

Special Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Thursday, March 10, 2011 - Library Board Room
11:30 AM - 01:15 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: David Edelstein, Faye Hill, J Gordon, Marilyn Mastor and Rachel Myers.

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pamela Kiesner; Christine Perkins and Wendy Jenkins.

Others: Michael Lilliquist, City Council, Tara Sundin, City of Bellingham Planning & Community Development Dept, Jim Long, Public Development Authority.

Call to order and introductions: Special session was called to order at 11:30 a.m. by Chair, David Edelstein.

Approve/modify agenda: No changes to agenda.

Planning discussion:

Pam listed the items she has available in the Board Room for information gathering:

- City Center Master Plan (August, 2002)
- BPL Preliminary Building Program (September, 2003)
- Chronology of Community and Planning Studies, which include reference to the library (October, 2004)
- BPL Facilities Needs (May 2005)
- Seismic/Geotechnical Study Proposed Library Improvements (May, 2005)
- BPL Citywide Library Services Study (January, 2007)
- Library Planning News (March, 2007)
- BPL Community Analysis, Library Needs Assessment, Central Library Building Program Statement and Cost Analysis (January, 2008)
- Study Committee Report Regarding the Potential for Annexation with WCLS(July, 2009)
- BPL Capital Priorities (May, 2010)

Build new Central Library or focus on branches?

Viewpoints expressed:

- Much has changed since the last studies: more interest in partnerships and mixed-use facilities; increased collaborations with all area libraries; and decreased funding for staff and materials.
- The Board's responsibility is to plan long-term rather than react to economies and politics.
- City perspective favors fair distribution of resources (parks, trails, etc.) which implies branches.
- Past demographic studies support a central library over branches.
- Current economy cannot support branches. Barkley works because building costs are covered by private industry.
- Branches could be possible with mixed-use facilities.

Need for Strategic Plan

Viewpoints expressed:

- There is a need for a strategic plan to meld past information with current changes in order to build a coherent argument for the public.
- The Board's responsibility is to plan long-term for excellent library service.
- We need to show the taxpayers a very well-thought-out plan that looks to the future.
- Capital Facilities Task Force report recommends the Library develop a library plan. Does the City have funds to implement this?
- A facilitator would give credence to the plan.
- The Library should not overlook opportunities to partner with other departments or the Public Development Authority, the Library has economic and community impact.
- The Board's job is to serve library needs. If the strategic plan includes a bigger picture (such as inclusion of city space needs), we need help.
- The past strategic plan was staff-driven with a library focus, but did not get to the public input stage.
- Greg Baker, Bellingham School District Superintendent, expressed an interest in collaborating. The District has land and needs new buildings for administration, an alternative high school, teacher training facility, and an early education center.
- Public education needs to be a big part of the strategic plan.

Determining the economic impact of a library

Viewpoints expressed:

- It could be advantageous to determine the economic impact of a new library.
- Studies have shown a library is not an economic developer. Libraries can facilitate, but not drive development.
- We should look at the statistics already out there.
- Vancouver, BC Library seems to be a vital economic element.
- Site demographics point to the desirability of retail areas – we want to be where McDonald's and Starbucks are.
- The library is a draw, a valuable asset.
- One successful model suggests a bookstore/commercial outlet/library combination – the library as “third place.”
- Building a stadium does not bring in more money to a community, but it does have a feel-good impact.
- It is a benefit to the community to locate the library close to other businesses.
- Currently, we are in the desert (e.g. civic center is a low traffic area in the evenings and on weekends), but still have high usage. Imagine the usage if we were in a different spot.

Outcomes:

- Board will continue with Special Meeting format to develop a Board consensus.
- Pam will obtain samples of RFPs.
- Pam will talk with Stan Snapp about funding of CFTF recommendation.
- Next meeting will be determined at Regular Board Meeting, Tuesday, March 15.

Meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees