the Municipal Court site. This meeting is for looking at the present site now that we have the geo-tech report and design possibilities. It

is helpful to eliminate what we don't like. Judith suggested looking at criteria sheets for both sites. David said that if there is no other site, these designs show we could accomplish our goals here. Alan and Faye are working on a site evaluation of the Municipal Court site. Alan said it depends on vacating "C" Street. The building could be situated to face the city and Sehome Hill. There are views down the creek and opportunity to come into the trails. There could be a traffic problem for about half an hour when school is dismissed in the afternoon. It does seem to draw outside of the city center. Faye felt two lots were enough. She likes looking up the corridor to the library; it would give a perception of an invitation to the building. It would be an easier site to build on technically. There are two bus routes, and it is close to the Senior Center. The big question is the impact on the neighbor streets. David said in vacating "C" Street and making other streets one way for the neighbors, the pluses will outweigh negatives for the neighbors. Tim suggested decisions could be made to weave it into the city's capital plans. Retrofitting this building for use as a courthouse and offices would benefit the city by consolidating city functions in the city core. The court site diffuses the parking problem. Margaret stated there would be more flexibility in planning for delivery and school bus access.

John suggested nailing down a site, and have two or three scenarios such as the Children's Museum for the public to pick. Judith felt the library's functional needs are greater. The design should come from design professionals with staff and board input. Judith suggested public visionary meetings that would be not what you want it to look like, but what you want it to be and what you want it to do. Faye and Alan will consolidate their comments in the site evaluation, and present their report at the next board meeting. Tim said we don't need to decide on the blocks. The big element is traffic.

Pam has met with city department heads involved with the site. They feel this is worth looking at further. She and Tim have also met with PFD representatives and department heads. People are aware we are looking at the court site. John asked about moving the court and other offices during construction. Tim had the impression that Municipal Court has a place to function during construction. After existing in the bowels of City Hall, ITSD is loathe to leave a decent building, but maybe a portion of the present library could be vacated for ITSD while a new building is built. David mentioned that a new building is most economical. Actual costs are needed.

The neighborhood next to the site needs to know we are talking about the site. Pam has the name of the neighborhood representative. We should also speak to the Kulshan Land Trust about incorporating into the adjacent neighborhood.

This has been good research to see that we looked into the current site as much as we could. It is good work for reason to go ahead or not.

Judith Wiseman's Last Meeting: Judith was thanked for her work on the board. She represents a lot of historical knowledge. Judith said she has enjoyed working with the board and staff. She would be happy to help in any way that she can. Her experience at attending board meetings via speaker phone with no visual distractions was most insightful. She was impressed that this is a tremendously talented board that has shown quality insight and analysis.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – October 18, 2005 will begin at 2:30 p.m.

Next Special Library Board Meeting – November 8, 2005 will begin at 2:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees