

Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, December 19, 2006 - Library Board Room
02:30 PM - 04:15 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: Alan Kemble, Vice-Chairperson: David Edelstein, Faye Hill, Vicky Marshall, J. Robert Gordon

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pam Kiesner; Lizz Roberts; Gladys Fullford

Others: Tom Glenn, Linda Langey, Cliff Baacke, Jack Weiss and Margaret Ziegler

Called to Order: The Regular Meeting was called to order at 2:30 p.m. by Chair Alan Kemble. The agenda was approved.

Public Comment: Margaret Ziegler thanked Alan Kemble for his service to the library and community, and all the support to the library staff.

Margaret also commented on the site selection. The decision is exciting as long as it is the whole block that is included from the beginning. It will be a very complex project, and the architects should be given all the potential to make the building design work well. The perception of building in phases would make the area very crowded. Having been involved in the remodel of the current building and the limitations that were there, several things could not be done because of previous design. Margaret agrees that when a new building is built, we should think bigger than the existing space needs to be. Two stories may not be enough. When this building was built, someone had some forethought in including the middle mezzanine. If we hadn't had that space, we would have been in bad shape a long time ago. We need the forethought of a library in a multipurpose building. Alan suggested Margaret come to the work session with the City Council in January. Margaret said she would be happy to repeat her comments.

Minutes approved: November 21, 2006 regular meeting minutes approved as read.
December 5, 2006 special meeting minutes approved as read.

Pam asked whether the Board prefers to continue with recording the minutes, or go back to writing them as they were done previously. Faye Hill commented that she thought it was important to record the meetings. Alan said it was vital to record when the Board is talking about the site and development. Alan said it will be important to have tapes of meetings over the next few years where there will be pros and cons discussed about several subjects. Tapes and written minutes are kept for several years. Pam said there is a technology that we might be able to use. One speaker could repeat the meeting into the program, which would put it in written form on the computer.

Claims approved: November, 2006 general fund \$79,527.49; gift fund \$829.95
The \$28,899 was charged through ITSD for a city bulk buy of computers. Over twenty public computers are being replaced. They will be installed with word processing and internet capability.

Statistics: Pam stated that a small group is working on refining performance measures for the 2007 budget process. Pam will share this information with the Board in January.

Pam commented that the target number of visitors and circulation will be passed for the year. Pam mentioned in a report to the City that when there were closures, the library was open during the weekend. People still come. We were quite busy. We have intrepid customers.

Communications: Pam passed around a communication from the Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation, from the Architectural Historian with the State. It is the official letter stating his opinion that the library is not eligible for either local or the National Register of Historic Places due to alterations to the library which have reduced its architectural integrity.

The second communication was additional staff comment on reactions to this site. It urges to not remain in the building during construction. Alan commented that it was quite interesting to go through all the comments. Pam said that staff represents Bellingham as a community with diverse opinions. Faye and Vicky commented that they value staff's opinions. Alan mentioned that staff is welcome to sit in on board meetings or send comments to the board.

Transitions: In recognition of Alan Kemble's ten years of service Pam presented a card from the library staff. The staff highly regards Alan's service and his support of the library staff. Alan said he has enjoyed working with staff and the board members. He is proud to be associated with the library and its growth. Pam also presented an official certificate from the Mayor and a card from the Board.

Alan invited the Board to elect a new chair and vice-chair for 2007. Faye nominated David Edelstein for Chair. Vicky seconded. Motion was approved. Vicky nominated Faye as Vice-Chair. The motion was seconded and approved.

Pam explained we still have applications for the board from the last round. They are kept in the Mayor's office for one year. Pam will meet with the Mayor to discuss the process. The City produced a news release, sharing open board or commission positions. We anticipate receiving a couple of applications as a result. Pam and Vicky will meet to talk about the applications. It is likely we could have someone appointed in January. Initial review is done by the Director and Chairman or appointee. The Mayor makes his recommendation to Council for their approval.

Strategic Planning: David brought to Pam's attention the Cascadia Weekly guest column request. This is an opportunity to write about our planning process so far, the site selection, and what we have been doing. Pam shared a draft of what she will submit. David commented that it was a breath of fresh air that one of the media has asked for something positive. J. Gordon asked about a guest letter with accurate information to the Bellingham Herald. Alan answered the editorial Board at the Herald could be contacted. David suggested it would be to the board's advantage to be thrifty in granting interviews. It would be preferable to write out our thoughts. J. Gordon suggested more focused attempt on the board's part to get better information out to the public. Pam explained one of the reasons we did the new web page was to be sure we were providing accurate information to the public in a variety of formats. David said in the past he has declined to do interviews because he was concerned that his information was not complete and may not be accurate. It is difficult to do something with so much detail and specificity off the cuff. He likes the idea of a cohesive letter with the correct detail to get the point across. Alan said it is not always wise to refuse comment. He tries not to give personal opinion, but will offer factual statements. There is a balance that is hard to keep. Alan also suggested going to the library conferences. They provide good insight into other library experiences in marketing, how to deal with the media, and bond issues.

Pam updated the Board on other tasks we've been working on related to this site recommendation. Pam contacted Public Works about any additional city space that might be available were we to move out of this building. She has not heard back. She has contacted them about a Public Works Project Manager, as well.

Pam talked with the Bellingham Planning Group about working with Rory Woolsey on preliminary cost estimates on cost savings from one phase instead of two phases. That might offset the cost of having to move out of the building. The architects should be given the complete block to come up with something superior.

Pam suggests when we go to City Council that we are very clear and positive about the site. David said it would be to the board's advantage to have a special meeting prior to meeting with City Council. The Board should talk about that issue, and be able to go to the Council with very specific ideas and explanations why we are doing it. The Special Meeting to prepare for meeting with City Council will be January 10th at 5:30 p.m.

The joint work session with City Council will be January 17th at 7:00 p.m. in the Library Lecture Room. Pam noted that the Council office takes care of all the media notification, and will take minutes. They will set up the room with sound equipment. John Watts thought it should be an informal discussion about the planning process and what we have been doing. John also suggested we invite the Parking Commission to attend. John could say something about why we want them there. We would run through our purpose and planning process. We have been looking at the Central Library, Fairhaven and Northside services. We would talk about the site evaluation process, the criteria we used, review of sites, and geotechnical findings on this site. J. Gordon will provide a letter to Council regarding incremental cost to go to bedrock. It is assumed that most of the sites would have to be piled unless bedrock is real close to the surface. This would tell the Council the difference in foundation expense for this site other than other sites would be in length of piles. It is an incremental cost to go to bedrock, and any one of the sites in the neighborhood might be equal or more expensive than the other. This isn't something that should scare the community. Pam added we will address questions such as why wasn't this site available before, and relate it to the previous volumetric study.

J. Gordon said there is not a lot of information about the Municipal Court site. He has reviewed or prepared documents on the other sites. Half of the Police Department building is on piles. The side that is better is up toward Girard Street, but the building was not built as a multi-story public building. He is assuming that a multi-story would need to be supported by piling.

Pam has asked the Bellingham Planning Group if they could attend the work session, and share their findings. We need to talk about the parking options, and why we chose the library block. Then we need to talk about the next steps and the time line.

Alan suggested the Friends of the Library and the PFD also be invited to the work session. He also suggested we get copies of the Facilities Needs Report and the report that the staff committee has just done on alternate delivery services to the Northside to the City Council members before the work session.

J. Gordon will go over the geotechnical report with David. David asked inasmuch if we have steel H-pile under the current building, can it be used to hold up a parking garage? J. Gordon suggested looking at a 1983 report by others regarding borings on these corners and in the middle in the back. There is dense sand on this end where a one story parking with a deck for the plaza could be built without worrying about the piles. J. could put some cross sections together if that would be of value to answer Council's questions.

David said the question we will get is, isn't it expensive to build in Lee Park because we need to pile. J. Gordon said yes, it would be expensive with a second level of parking. Alan said we do have a responsibility to provide parking for library users. If there is a hole in the ground the City may consider it worthwhile adding another parking level. The Parking Commission needs to be aware of the possibilities. Pam added that we have information to share with them, but we want to hear from them as well.

David said the proper approach is to think big as long as it is well thought out. We can potentially make it smaller if we can afford it. We should build extra room that we can expand in to. Maybe we would look for a potential tenant like the City of Bellingham, Whatcom County or the Senior Center.

Vicky thanked Pam for putting together the draft agenda for the joint work session. It's a basis to work from.

David asked about the case for or against building a branch. Pam said that will be covered on the agenda.

Pam explained the presentation to the Council on January 22nd is an official City Council meeting. They will have been discussing with us a few days prior to the presentation. We wanted it not to be a repeat of that discussion. This will be a presentation that the public will see. It will be filmed by BTV10. We will recap the high points of previous discussions. We will have a BTV10 production about the library that we can show. January 22nd is the meeting when the Library Board asks the Council to approve the site. The presentation will be at both the afternoon and evening Council meetings. The City Council will schedule the timing of presentation. The City Council secretary will be able to give the time the Library is scheduled the day before the meeting. (NOTE: it was subsequently learned that the presentation is EVENING only.)

Pam also put together a tentative time line, opening the doors in 2011. Alan asked how early could the project cost be confirmed; and if the design work is scheduled after the vote, what will we show the public before the vote. Alan commented that we need a good preliminary design to convince the voters. Pam said we should be able to have a preliminary design before the vote.

Vicky asked at what point does another committee begin or planning for another committee that will get the bond publicized and go into a strategy phase. Pam answered that we need to find someone who is willing to take this on and head up the campaign. They should take it from there. It could be as early as January that they would start strategizing. Alan mentioned that there are a few people who have handled past campaigns and have been involved in the school campaigns who have expressed interest in the past. David added as soon as we hear from the City Council in a definitive way, the Board will have a meeting to discuss sequences, dates, and a concept drawn out. Pam said it will be important to schedule some education sessions to learn the restrictions for staff and the Library Board during a campaign.

Northside and Delivery of Library Services: Lizz thanked the committee who worked with her on this report: Donna Grasdock, Helen Scholtz, Jane Lowrey, Suzanne Carlson-Prandini, and Linda Langey. The purpose of the study was to describe how we currently deliver services throughout the city and how to outline further methods that we might use to deliver those services. This is a draft report. It begins with describing the current delivery of services, comparisons to other libraries of our size, presents options, and ends with a preliminary outline of the next steps.

David said it would be very helpful to have an executive summary titled, Questions and Answers of Branch Libraries, and make the case. Lizz explained the committee didn't want to go into this with a particular decision made, but wanted to take a look at the options. David said the public need to see definite descriptions of what a branch might be. The public may be thinking in terms of a full service branch, and that is not what it might be. Pam said the final draft will include descriptions of the different levels of branches that we could have and that might already exist in the county. We could show a comparison of the sizes and costs of branches with living examples in the county. David commented that maybe when people talk about a branch library, we explain to them we cannot build a miniature central building, but we could potentially build a facility with a few services. Call it a library presence instead of a branch. Faye asked how does the American Library Association define a branch? Pam said there is no set definition; it should be locally defined. Generally a branch is an off-shoot of the main library that serves a particular portion of the community. Lizz explained branches do not relieve what happens behind the scenes at the Central Library. The Central Library is two separate entities: the public part and the administrative part, which has all of the functioning for all of the service outlets throughout the community.

J. Gordon asked about the real purpose of this document. Lizz answered the purpose of the document was to describe currently provided services and to outline methods where we might provide further services to the community, concentrating on taking care of areas of the city that are growing in population. Alan mentioned that a few years ago the Barkley area had asked about a branch. Pam said we determined it was important to look at community wide library services. J. Gordon said he sees David asking for more

information and justification for a central library system. This is a separate document and issue. The fundamental premise is that it is apparent that you have to have a central library. David explained that what is driving him is that in the last three years more than 50% of the questions regarding building a new facility centered around the idea why not build branches. We have to address that. Pam said this is addressed in this report. The Library Board can decide what our level of services is going to be, and it's the Library Board's purview to develop policies such as this. As an outcome of this report, it is hoped that the Board has additional information to help answer the question of branches. Or, when we reach a certain population we are going to have a fully developed regional branch library in the Northside. We have some guidelines in the report that the Board can enact, such as a library presence within three mile radius of each of the facilities. The Board sets the standards. The Whatcom County Library System is an example of a rural system that does not have a central library. They have a central services office on Northwest that is not open to the public. They have a collection there at the delivery center. They operate all branch libraries. This report provides a variety of service alternatives.

Fairhaven Condition Assessment Update: Lizz met with Myron Carlson about what needs can be met by Facilities. Lizz will have a report of what those will be at the next board meeting. This will allow the Board to make decisions on what needs to go forward as capital items. Lizz will work with BOLA to get the final report as well. Lizz said the discussion needs to go further than with her and Myron. Pam will meet with Dick McKinley, Lizz and Myron. Alan suggested a Board Member should be included in the discussion.

Reports: Faye said the Fairhaven Birthday Party was a big success. Vicky commented that it was very nicely done with music and policeman in their old time uniforms. There was a nice article in the newspaper, and it was a credit to the library and to the Fairhaven Friends.

Vicky went to the Jazz Rent Party which was delightful. The appetizers were good, and music by Pearl Django was very nice. It was a great kick-off for the Jazz series. Vicky passed out brochures on the events. Pam mentioned that we were the only ones in Washington State and one of 50 in the nation to receive the jazz grant. We have a great partnership with Jud Sherwood of the Jazz Project. It is a film, discussion and performance series.

Pam reported the Friends book sale in December brought a record of \$11,882. It would be great to have the Friends come to a Board meeting and do a Board informational topic presentation. We thank them for everything they do.

In January Pam will bring a 2007 calendar of Board topics, so the Board will know what will be talked about in advance. Pam will also bring accomplishments and goals that the staff has accomplished and are looking forward to. In January we do the Library Director's annual review. Pam will talk with David about how to proceed.

Lizz passed out Bellingham Public Library news articles. Lizz highlighted the adult and teen programming that is new this year. We will be producing an adult and teens calendar as well as a children's calendar each month.

Next Special Board Meeting – January 10, 2007 will begin at 5:30 p.m.

Joint Work Session with Library Board and City Council -- January 17, 2007 will begin at 7:00 p.m. in Library Lecture Room.

Presentation to City Council afternoon meeting & evening – January 22, 2007 in City Council Chambers (**Note: evening only – 7 p.m.**)

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – January 23, 2007 will begin at 1:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees