

Regular Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Monday, July 07, 2014 - City Council Chambers
01:00 PM - 01:52 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: Faye Hill, J. Gordon, Marilyn Mastor, Rachel Myers and Tom Barrett

Board Members Absent:

Library Staff: Pamela Kiesner; Library Director

Others: Terry Bornemann, Gene Knutson, Pinky Vargas, Roxanne Murphy, Michael Lilliquist, Jack Weiss, Mayor Kelli Linville, Ted Carlson, Public Works Director, Katie Franks, Development Specialist, Brian Henshaw, Finance Director, Library staff and members of the general public

Call to order and introductions: Special session was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by City Council President Pro Tempore, Terry Bornemann, and Library Board Chair, Faye Hill. Library Board of Trustees were introduced.

Approve/modify agenda: Marilyn Mastor moved to approve the agenda as written. Rachel Myers seconded. Motion carried.

Review: After a brief process overview by Pam, Faye provided a brief overview of: (Faye's remarks are provided as an attachment to these minutes)

- 1) Library planning and highlights from the Library's Strategic Plan, 2013-2017
- 2) Site selection
- 3) Changes since the 2008 study and the need to revise the Building Program Statement
- 4) Library's place in the city's plans for capital improvements, downtown planning and development, use of current building

Discussion and questions:

The 2008 building plan calls for over 77,000 square feet (current square footage is approximately 44,000). Would this amount be altered with an updated building plan?

The next step is to update the old plan and size needs will be looked at closely. Much has changed in the intervening years – technology advances, staff efficiencies, and the demand for meeting and program space have all changed. Funds to update the plan are included in the Capital Budget Requests we presented recently to the Mayor's office (\$51,000). The original cost of the plan was approximately \$200,000, but there is much good, still-relevant information and much that can be updated by staff. The funds requested would go towards hiring a consultant.

What role do branch libraries have in this plan?

Branch libraries are wonderful – they bring service to the patrons and get people out of their cars – both Fairhaven and Barkley branches are very successful. Our first priority is to restore the open hours we lost in the recession. Branch libraries are very expensive to operate. During the Building Plan process we learned that there were only a few other cities in the country that are our size that have more than one branch. Barkley Branch is possible because the Barkley Company covers the hard costs. The Central Library is still the backbone, servicing both branches.

Where does funding for the Library come from?

The library's operating budget comes from the General Fund and we have very little funding from other sources. Were we to build a new building, we would first develop an operating budget so that we know we can open and operate a new building successfully. To fund construction, we would look at bond, levy and fund-raising options.

The original building plan favored tearing down and rebuilding on the current site. What were the costs associated with moving to a temporary facility while a new building was being constructed?

There was \$16,000,000 estimated for fees, moving and furnishings; Pam recalls \$2-3 million of that being associated with temporary housing and moving.

When updating the building program, how many sites will be looked at?

The Mayor has asked Katie Franks, from the Planning Department, to take a look at all of the original site data (about 25), plus consider any new site options. She will report back.

One suggestion that has come up is re-purposing the current library building to house Municipal Court. Is that a reasonable reuse of the building?

Ted Carlson responded, specific to Municipal Court, they first considered the Federal Building, determining it would not work. The next step is to look at the library building. This is a larger facilities question which will be addressed in the capital facilities planning process for the 2016 Comprehensive Plan update.

How high of a priority was a new library in the downtown survey?

A new library was a major priority in the 2002 City Master Plan that did not get implemented. The library was part of the current downtown planning process, and was mentioned often by the participants as a high priority.

Jack Weiss pointed out that the last page of the 2008 study (page 336 in the Council's packet) has an interesting matrix comparing Bellingham Public Library to other comparable library systems. It shows we are doing a lot with few FTE staff and have a high rate of circulation.

Terry Bornemann commented that great cities are measured by how they treat their libraries, arts and schools and he looks forward to moving ahead.

Next steps: Rachel outlined the next suggested steps:
(Rachel's remarks are provided as an attachment to these minutes)

- 1) Pam will provide a general library update to Council in August, including the 2013 Bellingham Public Library Annual Report and Summer Reading Programs
- 2) All Council members were invited to tour the Central Library
- 3) The recently submitted 2015 Library Capital Budget includes:
 - Request to purchase a site (\$5.1 million)
 - Request to revise the library's building program statement (\$51 K)
- 4) Perhaps Council would like to consider forming a "Library Building Working Group" consisting of 2 Council members, 2 Trustees, Pam, Ted Carlson, and Brian Henshaw

Meeting adjourned at 1:52 p.m.

Attachment:

Review the following points: Faye Hill

Brief history of library planning and highlights from the Library's *Strategic Plan, 2013-2017*

The library, as a physical community presence, is important to the people who live and work here. This strategic direction was very clear as we gathered community input for our strategic plan.

In the plan, we focus on improving public access to our libraries by increasing open hours and restoring those lost in recent budget reductions. We also focus on improving our virtual presence so that those who access library resources and services online will have a welcoming and successful experience.

We're already making great progress on these key strategic directions, and at another time we'd love to come back and update Council on our work to implement our Strategic Plan.

Today, we'd like to focus on planning for a new library facility. Central Library replacement is high on this community's radar - we received many survey comments and unsolicited comments about a new building throughout the strategic planning process. Our strategic plan identifies as a priority replacing the 63-year-old facility, which serves as the central hub and supports the rest of the city library system.

We want to ensure that a replacement Central Library is included in the city's overall plans as well. We also need to develop a building program that will meet our community's needs well into the future, and effectively strategize funding the construction and long-term operations of the facility.

2. Site selection

Since 2001, the Library Board has been conducting site reviews, using a set of criteria that includes location, accessibility, size and shape, economic issues, environmental issues, and social/perceptual issues.

We identified around 25 sites during that time period, some more available than others - some, after careful review and consideration, were recommended to not pursue further.

The board also issued an RFP for library sites, asking the general community for available sites. In 2006 the board focused on city-owned sites and narrowed the choices to 4 top sites, including the current library site, the Municipal Court site (both blocks), the Re-Store site on Holly, and an area near Maritime Heritage Park.

After public input and a public tour of all 4 sites, the Library Board, in January 2007, recommended to the City Council that the current building be demolished and that a replacement library be built on the same block. This was unanimously approved by the then City Council.

The Board has continued to review site options over the past 8 years. Our community, local economy and other factors have evolved during that time, and our plans will likely change as the result.

For example, today there is interest in not demolishing the current building and using it for another purpose. And one of our previously unavailable sites has become available and we are extremely interested in pursuing it further.

Mayor Kelli has asked Katie Franks from the Planning Department to apply her planning expertise to the sites we have reviewed to provide an independent analysis of the sites, plus - to help us consider any other sites that may be available that we may not have considered.

3. Changes since the 2008 study (linked below), and the need to revise the Building Program Statement

In June of 2007, then, we issued a Request for Proposals for a Library Building consultant to provide Building Program Statement Development Services for a Replacement Central Library. We hired Thomas Hacker Architects who teamed with Library Consulting, P.A. and RMC Architects locally. The study included a high level of community involvement and provided recommendations regarding the future of the Central Library in Bellingham. The process included public open houses and multiple public meetings, culminating in January 2008 with the report we provided you: "*Bellingham Public Library: Community Analysis, Library Needs Assessment, Central Library Building Program Statement and Cost Analysis*".

Shortly thereafter, we experienced the recession. The building plan was not implemented for many reasons, primarily economic, and it needs to be redrafted based on changes in the library world and the environment around us in the last seven years.

To name a few of the significant changes we've experienced:

- The changing economy affecting staffing resources, the use of additional technologies to ease workloads of a reduced staff while at the same time improving services to the community
- The Early Learning movement and the recognized role of the public library in early learning development.
- The use of eBooks and even more technology - how does this affect the size and layout of our public library
- The recognition that with even more technology, the need for our community and our community's interest in meeting face-to-face and an increased demand for a variety of meeting, tutoring, and programming spaces
- The explosion of book discussion groups and our community's desire to talk about what they are reading and learning

4. Library's place in the city's plans for capital improvements, downtown planning and development, use of current building

A new library was identified way back in the City Center plan of 2002; most of those projects have been completed, and yet the library, one of the identified priorities at the time, has not been addressed. A new Central Library has been identified as a priority in other city planning efforts since then as well.

It is important that library planning is integrated with the other ongoing and upcoming city planning efforts, including for facilities planning and maintenance. The downtown plan efforts

reveal that there is much community conversation about the library and the need for a new one. It is a question we all receive on a very regular basis.

As you all know the Mayor initiated a facilities planning effort last year, focused around using the Federal Building for city government offices. The library has been very engaged in that conversation, and we see ourselves as an important part of overall city facilities planning.

For example, one scenario we've discussed that meets multiple interests includes building a new Central Library at a new location, remodeling the current library building and moving Municipal Court into it, and re-purposing the Muni Court block into something entirely different or selling it.

Collaborating on city facility planning allows us to stage big moves carefully, and be planful and thoughtful in meeting multiple public facilities needs and interests. We're excited about our role in these efforts and eager to move forward.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees