

Special Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, December 05, 2006 - Library Board Room
01:00 PM - 03:20 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: Alan Kemble, Vice-Chairperson: David Edelstein, Faye Hill, Vicky Marshall, J. Gordon

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pam Kiesner; Lizz Roberts; and Gladys Fullford

Others: John Watts, City Council Liaison, Tom Glenn, Friends of BPL, Patricia Decker, Public Facilities District Director, Sam Taylor, Bellingham Herald, Calene LeBeau, Whatcom Community Foundation, David Christensen, James Zervas, Bob Ross, Terry Moore, Claude Hill, Margaret Ziegler, Ruth Baacke, Cliff Baacke, Velma Wendt and Jack Weiss

Called to Order: Meeting was called to order by Chairperson, Alan Kemble.

Executive Session: To consider acquisition of real property by lease or by purchase.

Regular Session: Alan reported the proposal for private property was not a viable proposition, and will not be pursued; therefore there is no action required from the Executive Session.

Approve/modify agenda: Faye Hill asked the Board to consider reversing the items under Strategic Planning. The agenda was approved with the reversal of the items.

Whatcom Community Foundation: Calene LeBeau, Chief Executive Officer of WCF was invited back to answer questions about setting up a non-endowed fund. Pam explained that there is the possibility of a donor giving a donation for the new library. Pam had proposed that the Board set up a non-endowed fund with the Foundation.

Calene explained the library's endowment fund was set up a number of years ago, and was a gift from a donor. The fund is invested, and in perpetuity we receive an annual check for the interest earned. A non-endowed fund can be totally spent down. The Foundation provides the administrative services of investment, bookkeeping, and acknowledgement letters to donors.

Alan asked about the endowment fund. If the library board and the foundation board agreed, could the endowment fund principal be drawn down? Calene answered that only happens in very rare, critical conditions. She doesn't believe the WCF Board would approve drawing it down for building projects. That is not what endowment funds are for.

Alan asked if the library board would have complete control over the expenditures of a non-endowed fund. Calene explained the way the WCF was set up under the Federal tax structure. A person gives money to the Foundation, and that person gets the tax benefit. The funds can be designated for an organization. The WCF board is there to make sure nothing illegal happens. The Library Board would say how they want the money distributed, and the WCF Board would approve it.

Structurally when money is given to the fund, it actually belongs to WCF. The reason it is set up that way is that if there is a disaster the WCF Board has variance power. The WCF Board would follow the wishes and intent of the donor.

It is the WCF Board's responsibility to make sure they are following all of the rules and laws for donations. They will advise donors how best to gift the money to organizations. WCF is here to help build the community.

Faye asked if WCF does promotional work to help raise funds. Calene answered that they do not do that. They do try to make the funds as public as possible through their annual report. They do let donors know what organizations are trying to raise funds. They do put ads in organization's programs that talk about endowments with WCF. They brainstorm with organizations, but they do not conduct fundraising campaigns.

David asked about the fees. Calene responded that it depends on the amount of money in the fund and whether it is endowed or non-endowed. Non-endowed are a little higher. If it is less than \$500,000 they could be 0.7 to 2%. The administrative fees that are collected are granted back into the community in the spring grant rally. When funds go over \$1,000,000 the fees go down to 0.5%.

It is a simple one-page form to set up a non-endowed fund. All of the IRS reporting is done through the WCF.

Pam explained she advises donors that it helps us if their donations are as flexible as possible, but it does happen that donors want to give to a specific item or project. There will be a variety of gift opportunities when our campaign for the new library begins. Calene said it is possible to set up sub funds for specifics, but you don't want to get too specific.

Communications: A resolution in support of the main branch of the Bellingham Public Library staying in the arts district and near the civic campus, signed by a number of community members.

Public Comment: None

Strategic Planning: Pam pursued a question raised by a member of the public about the historic preservation of this building and whether this was a historic facility. Pam talked to David Christensen, who is on the local Historic Preservation Commission, and to staff at the Planning Department, who contacted the State Architectural Historian. His opinion is that this building in no way meets any eligibility for state or federal historical designation. He will send us a letter with this opinion.

Pam met with Tom Meyers yesterday. He is with Meyer, Scherer & Rockcastle Architectural firm out of Minnesota. He is working with Ferndale community on their building planning. He suggested a per square foot cost much higher than we had been advised. He looked at the lawn, and thought it looked small to be able to build and stage everything that we want to do. The architects will be able to help address this during the design phase. Pam passed out written comments from the staff on building on this block.

David Christensen reminded the Board that earlier their group brought forth a letter stating that the best location may not necessarily be here. The task they were given for this presentation was to see if it is possible to build a new building in the lawn area and stay in the building while new building was under construction, and to show this in phases.

Terry Moore presented the volumetric study on the current block. Terry said it is possible, not easy. Their charge was not only how to build a library, but also a public space (auditorium) that would handle 300 seats, office and two floors of underground parking. Their solution was to create a couple ramps to the underground parking, which would provide 114 to 250 stalls. The library's main floor and public spaces would be created at street level.

The objective was to create a city-center space that would be highly utilized. This could be a successful space by making the plaza face south with natural light. It could be linked to the new Children's Museum

and other arts elements. By placing the Library in this location, with these connections, there is the possibility of creating a more unified city experience, drawing the downtown and civic center together. The other issue is to maintain a nice relationship between the library building and City Hall building.

The proposal is for 11,500 square feet on the first floor, 26,000 sq ft on both the second and third floors. A sky-lit corridor is proposed with bridges crossing over. A public plaza would be created that ties the links together. Stairs would come up out of the garage. Garage elevators would be built after the current building is demolished. There is a total of 80,000 sq ft. The new building would be 20 feet away from current building. The plan goes right up to the curb and parking stalls of Lottie Street. A nice space was kept in front of City Hall.

Pam asked if it was preferable to place a building there while the current building remained, or should this building be demolished first so an architect could work with the entire block. Terry answered that it would be like having a whole new space to work with.

Terry said if there are three levels, it is critical to have a sense of relationship and openness, so you have the feeling that it is one space rather than separate levels.

John asked if it wasn't better to have the heavier stacks on the lower level and public spaces higher. Terry said yes, but they were charged with having the public spaces on the main floor. The public spaces could be built as part of the second phase.

If there are three stories, it would be about 13 feet per floor. It would be about as high as the current building.

One sketch shows the open feeling through the middle from Lottie Street. The view could go through to Central Avenue and all the way down the alley to the Douglas Building.

David Edelstein commented that if the building was demolished first, the building could be held to two stories by coming closer to Central Avenue and off Lottie Street. There could be more sky-lighted interior space. It could be more grandiose.

David Christensen said he believes libraries are typically square. He mentioned that the library could come out in a fan shape from the lobby.

Staging area during construction would be Lottie Street and parking area all around the site.

General costs per square foot need to be assigned. A second level of underground parking has extra costs for de-watering. Structural and floating slabs were discussed. Decisions need to be made, conditions and volume information is needed to quantify numbers in order to state costs.

The Board commented that the drawings and sketches are beautiful. The digital copies have been sent to Pam.

J. Gordon asked for comments on saving the current building during the construction vs. making it go away now.

Jim Zervas commented on the expense of moving out, the difficulty of bringing the building into a functional relation to the program, the cost of remodel. Terry added the psychological aspect for the citizens in tearing down what they think is a functional building. The reward is the plaza and being able to link it to the rest of the town. Bob Ross commented that there might not be a gigantic advantage to working with the whole site first other than the three stories cast a big shadow. He likes Terry's idea of having a one story portion come out over the plaza in phase two.

The project should take two years for phase one, and up to three years for the whole program.

Pam mentioned that she met with the Mayor. He has stated that he would have difficulty with the building covering from one street to the other street and butted up against Lottie Street and standing three stories high, possibly blocking City Hall.

John commented that this type of drawings and ideas are exactly what the board needs to visualize things. They will be valuable concepts to show to the public.

David Edelstein asked about the percent of savings to be able to build in one phase against the moving out costs. Terry answered that 20% of the module is in the foundations. Construction of all the foundations at once, all the piles, and all of the parking garage would be a big savings in both time frame and money.

Jim Zervas asked if 500 parking stalls are needed. Would the City or County pay for the parking? Terry added that parking could be extended under Lottie Street.

David Edelstein asked if piling would be needed for one level of parking without the building. J. Gordon answered not outside the peat bog area. The plaza may not need nearly the piling as the building. David would like to see the hard surface removed and a lawn installed on Lottie Street and Grand Avenue.

David Edelstein asked David Christensen about the better site he mentioned earlier. David Christensen answered the owner of the post office site would be willing to be a proponent of the process if he knew there was interest. David said his group thought it would be a very good site. It looks out over the park, is a very iconic structure looking up at it, and is a very powerful location. When he presented this site, he heard that there was no interest; that it was not in the center of business.

Terry jokingly commented that he was severely criticized by the group for making the current library block, and these plans, look so appealing.

Further questions can be coordinated through Pam to the group.

David said the Board should educate themselves to the true cost of moving out of the building temporarily and what are the opportunities of where we could go. Pam said she will begin the process.

J. Gordon asked about hiring a professional consultant to make recommendations. Pam suggested deciding on a site first and then go into consultancy.

Faye and Alan suggested a list of questions from the board members, and see what information Pam and Lizz can find before detailed consultant work is contracted.

Pam said we could work with David Christensen who would work with Rory Woolsey to determine what the cost savings would be to do the project in one phase (e.g. demolishing current building first) vs. multiple phases.

John said the other question is whether you want one or two levels of parking. David said one level of parking is cheaper not under a building, but under a building the second level might be cheaper than one level standing alone. John said the amount of need for parking is another part of the question.

John met with the Parking Commission. They are just beginning to look at how much parking is needed. They have not addressed this block. David suggested a stand alone one level parking garage with a deck over it that did not need piling. One phase could be the new building with two levels of parking. Twenty years from now parking could be added under the lawn between City Hall and the Library. J. Gordon said the peat bog does go under Lottie Street. There are back water deposits from Whatcom Creek.

J. Gordon asked about the likelihood of money coming from another group into building this parking. John answered the Parking Commission and Public Works have been given wider responsibility for managing the parking facilities for the city. They are working together.

Pam said she met with Malcolm Fleming, COB Chief Administrative Officer, Tara Sundin from Planning, Dick McKinley from Public Works, (and Patricia Decker from PFD was unable to attend, but provided input.) There was interest in working together in terms of a shared parking structure. Patricia Decker commented that it depends on how many players you want to involve. The PFD at this point does not have funding to build parking. It may be that some time in the future it may have revenues that would help contribute to parking. The political part is that you do not want the library to pay for parking it doesn't need. Maybe there is someone who could pay for the extra parking that could be put in now. It could be the Parking Commission, the County, or it could be bonded and it is paid for by the parking revenues.

John said the library bond is for libraries. Anything additional needs to come from other funds. That would probably come from the City Councilmanic bond. There would have to be a way of paying it back through parking revenues.

David commented that it a community benefit to put all of the parking underground while the building is being constructed and add parking beyond what we have now. Alan added that he thought the Parking Commission is the logical entity to step up with a proposal. Alan said he had no problem with extra parking; he just had a problem with paying for it.

David asked if the library today was not in this building and there was no other building here, would this be the best spot. Alan, Faye and Vicky agreed that it was.

John stated the Board needs to determine the preferred site. That allows other work to continue. Further questions and definitive answers would be logical outcome of the decision. A lot of answers could come from a design competition.

Pam asked if they were comfortable making a decision. J. Gordon asked if there was sufficient information to make a decision today. Faye made the motion to take the Municipal Court off of the list and that the Board chooses this block as our preferred site for the new library. Vicky seconded. The motion carries unanimously.

Alan thanked the Bellingham Planning Group for helping the Board to focus. Vicky thanked Pam for all the behind the scenes work she has done. Faye thanked the visitors who came today and bearing with the Board.

The Board contemplated how to take this to Council. Pam said the City Council only meets one more time this year. Tim Douglas had suggested the Board make a presentation outside of their regular City Council session, and that we would invite them and the community to a presentation. John said the Council reorganizes January 8th, and suggests a meeting after that date.

David suggested firming up some loose ends and answering some questions before the Board goes to City Council. They are looking at some time in January.

John asks that Alan Kemble be invited as ex-officio to the meeting with City Council. Pam will email the Mayor and staff right away, so they are aware of the decision.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – December 19, 2006 will begin at 2:30 p.m. in the Library Lecture Room.

Meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees