

Special Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Tuesday, February 06, 2007 - Library Lecture Room
06:30 PM - 08:15 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: David Edelstein, Vice-Chairperson: Faye Hill, Vicky Marshall, J. Robert Gordon

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pam Kiesner; Lizz Roberts; Gladys Fullford; Scott Blume

Others: John Watts, City Council Liaison, Tom Glenn, Friends of BPL, Cheryl Stewart, Michael Lilliquist, Richard Zarnowitz, Alan Kemble, Margaret Ziegler, Rich Fly, Jim Boyle, Jack Weiss, Julie Guy, and John Servais

Called to Order: The Library Board was called to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Library Lecture Room; the agenda was approved. David explained there are agendas available as well as copies of our Bellingham Public Library Citywide Services Study and Bellingham Public Library Facility Needs available.

Communications: No communications.

Public Comment: Michael Lilliquist said he is here to keep track of the progress. His main interest is branch libraries. He knows they are being considered by the Board, but feels the need to keep pushing. He feels there is a potential conflict of resources and money between a central library and branch libraries. He asks if the benefit of a main library 5 or 6 times greater than 5 branch libraries. Michael is afraid all the energy that goes into the bond may preclude money for branch libraries.

David commented that it is exciting to have debate, but if we had that debate every time the question was raised, it would be all we were doing. David suggests the Bellingham Public Library Citywide Services Study would be a good place to begin. Pam spoke very eloquently at the City Council presentation on where to put resources, in a central library or a branch or a presence.

Michael added that branch libraries as a community center should be the responsibility of the city in general, and not just a drop-off/pick-up.

Strategic Planning –Critical Path: Pam talked to David Christensen about the process that we have begun to pencil out. David thought he would probably just be confirming the process that we have already started to identify. We know we have elements that we need to start working on concurrently. Some elements come before other pieces of the process. In talking with David and David Edelstein, it was decided to invite the Bellingham Planning Group back at a time when we can use their time more adequately. Tonight we will review what we have started to put together with a focus on Fairhaven, Central Library and North side presence and interim library services.

Pam has started to put together some draft time line worksheets based on steps identified so far.

Pam met with Therese Holm, City Finance Director, and Joan Hoisington, City Attorney, and invited them to come to the next Board meeting on February 27th. Therese will talk about financing options, what is bondable, and Bond Counsel. Joan will talk about campaign law.

Pam and David talked about the need for additional meeting dates. David feels to give thorough consideration and planning to the Central Library, Fairhaven renovation and North side presence, we really must do it at special meetings.

February 27th is our regular meeting. We generally have a Board educational topic. Having Joan and Therese do this kind of education is very appropriate. We will leave on the agenda as a place holder, City-wide Library Services Planning.

The final Fairhaven report will be presented by Myron and Lizz at the February 27th meeting. David asked the Board to read the Fairhaven report and be prepared to ask questions of Myron. Lizz is working with the City and BOLA on the report. It will show in a phased manner when the work should be done. The Board needs to decide to what level the work will be funded, and whether it will be wrapped into a bond. David said it was appropriate to include the Fairhaven renovation and the North side presence along with the new Central Library.

North side presence: Pam said all the data we've gathered indicates that a community our size with drive times of 5, 10, and 15 minutes, we cannot support another branch. However we know we have an incredible community of readers. We need to determine which way of serving library needs is most appropriate on the north side. It needs to be determined at what point do we say yes we need a branch library. How will we satisfy the library needs in the interim? Can we sustain those efforts? It is a priority to make that determination.

J. Gordon asked about feedback from the north side community. Pam and Lizz are hopefully slated to go to a Cordata/Guide Meridian neighborhood meeting and would also like to do a community survey. We also hope to have the survey in a neighborhood newsletter that comes out regularly. Faye asked for a copy of the survey questions. Lizz said it isn't developed yet, but anything the Board would like to ask in the survey, let her know.

It was confirmed at the Board's last meeting that "north" really means Cordata/Guide Meridian. It would be good to find out who else besides this neighborhood may use that presence.

David said we need to look at the entire north side, because if we put a presence in Cordata that was hard to access, it wouldn't be adequately used. Library presence for the north side needs to be defined. It might be singular, or it could be plural.

Lizz said we have a lot of resources through the City and the neighborhoods themselves. It is our intent to attend neighborhood meetings.

John mentioned there will be a presentation on February 14th to the Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Committee on public involvement assessment. John suggests the Library Board go to and see what types of activities the City is considering to enhance public involvement.

Pam suggested that the Board needs a policy on level of service to the community as far as distance, drive time, and population. That will help to make a determination that putting a pick-up/drop-off would make sense because of the standards we set.

We currently have three drop boxes and 29 nursing, retirement, or assisted living locations where we are already going with our delivery vans. We want to recognize it's not just a pick-up/drop-off point; people love their libraries because it is a community center. Timberland has a kiosk that they have set up in a community center. The kiosk is a method of accessing library information. They have self check-out, a computer and a telephone to call the librarian. There are a number of ways we can provide service.

Lizz is responsible for Outreach Services. The van is shared between library materials delivery to WCLS (2-3 times a week), our 3 drop boxes (1 every day and the others three times a week) and the Fairhaven Branch and with our Outreach Services that delivers personalized service to the 29 facilities once a week. Outreach staff drive the truck as well as our delivery driver. The truck is in motion and gone most of

the day. The delivery vehicle was bought to fit the dock that we currently have. We cannot get a larger vehicle or a second vehicle because we do not have a place to put them.

Haggen's pays us for the drop box service at their grocery stores. We could consider having drop boxes in other locations such as WCC. This is something we may be able to provide within our operating budget.

Public Comment: Julie Guy has been following this library process in the paper. Julie said she was concerned because she doesn't see a branch library in the north end. She knows there will be millions of dollars spent to enhance the downtown, and thinks there should be some money for a small branch rather than just a drop box or lockers in the north end. She read that maybe the north end would get a branch in five years, and was finding it hard to see that the decision was fair to the taxpayers. She is requesting a branch for the north end.

David again offered the Bellingham Public City Wide Library Services study that would explain the way ideas were formulated on how to spend a limited budget on behalf of the taxpayers.

Pam explained we have the go ahead at WCC for a pick-up and drop-off. It's a matter of planning together and putting it in place. The difficulty is that the library is a bit of a walk from the parking lot. We need to carefully consider if we are going to offer anything there where it should be to make it most convenient for our customers in that part of town.

John mention the WTA is building a transfer station across the street from WCC that would enhance bus service. There will only be a minor facility with restrooms.

Pam wondered if Parks is considering any structures in the parks planned for the north side that we could partner with. Julie said there are no parks yet, but one is almost in the purchase stage. Julie said she and Linda Langey would be glad to work with the library on that subject.

John said the Council just had a report from the Parks Department about the North Bellingham trail planning. They have come up with 65 miles of trails on paper. The City has adopted that as guidelines for future planning.

David said the Library Board has been made well aware that there is a Central Library downtown and branch library on the South side, but no branch on the North side. If the North side had a community center, it would be easy to say we could put library service in the center. David believes it is not the library Board's responsibility to do anything other than represent the Bellingham Public Library in their fiduciary responsibility, and a community center is not the responsibility of the Library Board. That is the responsibility of City Council.

Vicky agreed and Faye added that a community center may be a great place for a library presence; right now the clubhouses are for use by residents only. The Board needs to look at this carefully to see if there are any plans for a community center that we could partner with.

Julie asked about not creating a community center, but a branch library. David responded that the definition of the word branch is in the eye of the beholder. To justify building a branch, you have to have a City Council willing to support staffing it. The population is not there.

Michael Lilliquist asked if the same argument would be used for the South side if there was not a branch there. Pam explained we have a Fairhaven Branch because when the three towns merged we subsumed what was the Fairhaven Library. It became a branch of Bellingham. Pam urged everyone to read the report and look at the graphs and data that we have collected. If you did take Fairhaven out of the picture, everyone would still have access within 5 to 15 minutes. A 15 minute or 3 mile drive is considered standard. We can devise our own standards. We can say every neighborhood should have a branch, but what can we sustain and what makes sense for this community given the current size and the future size?

We currently have estimated 113,000 for the year 2022. When we looked at the national figures, there are very few cities of our population size that have more than one branch. We could be different and say that Bellingham's readership is such that we can support a North side branch. All the national planning standards do not point to supporting that.

Cheryl Stewart said she is also a member of the Cordata neighborhood. She reserves all her books on line, and would be happy to go to WCC to pick up books. She would like to use the trails to walk to a library presence. Cheryl mentioned the Food Coop may become their community center with a meeting room upstairs. Cheryl would like to see a book-drop there. She would like to see children walk from the elementary school to the library presence. Cheryl thinks eventually there will be a branch in the area, but right now she would be happy with a place to pick up her books.

David said he believes we will build a branch library on the north end of town. It's a question of when. As the City grows, the library system will grow. If we were building a branch, we would put a meeting room in it; it would be a community center. The population has to grow. We have to take care of this central branch now because it is inadequate.

Michael asked if the City or Parks were persuaded to build a community center, would the library jump in there with more than just a kiosk. David answered that the Library Board has a responsibility to look at all things that involve the library. They would debate, deliberate and discuss it. The Board has a fiduciary responsibility to the community taxpayers.

J. Gordon said branch libraries seem to have a limited use. Most people go to the Central Library where there are more books. J. said the Fairhaven branch is used more for gathering, periodical, computer space, and other type uses, not for library book storage that the Central Library is being used for. Fairhaven is more of a community center with a library function in it. A community center is not as expensive to build as a library.

Scott Blume said when you talk about Fairhaven Branch, a disproportionate percentage of use of that library is by children. Forty percent of the circulation is by children. It is true for adults when you talk about a branch being used for computers and periodicals. The branches have a very important role in the city for serving children. Scott also proposed that to build a branch may not be necessary. Branches throughout the state are operating in existing malls and shopping centers.

Pam added this is what we have talked about in terms of a storefront library. Pam also mentioned she believes providing meeting space for community to come together for discourse is one of the library's principle reasons for being. We have that kind of space here. It is not adequate. In any branch we would want to lease, build or partner to have a space for book discussions, story times, and other children's programs. The square footage of library space at Fairhaven is 3,300 square feet and meeting space is 6,000 square feet. Some branches provide meeting spaces, some don't. She added that we receive \$35,000 in room rental revenue annually--not a large amount, but is part of our budget.

David said if we are fortunate to build the Central Library, people will be excited to come downtown to the new library. They will be able to take the transit to travel efficiently. There is no sentiment on the Board to purchase real estate and build a branch on the north end of town at this time, but will discuss the varied opportunities in increasing our library presence in the North end.

Pam said we are just getting in touch with the Food Coop. It is nicely located just a block away from WCC, but may be more convenient.

Interim Library Services: When this building is demolished we will need interim library services. We are formulating a critical path from today to opening the door of the new central library, renovating Fairhaven and addressing the North side library presence. The path will look at all things necessary to accomplish all goals. Interim library services means moving the collection out of this building, putting

it into another building, opening it up for public use, running the library, and then moving the collection into a new central library.

We need to determine space requirements, research space availability, what can and can't we provide, partnership opportunities perhaps with Whatcom County Library System (WCLS) and developers, sequence, move out, move back, communications and public relations, determine lead staff and staff needs, level of city support, communications and technology, costs, project manager, opportunities for pilots, portables and consider all options.

Pam mentioned we operate out of this building with 44,000 square feet. We will be meeting with staff to talk about what our actual space requirements might be, and talking with the Board about what is the minimum that we should be providing during the interim. We have a staff issue, materials issue, and delivery issue. With just this one element we will be going down multiple tracks.

Pam will talk to the staff about services we can and can't provide. We will talk further with WCLS about more ways we can share, like delivery. During this interim time period we might be able to really try some very interesting ways to deliver library service. It's looking carefully at the drop-off and pick-up concept. Maybe it is getting some kiosks out into the community as well. Pam talked about the issues we are dealing with at a library directors meeting last week. She will talk further with library directors who have moved out completely and moved back in to a new place. It doesn't need to be fancy space. It needs to be pretty basic. We could do it out of multiple facilities, however it appears as if it would be easier if it is all out of one facility. Pam and the staff are open to all kinds of possibilities. This won't happen for a couple of years, so we have the time to plan.

Faye asked what percentage of our collection could just be packed away for two years. Pam answered that most of our materials circulate. There would be a fall-out of not having a particular part of the collection available and the load it would put on WCLS. Maybe there are some parts of our collection that we can house at the various branches of WCLS. First we decide what we can provide, what we can't provide, what we should provide, what do we want to provide. Finding a space is the last piece.

David said one of the problems is that we don't need the space today. The space that is available today might not be available tomorrow. We obviously can't demolish this building unless we move the collection out first and open for business in a different location. We can't really plan it until we know when we are going to do it. We must face this as one of our biggest challenges.

Vicky said we can think outside the box. The first step is to talk to the staff to see what they think we need. How much space do we need? They will know better than anyone how things are going to work or how they can make it work within what they do. Vicky would also like to hear from the community. This is a community library, and we need to get all the ideas and avenues that we possibly can to come up with the best possible solution. Only when we have the big picture from all the stakeholders can we make an educated decision.

David added that there is no chance the owner of Toys-R-Us would leave the building vacant for two years and hope that we would rent it for two years. Thinking outside the box, we could possibly convince someone who owns a gymnasium to let us use the space while they hold their events at an alternative location during the interim.

John said the number one thing was to ask staff about possibilities. They might divide by function and you can then divide responsibilities. You will know what to ask for. A big element is communication. At some time the Board will need to get ITSD staff involved.

Pam said the wonderful thing about eliminating the long check-out counter upstairs is that we have four self check-outs and an assisted check-out that are movable.

David welcomed everyone to help brainstorm to identify all of the things that we must consider, that we must accomplish, that we must fund, people we must talk to, approvals, and put them in sequence. We will have this critical path on paper in the near future. The Library Board and community can add to it.

Michael Lilliquist said the current facility combines both distribution and storage. We will probably have to break up and fragment the structure. The Board should start thinking about a distributive system. Michael suggested possible storage facilities: G.P. warehouse, WWU, branch locations. Vicky added It is an opportunity for pilots. Michael said transportation costs will be much larger. David said the storage component will be the easiest. The operating component will be a challenge.

John explained that a critical path refers to a sequence of things that have to happen. For example construction will not happen without designing the building. It is for the Board to figure out the specific critical path they envision. They need to assess the needs and what the community wants and will pay for. We collect that data and put it into a project plan. That should be done by someone who has project management experience. The key person in all of this is going to have to be the focal point of all of our input. That person can put it all together, show us what the time flow is going to be, and how long it will take. Things not on the critical path will have more flexibility. The critical path is those critical elements that have to happen in sequence. Once the Board decides what functions it wants to do and hires a project manager, that person will become the most important person of the whole project.

Julie Guy stated Bellingham Technical College has an outstanding course in project management. That would mean their faculty that would be prepared. Julie presumes that WCC and WWU also have professors in that category. A good project manager is needed early to lay everything out.

The Board is defining the project. This will intersect with hiring a project manager. We are getting closer to defining the project every time the Board meets.

Julie asked how much has to be done before you go to the bond issue. You have to have the project manager and the project laid out. John answered that you need to know the costs. David said you have to define the project, do a thorough estimate, and it has to be compelling if we want the bond to be passed by the voters. John added it has to be completed within 3 years of it passing.

Pam said it has to be timed carefully. Pam has considered what stage to get to before going to voters. Do we need a complete design? Should it be a fuzzy rendering with green around it? Should we not have a design at all? Pam has been advised that if you have a preliminary design on paper, that it becomes the visual that the community expects and will start to take it apart when it is bound to change in the end.

John said with the volumetric studies from the Bellingham Planning Group, you can come up with factored estimates that are basically industry practices of snapshots in time of what a typical building cost might be. It might be \$200 to \$500 per square foot. A lot depends on the materials that are selected and final design. You can come up with a range, so you can come up with an idea of what the estimates are going to be. Before you go for the bond, you need to be a lot firmer than that. You need to be much closer to what the final product will be.

Pam said we need a really clear building program statement of what it is we expect. Bellingham Planning Group started to help us with that a few years ago, and we are updating it now.

John said he did write a note to the Planning Commission and copied to the Mayor and others, and asked them at their next meeting to begin to assess the need for parking around this area and also to begin to get input from city and county as to whether both of those entities would like to participate in a greater parking facility than the library can justify by itself. We don't have any information back yet, but it is in the mill.

David stated the Board appreciates the public coming. The Board likes to see more ideas. More ideas mean a better product for the community.

John mentioned the discussion of whether or not a library is equivalent to a community center. John explained his opinion is that a library is a community center. It is up to us to define what functions and how much space to provide. As we learned from the Project for Public Spaces, if you select a good site, create something the public will want to go to, and the more functions that go on there or around that area, the more people you are going to attract. This site already has some of the attributes. A similar type of attitude should happen with any other presence that we may provide. The presences do have to be defined. Things can change. What we call a community center now could very well be a bank of computers with internet access. Some patrons may use this as their home base. When we say we need a community center we are engaging in semantics. Everyone is right. It is a matter of getting it down where we want something, what we want, and how we are going to pay for it.

David added there is something between a drop box and a branch library the size of Fairhaven. That something would serve as a community center. It would have computers, periodicals and books flowing in and flowing out. It wouldn't require a lot of staff. Anybody would be happy to have a library presence or branch close by. The Board needs to keep talking about it and talk to potential partners like WCC, or the Food Coop. It doesn't have to be a building the size of Fairhaven Branch.

Faye said there are different ways of thinking about what a community center is. She recently visited a branch that was a storefront. It wasn't a very large space. You could pick up holds, return your books, and they had a few paperbacks out. Faye would call it a form of a community center because it was a noisy place, people were visiting one another, and they loved getting together over those paperback books.

Michael suggested if an analysis was done here at the Central Library, we might be surprised how much is used is computer related and not book related. It may be that a main library is further away from a book centered library as well.

Pam responded that here and in most libraries we find that computers have been added on top the book materials. Our book circulation is one of the highest in the nation, and certainly one of the highest in the state. We don't see any decline in use of our book collection, but we do see an increase on top in the use of our computers. People think we can build a smaller library because of computer use; it's not true because you actually need a bigger library. You need more computers in addition to the books.

John added that the Alameda is the same size as Bellingham. The Alameda Library has space for 600 people to sit down with a facility of 48,000 square feet. Their usage is much less. What's good for one community may not fit another one. Our circulation is 16.4 books per capita per year. The national average is 7.1, and the state average is 10.9.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – February 27, 2007 will begin at 2:00 p.m. in the Library Board Room.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees