

Special Meeting of the Board of Library Trustees
Wednesday, August 06, 2014 - Meeting Room on lower level
02:30 PM - 04:05 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; Bethany Hoglund; Jennifer Vander Ploeg; Janice Keller and Madeline Sheplor

Others: Katie Franks, Planning Department Development Specialist

Call to order and introductions: Special session was called to order at 2:34 p.m. by Chair, Faye Hill.

Approve/modify agenda: J. Gordon moved to approve the agenda. Rachel Myers seconded. Motion carried.

Review DRAFT site selection criteria:

Katie Franks from Planning was tasked by the Mayor to look at the Site Selection criteria the Library Board established and have used historically to evaluate potential sites for a new Central Library.

Katie explained how she looked at and studied the criteria in many different ways, ultimately trying to come up with a ranking system based upon decisions of which site criteria is most relevant. Katie shared she wanted to be sure she honored all the good work done previously by the Library Board and Pam in establishing the criteria.

Katie explained that during this site selection criteria review, she has worked with many, including Faye Hill, Pam Kiesner, Janice Keller, Tara Sundin (Planning), Darby Cowles (Planning), as well as Mayor Kelli Linville and the City Center Action Group which includes Police Chief Cliff Cook, Public Works Director Ted Carlson, Parks Director James King, Finance Director Brian Henshaw, and Pam Kiesner.

When looking at the criteria as a whole, Katie feels the criteria might benefit from a ranking system. This ranking system would involve Primary and Secondary Criteria.

Katie also recommends having a broad-based review team tasked to site selection, including Department Heads in addition to the Library Board. Katie shared that she presented her findings to the City Center Action Group, including the Mayor, on the morning of August 6th and that the attendees were interested in the process and outcome, and had many ideas and suggestions for sites. Additionally, Pam shared that at that meeting Mayor Linville affirmed that the Building Program needs to be updated, preferably before the site selection process goes too much further.

The Board wanted to know where a new library would fit into the City's Downtown Bellingham Plan. The plan also includes the City Center Implementation strategy, which is the action plan for the Downtown Bellingham Plan. Both the Downtown Plan and Implementation Strategy are still in draft form and were released in February 2014. Katie let us know that Council will be moving to adopt the Plan soon, and that the Library is in the Downtown Plan and Implementation Strategies.

Findings and Recommendations

Overall, Katie strongly suggested the Library Board prioritize the site selection criteria. This prioritization would be a tiered system, with Primary and Secondary priorities, and these priorities would align with the City's Downtown Plan.

Primary Priorities

A suggested primary priority is that the new library be located in Downtown or Old Town. Katie clarified that this doesn't necessarily mean it is located in the Civic Center. Another primary priority would be locating a site that is zoned for Library use. Katie brought this up as there are newly adopted zoning restrictions that may exclude some sites previously considered in 2007. For example, the Municipal Court site is in the process of being rezoned, and this rezoning would exclude Library Use.

Additionally, in the Downtown Plan, an Industrial Transition Zone is defined, spanning the area behind Squalicum Creek along Cornwall Avenue. In this new IT Zone, a Library might be discouraged.

Katie also wanted the Board to be aware of the Exempt Parking District boundaries and how they have changed since 2007. As the boundary currently stands, the current library site is now within the Exempt Parking District, which means that organizations within this district do not legally have to provide parking for customers/users. This change brought about much discussion by the Library Board as parking is a huge expense for any new structure. J. Gordon let us know that underground parking is 25K-35K per stall.

The parking discussion led to a more historical discussion of the previous Library Building Program. In 2007, the Board was instructed to provide approximately 200 parking spots for a new building on the current site.

Site Selection Criteria Presentation by Katie to Mayor Linville and CCAG

Pam reported on the presentation Katie Franks gave to Mayor Linville and the City Center Action Group that morning. They discussed that the City's Capital Facilities plan is being rolled out currently, and the Library will be included in that. However, the City does have many Capital needs in addition to the Library.

Pam let the group know she would like to see Library planning be concurrent rather than linear so that the project progresses.

Darby Cowles (Planning) shared that one thing that came out of the Downtown Plan was a desire for Bellingham to have a town square. The Library desires to have green space/ community space in a new building, however Planning is questioning how much additional green space the City needs to have if we move off the Lee Park site.

Katie shared that in Downtown, they want buildings to be built up, not out. Katie encouraged the Board to consider how we achieve the green space desired; maybe it's not at ground level but maybe it's a rooftop green space or mid-level open space.

Additional Considerations

Co-locate with another City Departments. Katie recommends we consider who we want as our neighbors in terms of co-locating as well as who we are physically situated next to.

Pam let us know that Mayor Linville cautions us to build the space for the library rather than other entities. When funding a new library, we will ask the public for the funding to build the building. Despite being able to rent the space to another entity in the future when it opens, the

community still needs to pay for the additional space up front. It was discussed that Public-Private partnerships were explored in 2007. J. Gordon reminded us that there are many complications and issues to consider including separate entrances, etc. These complications can be reduced, if not eliminated, if we partner with another City Department rather than a private business or community non-profit. This led Katie to encourage the Board again to seriously think about who we want as neighbors. She recommended we think about what other Departments we collaborate or do business with on a regular basis.

Next Steps

Katie and the Library Board discussed what the next steps will be. These steps will be done concurrently.

Step A

Per the Mayor's directive, the Library and Board will go forward with updating the Building Plan. Pam shared that many of the pieces can be done by Library staff, but some cannot. We may need to go out for a RFP. There was then discussion about the necessity of a RFP as it's a plan update, rather than a new plan. Does the City have an architectural roster we can utilize? Do any of them have experience with libraries?

Katie questioned if the existing Building Program is site-specific, as it was designed with the current library site in mind. Pam acknowledged that elements of the Building Plan, for example parking, are site specific but many elements of the study can be transferred to another site.

In regards to who will be working on updating the Building Program, it made sense that the Facilities sub-committee of the Library Board will need to be intimately involved, in addition to others, including Library Staff.

Step B

Katie will begin a review of city-owned sites in the next two weeks. This review will include the Maritime Heritage, ReStore, current Library and Army Street sites. Katie will not review the Municipal Court site as the new zoning will not allow a Library to be built. There was much discussion by the Board about the Maritime Heritage and ReStore sites concerning patron safety. Tom Barrett voiced his concern for patron safety, especially Children, for any site in the Maritime Heritage park area. Other Board members agreed. After discussion, members agreed that they would need to see some major changes with the Park and how it is currently occupied and used, before considering a site in or near Maritime Heritage Park.

Katie mentioned that we could review the Municipal Court site, but she feels that Planning would not be enthusiastic of reversing their new zoning rules for a Library.

Wrap-Up

Katie shared that the ultimate goal of the downtown is to have filled-in, vibrant streets filled with shops and buildings. Parking lots are breaks in this, which is why the City prefers underground parking rather than parking lots.

Katie feels we need to continue to educate Department Heads and the community about library use and the needs of the library. Pam suggested we expedite the "Why do we need a library" document Janice is working on. This can then be available and presented in the community.

Rachel would like to see the Board come up with top priorities for the new library that everyone can get behind. These points can be used to show how the community will benefit from a new library. She suggested using our current data points to help create these priorities into elevator speech-like statements that will interface goals with the Strategic Plan. She provided some example templates:

- "We have to have _____ and this is why..."
- "Our vision is a library where _____"

Discussion ensued about the feasibility of the City purchasing a site for a new library rather than already-owned city properties.

Circling back to the discussion about community space/outdoor space, it was reaffirmed by the Board that outdoor space is a key element in a new building.

Meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees