

Special Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, June 14, 2005 - Library Board Room
02:30 PM - 04:20 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:

Library Staff: Pamela Kiesner; Gayle Helgoe; Gladys Fullford

Others: John Watts, City Council Liaison, Jon Gambrell, Tom Glenn, Velma Wendt, Paule Kelly, Anica Stieve, Karly Schenck

Strategic Planning Work Session: Responses to the board's questions about the Seismic and Geotechnical Study were due June 6th, but they have not been received yet. We are also waiting for the Executive Summary and a consolidation of the two reports.

Correspondence from the Public Facilities District to the Whatcom County Council regarding the County's long term facilities master plan suggested keeping the county seat in the downtown area. The letter asked about the potential for a possible land trade, suggesting that the library could be built on the existing courthouse parking area.

Judith Wiseman highlighted the draft evaluation of two site evaluations. The original Site Evaluation Committee did not complete the present library site in detail because it was thought the park area was unavailable and the viability of the present structure was unknown.

The Walton Beverage site is similar to the Tube Time site. It is bordered by a principle arterial, State Street. There is a large volume of noisy traffic. State Street is considered a gateway to downtown, and traffic is expected to increase. A bordering brick building, a visual barrier, is not part of the site. Tim Douglas spoke to John Harmon and learned the Whatcom Housing Authority is moving seriously ahead with a housing proposal of two five-story towers. John didn't see how the library could fit on the property with their proposal. The Board was asked for consensus of recommendation rating the site.

Alan Kemble agreed with the opinions of noise and smell from fumes. He is committed to be in a strong civic center, and does not see this as satisfactory or salubrious. Tim is not convinced the site is adequate unless the housing authority does not go ahead with their project. David Edelstein said we should look at the present site or the county parking site before looking farther from downtown. Faye Hill agreed to not recommend this site because of traffic and noise. Judith had previously rated the site as satisfactory, but constricted and noisy with no outdoor outlook. It does not meet the City's goals. It is on the fringe. It should be closer to the civic center. Judith will write a summary sheet and make the changes for the site evaluation study. As we reduce the number of sites, Tim said he would like to identify the sites with names, rather than letters.

Judith asked about the next step in looking to architects to evaluate an additional building on the present site and the constraints of the present building. Design experts could determine if the present building could be incorporated with a new building.

John Watts told the board that City Council has put money aside through the Center City Master Plan for professional help in early developmental criteria based site evaluations and planning.

Alan likes the general idea of this site, and does not want to see the loss of total green space. He envisions a building with cascading levels on one side of the present building with one level of parking below and a plaza above, retaining half of the green space. Tim would like a final design to be committed to preserving substantial public open space. Good design help is needed.

The expectation is if parking is incorporated, it would be the responsibility of the City Parking Fund.

David mentioned that when talking about the lawn, Lottie Street and the City Hall plaza should be included. Our community cannot afford to take down this building without looking at adapting the present building for rentals. Rental revenue could be used towards paying for a new building. Our responsibility is to expand our view to what would make sense for the public to build on this site. Bring the experts to study this site unless the county parking site becomes available.

Judith has been enthusiastic for the site on the bluff; however the county parking site could have some of the same attributes, such as a connection with the waterfront. David said the hierarchy in order of expense is vacant land, land with a derelict building, land with renovated building, and finally land with a renovated building and with a business. The board is not interested in displacing any current businesses.

In summary, it was agreed to look for proper architectural and professional help at the present site. Tim and Alan will talk to Mr. Dessler about the county master planning for facilities to ascertain if the county parking site might be an option for us.

The bluff site is desirable, but problematic site. Tube Time site also has complexities with a ten year contract on the building. Tim was surprised to find that a storm sewer line and sanitary service line run in front of the buildings. It is a non-vacated alley with an easement.

The Board is inclined to give top priority to the civic center. They will use their energy and fiscal means to look at this site and the county parking lot first. Only if these options do not work out will they look elsewhere. Tim does not want to proceed with the idea that we are providing parking. John said there is an unaddressed need for parking, but he does not want the parking problem to drag the library building backwards. It's not a question of whether it's a good idea, but rather if this is the proper vehicle. Judith said public parking is undisputable, but we need to guard against negative voices. We need to research what other libraries have done. John said we are in a unique situation. A hole has already been dug. It is part of a natural plan. It makes sense and would be a good use of public dollars through the parking fund authority.

Tim expressed appreciation for Judith and Faye's work on the site evaluation. Judith mentioned there are concepts for buildings in the Library Journal. The ideas and possibilities an architect could give us should be explored. A charette with architects, landscape and design professionals could be a vehicle for gaining conceptual ideas and possibilities. Tim asked Pam to devise a way to approach a charette for this site.

The Board has tentatively concluded they need to look at opportunities for the northeast corner of the community. Possibilities include adding a pick up to the drop off, or a public sector with a village concept or a coffee house. What it needs to be and what is available needs to be determined. It could be a public/private operation underwritten by a private entity. Tim would like staff to research what other cities are doing and the financial arrangement possibilities.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – June 21, 2005 will begin at 2:30 p.m.

Next Special Library Board Meeting – July 12, 2005 will begin at 2:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST
Secretary, Library Board of Trustees

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees