

Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, September 19, 2006 - Library Lecture Room
01:00 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, Vicky Marshall, David Edelstein

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pam Kiesner; Lizz Roberts; Gladys Fullford

Others: John Watts, City Council Liaison, Tom Glenn, Friends of BPL, John Stark, Bellingham Herald, Cliff Baacke, Ruth Baacke, Michael Lilliquist, Margaret Ziegler, Patty Davenport, Bonnie and Ed Chytraus, Becky Pillai, Darlene McLeod, Stan Snapp, and JUDITY Wiseman

The Library Board was called to order at 1:00 p.m. First order of business was an **Executive Session** for the purposes of considering acquisition of real property by lease or by purchase.

Called to Order: Regular session was called to order at 1:45 p.m. by Vice-Chair Alan Kemble; the agenda was approved.

Public Comment: Michael Lilliquist asked the Board to change directions. Michael said it is misguided to expand to a large library downtown. He said a better solution would be branches that would serve as center points of urban villages with the library evenly distributed. Michael commented that the library is not just a place for books, but also a community center and meeting place. He said branch libraries may cost more, but they are worth more in terms of the community and the vision for Bellingham. Michael said he likes the green space the way it is and thinks we would lose it if the Board chose one of the other sites.

Alan explained the Board is discussing the aspects of branch libraries as well.

Minutes approved: August 15, 2006 regular meeting minutes approved as read.
September 6, 2006 special meeting minutes approved as read with the correction that the next regular board meeting is September 19, 2006, not October 17, 2006.

Claims approved: August, 2006 general fund \$40,171.78; gift fund \$100.70

Statistics: Vicky Marshall noted both visitors and holds are way up; 33% is very significant. Pam Kiesner said circulation is also up year to date. Alan mentioned that figures are changing faster than they have in the past. Room bookings seem to be used more for free. There is no charge for library use, Friends book sales, and other City departments. Pam also mentioned that for profit fees for room bookings are up at Fairhaven. John Watts remarked there is competition for meeting space within the City.

Communications: Pam mentioned the communication received from Bill Hinely in the board packets. There are copies of a communication from John Servais in front of the board members that was received yesterday. Michael Lilliquist presented his letter to the Board today.

Reports: Faye Hill visited the Eugene Public Library. Eugene is twice the size of Bellingham. Their new building is twice the size of what we are planning. It is a wonderful library. It had no green space, but was located across the street from the transit center.

John Watts mentioned that last week there was a presentation by Parks & Recreation Director, Paul Leuthold, to the Parks Advisory Board about the idea the Library Board has discussed using some part of Maritime Heritage Center Park as a potential site for a new library. The Parks Board said it would be a reasonable request as long as the geotechnical work was done properly and arrangements were made for compensating parks for any green space that might be used. John also said the City Council approved an ordinance that sets up a Greenways Advisory Committee for the next Greenways session.

Pam mentioned the library expects as part of its communications program to have a web page up soon that will include the facility assessment, documents we have about planning, maps, photos of other libraries, photos of this and Fairhaven library, and frequently asked questions and answers.

Nancy Pearl was a keynote speaker at the Literacy Council breakfast. The library engaged her in cooperation with Whatcom County Library System (WCLS) to give a Reader's Advisory Workshop. There were also representatives from Bellingham Technical School, Whatcom Community College and Bellingham Public Schools.

(Tim Douglas arrived at this point in the meeting.)

Pam noted that the City of Bellingham has a new city logo. All city departments including the library are being asked to use this logo as their department logo.

There are copies of the budget detail on the table. Pam has discussed with the Information and Technology Services Department (ITSD) that our department needs additional assistance in backup for our Library Computer Technician. Pam's request to the city for additional staffing was not approved. The Library Computer Technician position will become an employee of ITSD, and will be in their budget. Doug Dickinson will be cross trained with other ITSD technicians, and ITSD tech staff will be cross trained to help the library as backup when Doug is not here. Marty Mulholland, ITSD Director, is working to get all the tech personnel under one roof. The library has a completely separate system with Horizon, and works very closely with WCLS. The library also has a huge public computing component with our internet service. Doug's position will remain primarily onsite at the library because of his critical role with the public computers.

Library Board of Trustees Transitions: Tim Douglas' appointment as Interim Mayor begins November 1st, creating a board vacancy. Alan will have served 10 years on the board as of December 31st, which creates a second vacancy. Pam provided copies of the Library Board Policy with the bylaws to the Board. Interested candidates can fill out an application and turn it in to the Mayor's office. The Mayor has always welcomed recommendations from the Director and the Library Board. Then the Mayor will recommend replacements to the City Council, and the City Council approves. Pam suggested discussing board member qualities and qualifications: City resident, possibly a geographical diversity, library advocate, supporter, articulate, team-oriented and maybe someone with bond issue experience. Tim agreed that while the bond issue is independent from the board and has to be conducted separately, having someone who understands how bond issues work could be of benefit to the Board. Alan suggested a financial background would be helpful. John added that the Library Board is unique in that the Board hires the Director. It is a position of responsibility. A member needs to be able to attend meetings regularly and take the job seriously. Vicky said being a team member who can look at all of the issues and think about the whole community was important. A Board member should be able to look at the whole picture and see what is best for the city. Faye added the person should be an active library user. Alan said board members look at a lot of financial information, cooperate with other city departments, set policy, and serve on sub-committees and selection committees. It demands some time commitment, but is generally rewarding. Applications can be found on the website www.cob.org/Mayor/boards_commissions/index.htm. Tim suggested that since the Board is exploring actively the issues around the way library services are provided throughout the community, it would be important that a person recommended not see themselves as a person to advocate for a particular area. Vicky added a board member needs to be someone who can look at the needs and the picture of the whole community.

The Board needs to either ask Alan as Vice Chair to take over the Chair when Tim leaves, or elect a new chairperson. Faye moved for Alan to take the Chair position until the end of the year. Vicky seconded and nominated David to serve as Vice Chair. The nominations were approved by consensus.

Since two members will not be able to attend the regular meeting on October 17, the date will be changed to October 5th at 1:30 p.m. If an executive session is necessary, it will be held at 1:00 p.m. A notice will be sent to the Bellingham Herald.

Alan asked Cliff Baacke (who was in the audience) if he was interested in coming back on the board. As a first step Cliff should fill out an application form. Vicky said she would be willing to speak to anyone interested in being a board member. John said there could be an announcement made at the next City Council meeting. It would then be publicized on Channel 10.

Strategic Planning: Pam gave background on what we are doing for community library services. The Assistant Director is responsible for outreach and branch services. We are doing a study of what our current branch services entails. We are dovetailing outreach to nursing homes, retirement centers with our study of outreach into the community. That could mean services such as a computer kiosk, a book drop-off, a pickup point, a 500 square foot presence in a grocery store or coop, or a medium sized branch library. A draft report will be available by the end of the year. Maps from the Planning Department are provided in the board packets. The maps show 5, 10, and 15 minute access to the Central Library, the Fairhaven Branch, and from both libraries combined. The maps do not take into consideration traffic lights or traffic congestion.

There are a couple of pages from the Washington Public Library statistical study in the Board packets that show which communities in the state have branch libraries and how many, and why they have branches. How do they define a branch? Stevens County Rural District says they have 9 branches, and some of them are called library stations and are only 500 square feet. This will be another piece of the puzzle as the draft report is put together for the board.

Pam met with Linda Lambert, Library Director at Whatcom Community College. Pam asked her if there was any possibility of working together on a combined northern presence. Linda is very open to possibility of working together.

The Fairhaven Condition Assessment Study is being done. October 5th is too soon for them to come to a board meeting; they will be invited to the November meeting. The draft preliminary report will be mailed to the board members for their comments and questions.

We provide communitywide library service through our Fairhaven Branch, the Hagen drop-off boxes, and 29 places served with community outreach.

Vicky asked if there had been any more business with Barkley. Pam said there had been no recent meetings. Tim said the first townhouse is underway. Barkley representatives have said they have an interest in a working partnership with the library for a northern presence.

John asked Pam for a thumbnail sketch of WCLS and our relationship with them. Pam explained we have a reciprocal borrowing agreement with WCLS. They have 9 branches, a bookmobile, and a central administration office. We share all materials and an automated library catalog system with WCLS. We meet with them on a regular basis. We talk and work with them about cooperative purchases and other ventures such as a staff training with Nancy Pearl. They have a separate administration and different funding mechanism.

Tim asked about the commute times in systems that have other branches. Pam answered they are very individualized to each system. Every library planning expert would say you need to develop your own

standards. But, the standard you hear quite often is a 15-20 minute access to a public library service. Tim commented that this is why we are looking at the total library services and how we deliver them. There is a cost to providing branch libraries. Many people think having a branch library is a community building function more than it is a library function. It is a different purpose and objective.

Pam said there are certain library functions that are best implemented in a centralized way: Ordering, delivering, processing, cataloging, selection. Most of the staff do these functions as well as provide public service. Tim commented that if the city went to an option of staffing a much smaller central dissemination point of a facility or warehouse, there would be a certain point where they wouldn't have as much to do. There would be no patron contact, nor would the patrons benefit from the staff's expertise. Vicky added that once you establish something, the city is being pressured to provide continual funding for that branch or space.

Tim said the Barkley Company sees some kind of library presence in their part of town as being something that helps build a sense of community. They realize that it may not be appropriate to do a full size branch there. Vicky mentioned the biggest pickup in the city is at Barkley, so we know that there are people who may use a branch in the Barkley area. We will have "buy in" from that part of town. Vicky has talked with Lizz Roberts about what can be provided at a low cost maintenance.

Central Library Site Selection: Faye and Vicky did the assessment of the Maritime Heritage Park site. Faye said the idea of this site was very new. What is in the packet is a draft of the review. The perception of accessibility to the site is very small. The restructure of traffic on Holly Street and professional design of access roads may increase the perception of accessibility of site. We don't know the full impact of traffic on Holly Street. This site could stimulate economic development of adjacent sites and waterfront. Tim mentioned an example would be that if the library were sited on the south end he could imagine a bagels and books kind of event which families can come and make that a family day. There are already existing small businesses in that area of downtown that could potentially interact quite effectively with the library.

Pam provided some additional information. We had a map that showed the various city-owned pieces of property, looking up and to the right of the amphitheatre. All the city-owned parcels equal .72 acres or 31,363 square feet. Our desired site size is 65,000 square feet. Part of that 65,000 is green space, and there is already plenty of green space here. Trillium privately owns property in this area. The 31,363 sq ft is not contiguous. There is a finger of the city owned land that goes behind the parking lot owned by Trillium. The city-owned portion does not meet the 65,000 sq ft requirement established by the Library Board.

Vicky said the hard part is the idea of putting something in a place where we don't know what else will be there in 5, 10, 15 years. It is taking a risk with the unknown. It would be a beautiful view with windows facing the bay and walkway.

John asked if the Board had talked to the R/UDAT architects about doing conceptual volumetric studies of two sites mentioned at the last meeting. Pam said they are very interested in doing it. Pam let them know that the board did not know yet which portion of the park, and did not give them the go ahead. Once we reach the point that we want to engage them, we can do so.

Faye added she thought this process was very important. If the building is too high, it would spoil the view from the museum; yet if we don't have a lot of space, we have to go up.

The Board had also asked about title searches. The City Attorney and Public Works Department are gathering the title information, and are doing an analysis on them.

Alan said the Board needs to decide how they wish to proceed on this. Should they continue to look at the two sites, concentrate on one site, are they going to ask the R/UDAT Group to come in, and where are they going to ask them to place the building?

David Edelstein said he was not ready to enjoin the R/UDAT Group. If the Board is considering the left side of the park, they could go forward with discussion of sites. If they are considering the south side of the park, they should go back into executive session. There is private property adjacent to where the library site would be that the board would potentially want to talk to that owner or owners to see if all of our plans were of like mind prior to making a commitment as to where to put the library.

Faye said there are different positions to consider: up against the bluff or closer to the front and private property. She asked if there is information on any soil differences. Alan said we don't have enough information to know the soil composition, except that a lot of it is likely to be fill, but someone from the Planning Department has said that wasn't necessarily true. Alan asked if they should go ahead with a fairly minor soil study before going to R/UDAT.

David had a conversation with a geotechnical engineer. David paraphrased what he said...anywhere in Maritime Heritage Park on flat lawn including the neighbor where Boss Tweed is located signed an agreement with the state of Washington to not excavate or build below the site of the lawn. David does not think that meant for excavation or piling. The geotechnical engineer also said the bank is fill. Before we get too creative or spend money, David suggests the board question the geotechnical engineer on what makes sense from his viewpoint.

Alan asked if David was suggesting dropping bore holes all over the area. David answered no, the general opinion is that the majority of Maritime Park is landfill. The community would be well advised to drill test holes prior to drawing up a quality building. Another concern is methane.

Tim said some years ago the city put in an irrigation system in Maritime Heritage Park south of the creek. In that excavation process a lot of pipe and stuff was turned up. Tim's guess is that there is very little likelihood that there is anything in that soil that is of a toxic nature or anything that would affect the public health, but we would want to have some confidence about that. Tim has asked if there was methane in the collection system at the Environmental Learning Center. He believes there is hardly any or none.

David commented that if the State says you shall put in a collection system, you will do what the State says. If the State says you will not excavate, you will not excavate. David suggests we continue systematically. First, in executive session, discuss whether we are comfortable with land available or should we talk to private property owners on our borders. Second, talk to geotechnical expert, and see what historical knowledge they have. Third, talk to the R/UDAT folks.

Pam asked if a study would already have been done when the park was put in. David answered that a geotechnical study would be for constructing a building. He doesn't believe they were contemplating building on the park.

Vicky commented that Pam sent the board information that made a lot of sense to her, and changed her thinking. Alan said if it involved private property, they would talk about it in private session.

David mentioned that when we talked about either renovating or adding to the central library, we've been looking at many sites. When we talked about the library block, we found that we cannot add another floor on top; and came to the conclusion that we wouldn't want to build another library in Lee Park and leave this building here. David was not a proponent of demolishing this building because he thought it had value and could be used for another purpose. In all fairness, we should revisit the library block.

A new plan would be to build a new library/civic building on the library block. There will come a day in the future that this land will become so valuable that this building will have to be demolished. Assuming that city hall and the county courthouse stay where they are, this is indeed the civic center. If this building

were to be judged surplus if the library moved away and the city decided it would be more expensive to renovate this building than the value would be, the building would be demolished.

David's new idea would be to build a library building in the park closer to Commercial Street with an entrance to underground parking that would be along side the library. Knock down the library, put in parking, take out Lottie Street, make it green right up to city hall, take out Grand Avenue, make it green between the library and courthouse, and put all of the parking we have on those streets plus more in two levels of parking under this new building and drain it out to daylight at the creek.

Build a six story building with two levels of parking under grade, two level library floors and two civic floors that could house city or county offices. We would have a good park on Central Avenue. David believes we could handle all of our transportation needs on Commercial Street. It is a far reaching view, but if we go to this block, that is what we need to consider.

Tim asked John what role the city parking system could play for this whole area. John said from his opinion, the council last year set up the parking commission with much broader duties and responsibilities than it had in the past. They moved to make it more of a recommending body and not just care-taking of parking spaces.

There has been an outstanding need for civic center parking for a long time. The Public Facilities District (PFD) has gotten into the act. Their charter may have some money that could be used for parking, but it is probably not sufficient to do a monster garage. It is necessary to have that sort of planning effort take place to see what we are going to be like in the future. We have to start planning for it right now.

John would like to see the Parking Commission plan brought into the broader discussion with the city and possibly the county to come up with a plan and specifically funding that portion of parking that the library does not need to fund. He cannot see burdening any library building with parking needs of the city and county. That has to be a broader planning effort and a cooperative effort to succeed. It is the right time to bring up these questions to the City Council and the Parking Commission. He suggests that would be the Library Board's decision to consider doing so as part of its presentation to City Council. David added that would be a wonderful idea for the Parking Commission to build a parking garage, and we build a library on top of it.

Alan asked if it was the wish of the board to go to the Parking Commission and see what plans they have developed or what they are interested in doing. Tim agreed that it would be his wish as the immediate step right now, but they are not fully set up.

John said part of this discussion has been rolling for awhile with the PFD and also the waterfront redevelopment. We know both of those are going to have substantial parking needs. The project itself has not been fully identified. The funding has not been identified. It makes sense to have this as a companion to the library plan in considering sites, but not necessarily as a burden to the library. The library needs to stand on its own as a public meeting ground and not a parking facility.

Tim said it is important to avoid any impression amongst the broader public that this is really about getting parking, using the library as an excuse.

David added that being a library board trustee does not mean that you don't have a fiduciary responsibility to the community. If we were to build a library here and we put no parking here, it would not be right thing to do. Building a two level parking garage is the right thing to do. If we had two levels of parking and eliminated the streets and surface parking on two borders, we would be on a world class civic park.

Alan commented that the geotechnical surveys done on this block show that there is a significant increased cost for two levels of parking. Alan agrees that we cannot build a new building anywhere in

the city without providing some parking. We have an obligation to provide parking. Alan said we should advance the idea of working with the Parking Commission.

John agreed that this is too big an idea for any one department to carry on its own. There needs to be a general discussion of a conceptual plan. It needs to be run by the council to get them to say to study it and come back with proposals.

David would also like to contemplate building a building where the library or civic use could expand or contract. Maybe we could offer the County some office space to facilitate building a first class building.

Faye said she would not want to do that if it ever denied us the possibility of expanding to a third floor. Alan replied that would be part of the lease.

Pam said we would not want to limit ourselves to two floors at this point. It could be that we would need three floors depending on the footprint of the building. We wouldn't want a building with greater than 25 to 30,000 square feet on one floor in terms of being able to operate effectively as a library. Pam assumes that we are talking about parking cooperatively on any of the sites we are talking about. We could see if someone could come to the October 5th meeting to talk to the Board, or we could go to them.

Tim said this would be guided by the Board's decision on the best site.

Tim referred back to Pam's conversation with Whatcom Community College Library Director, Linda Lambert. Tim hopes to speak to the WCC president and encourage our library as being a part of a presence in that area. WTA is planning a new transfer station there. The park and trail plan is going on. It is an opportune moment to look at what might be possible.

Alan commented that WCC has a beautiful library. It would be nice if it somehow could be worked into the community as a whole.

Vicky agreed. The more partnerships and connections we can make with all the outlying areas, that is what we need to go for. The public needs to see us as an organization that is reaching out to all areas whether it is a presence or a branch.

Faye asked about a motion to bring this property back into consideration.

John said the idea was to switch the current library building location with the park behind it. David added that the grade would be raised on the library block. It would not work as well if you left Commercial Street and Lottie Street. You would be getting hidden parking and a civic building that gives a library or the city or county room for expansion.

Faye spoke about demolishing the current building. She wants to do what is best for our community now and in the future. If it is true that this building would be demolished eventually if we go off to some other site, we would look back and say we could have built there.

Alan asked about public reaction to demolition of the current building. Can we produce a scintillating scenario that the public says we are giving up what they see as a functioning building. We know that there are all kinds of flaws in the building, we can't expand it for library purposes, we know that seismically it needs a lot of upgrades. There would need to be a big public campaign to explain why this building should be demolished.

David mentioned that he was one of the strongest proponents for leaving this building standing and for its adaptive reuse. In trying to do what is best for the community, David is trying to do better than excellent. He can't say that the Municipal Court site is better than excellent. He is also not convinced that Maritime Heritage Park is better than excellent although it has potential. He does believe that this library block with

the closure of Lottie Street and Grand Avenue has the potential of being better than excellent. He does not like the idea of demolishing a good building. The problem is that the building is in the wrong location to be a good building.

Alan talked about vacating streets. He doesn't see Lottie Street as a problem, but what is the likelihood of City Council vacating Grand Avenue.

John answered there would be a rigorous examination of the kind of activity of the city and the access of emergency vehicles and the like. Public Works would undertake that analysis and make recommendations to the City Council. There would be public hearings before the Council would make a decision whether the streets were necessary to remain open. There might be provisions where emergency access allowed for fire trucks, ambulances and the like or deliveries. There are various levels of closure. It could be a pedestrian mall, limited access, open or closed depending on time of day or night. There is a whole range of possibilities than could happen. It depends on what good use is intended and analysis that derives from that. It is not something done lightly.

David said other than emergency vehicles, if we look at the balance of saving individual drivers one minute and having a park in our civic center for our entire population, people would find a way to get here.

Pam suggested at this point that we not close our minds that this idea hinges on Grand Avenue being able to be closed off. Once we have an architect on board and work with the components, we might see other amazing possibilities. It has been common knowledge that we have talked about closing Lottie Street, but Grand Avenue is a new concept.

Vicky moved to open the discussion of this current library block as a possible library site be put back on the table; bring it back and open it to possibilities that had not been viewed in the past. Faye seconded. Motion carries.

Vicky appreciated that Pam took the time to listen to what was said and write down some thoughts and observations about what she heard. It opened up some ideas that would not have been opened up otherwise.

2007 Budget: Pam explained the budget has gone to the mayor. The information on the table is the information we just got prior to the meeting. There have been no changes other than the computer technician position going to ITSD. Pam had asked for 2.5% increase over what we were given as a threshold amount. The 2007 budget is about \$200,000 over this year's 2006 projected budget. That includes an 8% increase in facilities costs and salary increases. Five million dollars is included for a Central Library site. It includes an additional \$33,750 for design work because we are carrying forward what was not used this year.

Vicky moved to accept the budget as presented. Tim seconded. Motion carries.

Executive Session 3:55 p.m. to consider acquisition of real property by lease or by purchase.

Regular Session: Reconvened at 4:30 p.m. No action taken.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – October 5, 2006 will begin at 1:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

