

Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Wednesday, January 10, 2007 - Library Board Room
05:30 PM - 08:10 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: David Edelstein, Vice-Chairperson: Faye Hill, Vicky Marshall, J. Robert Gordon

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pam Kiesner; Lizz Roberts; Gladys Fullford

Others: Alan Kemble, Jack Weiss, Claude Hill

Called to Order: Meeting was called to order by Chairperson, David Edelstein. The Cascadia Weekly draft letter will be added after Strategic Planning.

Communications: Pam Kiesner read a voice message from Tim Douglas. He mentioned that at the Council reorganization meeting Joan Beardsley asked if the Library Board will be presenting their ideas of services delivery of the future and then talk about the building replacement. Tim mentioned the Board should be very sure to place the Central Library in scope of improving Fairhaven Branch and the Northside presence. Tim and Pam met with Dr. Harold Heiner regarding having a drop box, pick up and holds at the WCC Library.

David Edelstein suggested the Board should come up with a one-line concept that would speak to the issue of city-wide comprehensive service, so the public would know exactly what we mean. Example: "City-wide comprehensive library service: Growing a library system at the pace of the community." What next does the Library system need? A new central library, restoration and repair to the existing branch, and probably will need in future for Northside presence. The service level needs to be evaluated.

Pam added that we wondered if the study would lead to a Northside presence and possibly be added to the bond issue. A community our size may not need another library branch. If not a branch, what?

A bond only covers capital improvements. Delivery service is a non-bond issue. David said the Board could ask Council if they will be willing to fund costs out of the general fund, or if it needs to go to the public for a bond. The Library Board has the responsibility to analyze services every year. Immediate and long range planning is the business of the Board.

J. Gordon asked about a needs assessment for the budget process. Pam answered that it is important for the Board to be involved in the budget preparation. The City process begins in April, and the budget calendar involves year around planning.

Pam and Lizz will work on a one-line concept. David stressed that the Board needs to be out front ahead of questions. J. Gordon suggested the one-line item be used on agendas to help make everyone aware that it is constantly in our view.

Public Comment: Alan Kemble agreed it is a good idea for a one-line concept. Jack Weiss suggested being more descriptive using "comprehensive library service improvement initiative."

Strategic Planning: David said the Board will be going before City Council January 17th 7:00 p.m. in the Library Lecture Room in a joint work session. Graphics, maps, and drawings will be exhibited at 6:30 p.m. This will relay information and show the work the board has accomplished.

Pam said staff is working on displays that will line the room with everything we have done to this point including the volumetric studies from the Bellingham Planning Group. It will start with the history of the library to making the recommendation to Council. BTV10 staff will be filming this week and will produce a video to be shown at the meeting.

John Watts has alerted the Parking commission about the meeting. He is Chair of the Parking Committee, and was reappointed as the Council's liaison with the Library. Notification will be sent out tomorrow. Christine Walsh mentioned it at the Friend's meeting.

David asked the Board to look over the agenda to see if there is anything that needs to be included. Pam mentioned the Facility Needs Report and the updated Services Delivery Report will be added to the packets. J. Gordon asked about the County list in the Services Delivery Report. Lizz said they had talked about it, but that particular data set shows truly what it is. J. Gordon said it had only used today's numbers, and needed to show up to what Bellingham's delivery might be in 20 – 30 years. Pam said they increased population with 60% rise = 113,700. Lizz added 15 years is as far as City estimates go. It is difficult to go further. We expect the same high level of readership. It is compared to same category of libraries. The Board agreed to present the updated report for the joint work session.

Pam said David had asked for a one sheet statistical snapshot in time of population growth from 1951. We don't have a people count back then, but the population count can be included. David explained that he was looking for the most compelling proof that could be read in 60 seconds on one page. The population is statistical evidence that things need to change to maintain the level of service.

Agenda: David has a problem with the first item. J. Gordon and David met with Rory Woolsey, expert estimator on commercial buildings. The question was asked, how much parking does the central library need? David commented, none. Our customers currently use public streets, private property; they come by bus, bicycle, and walking. The code does not require parking. We shouldn't be representing the library at the detriment of our representing the greater community. We have the fiduciary responsibility of representing the library. If all of our customers can get here without our providing parking, that is not a reason to recommend to the community that we don't put parking under the library to the benefit of our customers, City Hall and the Courthouse. If we could put parking under this building in excess of what the library needs, maybe the City Council would agree to removing some of the on-street parking in the Civic Center. David suggests we should explain to the community that the parking under the library is a community benefit, and the library should not be forced to pay for it. We should get the Parking Commission to build a parking lot, and we build a library on top. Pam said this may be a hard sell to the customers of the library that we do not need to provide parking for them. David said to be more accurate, our customer parking requirements are met by their ability to park on the city street. It would be to the community benefit to put parking under the library building.

J. Gordon said the challenge is how much burden does the Board want to take in these decision-making processes because of the complexity of parking, roads, streets, and taking this building away first. The community will have a lot of comment on these issues. J. would prefer to get a planning effort involved up front with charettes. Involve the City Council, Library, County and community to figure out what is best for the community. He suggests starting with the biggest issue, such as site identification. There is a laundry list of things we cannot get our arms around, but can throw out for Council and community consideration. J. Gordon feels it is not safe to close Grand Avenue. If the site is approved and Council asked for the Board's recommended action from here forward. If you back out when the bond needs to be put together in August, you won't have a planning consultant or an architect on board until May. There won't be enough time to know what we want to do by a November bond.

If the Council approves the site, an action plan is needed. A local driven planning process, such as a charrette for public feedback could come next. Pam mentioned there was \$370,000 in 2006 REET funds

that will be reallocated to 2007 that can be used for to hire an architectural firm to set up public charettes or for preliminary design services.

Vicky said if we bring up the parking idea, we will get people not looking in a positive frame. If we do bring it up, it will have to be very gentle. We don't want to set people off immediately. Vicky likes the laundry list better, such as these are some of the things we have been thinking about, and by the way it is not our job to provide parking. David agreed. We'll control the planning process as long as we can to affect the best outcome. We'll subtly introduce these ideas. The charette leader would be able to put the graphics on the board.

David defined a charette as having a leader who has the ability to put graphics up on a board. A proponent is invited to speak on behalf of the project. All the stakeholders of the community are invited. All the positive and negative points are discussed. The facilitator tries to roll the thought to the direction for the benefit of everyone. J. Gordon added that often thoughts will be written on a wall. You try to come to a consensus. The value of a charette is that everyone in the room is a stakeholder. It provides opportunity for everyone to contribute, and know that we did the best we could do. David added that it compresses the gathering of information in a short period of time. It sometimes gathers information you hadn't planned on getting.

Item # 2. Pam will say something about the Fairhaven study. We need to get out front what we are doing with the Central Library, Fairhaven and the Northside. We will confirm that we are looking at whole community-wide library services. Vicky says this is a good opportunity to introduce the term that David suggested.

J. Gordon asked if we are bringing up the dollar amount of the Fairhaven study. David said he was hesitant to bring up the dollar number because there are so many items on the list that must be done, and some that would be nice to do if we had the money. David would rather communicate that we are still studying it. We not only have maintenance and restoration responsibilities, but we are trying to prioritize what is most important.

Do we make statement to the community that the items we judge to be compelling be finished in a short time period be put into a bond issue rather than ask for general fund money. Faye added that we do not have a specific dollar amount because we are still trying to figure out what the City is responsible for.

Pam said as she thought about the agenda, she reminded herself that our purpose is to bring forward a site recommendation for the Central Library. We want to share our long process we've gone through, and get all this other information in our presentation. What we are looking for is Council's approval of the site.

J. Gordon commented that many people have asked why we need a central library, why not several branches and why can't we add on to existing building. The presentation should put all those issues to bed to support not just the site but that this is the conclusion that a central library is required. This should go right to the beginning of the presentation.

David said the questions are do we need more space. That can be proven that the library was last renovated in 1983. Do you want to maintain the level of service or let it slowly erode? Next questions: Why not put another floor or addition on the building. We've studied it, and can easily give answers. Why not branches? The Comprehensive City Library Services Report is a missive that speaks to this question. Lizz said it is a complex issue and difficult to reply with a quick easy answer. J. Gordon said it is easy to conclude you need a central library when you look at the perimeter studies and the mile radius. The information is there to say this is a defensible conclusion. David said the term branch does not have a universal definition. J. Gordon said we could make the definitive statement based on the information available this is clearly the way to go.

Back to the agenda, J. Gordon suggested a welcome introduction that introduces the players and state the agenda and what we are trying to accomplish. He would leave it at that and not get into the parking

issues. Go into the purpose and planning, state the Fairhaven study and what we need to do to bring it up to speed. Bring up the Facility Needs Report and explain the Board's site evaluation process. We conclude we need a central library. We are very fortunate we have the Fairhaven Branch, and we will need something someday in the North end. Then go to the site for the Central Library. David said this information should be in and around item # 2. This should also explain why not add a floor to this building, why not build an addition, what is a branch? A branch is a fraction of the collection. The Central Library is the most perfectly located branch in the community.

Item # 3. Vicky and Faye have volumes of information on the 22 sites and criteria used for evaluations. Address the fact that only privately owned property was discussed in Executive Session. The public needs to know that by law, the Board cannot discuss a private real estate issue in public. Discussion is in Executive Session so that the terms of the real estate transaction is not jeopardized, and the property owner's possible sale is kept confidential. They turned out to not be viable sites. The point is that we have studied all possible sites. It was an exhaustive search. The Request for Proposals (RFP) that was done in January should be mentioned. Faye and Vicky will explain the process and why we chose this site and not other sites.

Item # 4. J. Gordon stated a separate line item or discussion may not be needed for the geo-technical study. He would call it site development issues. Pam will be talking about the three primary findings from the study. She will explain from the structural study why we cannot put another floor on the building. This item will be scratched, but the information needs to get out that three of the sites would require piling, and very possibly the Municipal Court site as well. J. Gordon suggested explaining the selection criteria and how the selection was made.

Assuming that parking will be put below the building, very few buildings in the downtown core are built without piling. Piling should not be an issue. There is very good ground under two corners of this site that might not need piling. Item #4 will be scratched and wrapped into other discussion.

J. Gordon asked if the question the Whatcom Independent brought up of building on landfill should be addressed. He explained this is a fill of old backwater area associated with Whatcom Creek with a peat bog, not a landfill in the more common sense.

Jack Weiss stated the Greenways Committee had the same experience with the Whatcom Independent. They cannot be convinced. Ignoring them was the best strategy. Jack also said Greenways strategy was to do a spring ballot for the purpose of being able to identify supporters. A general election in November would be apt to draw more dissent. They thought they would have much more success with a spring election that in the fall.

Vicky stated our focus is getting people to understand why we chose this site, and not get into a whole lot of other discussions. Item #4 is eliminated.

Item # 5. Pam is having the volumetric studies from 2005 mounted for display. What do you think about asking Bellingham Planning Group to come and present those studies? This may be too much talk and information for this session. Just let City Council know that we did this.

Pam said her thinking was to have one person to explain the studies, maybe David Christensen. He would state this is what we did for the Library Board and how thorough they were in the process. Pam will ask David to speak and to bring enthusiasm.

J. Gordon said if we did a charette or planning exercise, it is generally is not an architect who does that. If you want architectural and charette capabilities, David Christensen is the only one in this community who has credentials. Alan Kemble commented that David and Terry Moore ran a charette in the Library a few years ago to identify all the library functions. It was very effective.

Item # 6 needs to be modified. Parking options, yes. The variables are such that we should pin down what we are doing before stating the costs. Pam suggested John Watts, our City Council Liaison, could speak to the parking issue. He has taken the lead as far as the library not taking on all the costs of parking, and is the lead on the Parking Committee for City Council. John wants to bring all the parties together to talk about parking. He understands the process we've gone through. John can bring a more global community perspective. Having City Council being the author of the concept of parking wouldn't be a bad thing. David does not want the focus on parking with a library over it, but also would not anyone to get the mistaken idea that we would avoid doing the right thing by the community benefit to relieve on street parking. David will have a conversation with John Watts prior to the meeting.

Item # 7. Why is the library block the perfect choice? The information is in the draft letter to Cascadia Weekly. David asked if there is any reason the letter to the Cascadia Weekly shouldn't be published in the media. The Board will read the letter tonight, and call Pam with any changes or additions. Vicky said it was beautifully stated in the letter. The Cascadia Weekly asked us for this. Do we let them have it first, or also send it to other media. The Board will honor the request. They had specifically asked us to address the site selection. The letter will be sent after the meeting with City Council on January 17th.

J. Gordon suggested different wording, that this is the most perfectly "available" site. There were other compelling sites, but they were not available. If statements are to be edited it must be approved. The letter should read as if from David. The decision by the whole Board is implied. J. Gordon was not comfortable with some of the wording, nothing fundamental. Board will get suggestions to Pam by Friday, so she can make the changes.

David said substantive issues should not be settled by less than unanimously. The Board is required to be unanimous and to be all in accord.

Item # 8. The next steps are important because it is the Board's responsibility to lead the community. David would like to offer our outline of where we are going, where we have been, and where we are today. We will get community buy-in with a community charette.

Pam said the timeline needs work, which she will do.

David commented on Jack's earlier comment. He said the Board should talk to political operatives, and ask if a library bond would be more likely to succeed in a general election, off year election or special election. We'll know whether we have enough time for November election. More important than hitting a deadline is hitting a win. Faye suggested a generalized process rather than specific dates. It is important to identify the next few steps. What's immediate: Meeting with City Council, hiring a facilitator, and bringing in the stakeholders.

J. Gordon said the bigger issues are taking down the existing building, how much parking, and who is going to pay for the parking. These are fundamental issues before talking about the building. The charette process will determine the parking and should this building go. This will help get the community behind the plan.

David said we asked Rory Woolsey what would the cost differentiation be between being able to build a new central library between this one and leaving this one standing until the other one is complete. Then demolishing and building a second phase onto the project. The cost difference was half a million dollars. A half million dollars will be spent if we leave this library while we build the new one. The site design and the architects would be constrained with building this project in two phases. David said the constraint has a higher negative value than spending the half million dollars.

J. Gordon asked what the message will be delivered in the presentation of site selection presentation. Pam said she was hoping the Board's decision would be to recommend that this building needs to come down in order to make best use of the site. J. Gordon said that was what Bellingham Planning Group shows

in their drawings: the building is gone. Bellingham Planning Group drew the designs based on building in two phases because that is how we asked them to design it. David explained that now we know it is possible to do it in two phases, do we want to do it that way.

J. Gordon said this would be a good opportunity for the architect making the presentation to say publicly that this is what he was asked to do. However, if he was asked to build the library, he would ask to take this building down first. In order to build what he would want to build, none of us would want to be constrained by the current building to limit what the community can get. To have an independent party say that would be very valuable.

David said the Board could either read it in the presentation or make the statement that the cost difference to work around the existing building to build the new library in two phases was approximately half a million dollars. The constraints are a greater negative than spending the \$500,000. David suggested taking a vote on whether or not to demolish the library first.

Faye made the motion that we demolish the building before the new building is built. Vicky seconded.

J. Gordon asked if it would be politically better to have the board make that recommendation as opposed to the architect letting it come out in a charette process. David said he would rather say after much study this is the logical way of dealing with this. Let the alternative come out in a charette. It can be called a recommendation or say that is the direction we are going. Everything we are doing is a recommendation, so we can preface our remarks that these are all recommendations. J. Gordon said he would go along with the motion because he does believe it is in the best interest of the library to take this building down first.

David said the limitations are that it costs more to do two phases. The architect and site plan would be constrained with two phases. J. Gordon mentioned that it would be better to say design elements of the library would be constrained and compromised by having this building here.

Pam added that the proximity to City Hall is not desirable if the current building remains through phase one. We would end up with a better product with only one phase.

Faye added that we would assure people we will continue library services during the construction as best we can. It also gives an opportunity to try out a number of ways of delivering service. We may have to divide our services by putting children's services in a different location. Vicky said when we do this moving we want to maintain the service, but it may be a bit rocky.

David asked for the motion to be read. Faye had made the motion that we demolish the building before the new building is built. Vicky had a friendly amendment for clarification to add "current library" building. Amendment was seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Pam said the tentative agenda for January 22nd will be dictated by what happens at the January 17th meeting. We want to hear the Council's questions. Public is more in attendance at the evening meeting where the BTV10 feature will be introduced. The 30 minute feature will be condensed for the City Council presentation. Pam will have a 30 minute Power Point presentation. The site recommendation will be made by a board member.

J. Gordon requested that Pam email any agenda items to him while he is gone from January 17-22. He would like to be kept informed.

Pam said when anyone has anything to add during the presentations, feel free to jump in. It will be an informal presentation.

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees