New Library Study Committee
Municipal Office Complex
Meeting Room 3
September 14, 2022
Regular Meeting Minutes

Members Present: W. Barney, J. Bielot, M. Callahan, E. Dillon, J. Leatherbee, M. Lehmacher, R. Parady
Alternates Present: M. Mazur, C. McCarthy
Also present: D. Barlow, B. Casner, M. Gilroy, P. Griswold, A. Guinness, J. Leach, K. Stofko, J. Whitty

Call to Order – Chairman Barney called the New Library Study Committee meeting to order at 7:00 PM, and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.

Review of August 24, 2022, Regular Meeting Minutes and Special Meeting of September 7, 2022 – No comments or changes. Minutes accepted as presented.

New Business –

A. Presentation by Maureen Sullivan – Former ALA President Ms. Sullivan started by introducing herself to the committee members and reviewing her background. J. Leatherbee raised a question regarding what needs to be done to qualify for State Grants and who should be contacted to assist with that process. Ms. Sullivan reported that the people to contact at the State Library would be Dawn LaValle, Division Director, or Maria Bernier, Statewide Data Coordinator.

   A convening of the Institute of Museum and Library Services Literacy & Reading Skills was held this past March, and additional meetings were held earlier this month regarding concerns about youth and reading. Nationwide libraries are not seeing people back in libraries to the same degree that they were prior to the pandemic. There is a need for library buildings to be open and flexible to host community work and events.

   Chairman Barney asked Ms. Sullivan to expand on what is meant by open and flexible buildings as it is a term that the committee has been using to make sure that we all have a similar definition. Ms. Sullivan indicated that she is not a building expert, but that she has seen several recent examples of the current thinking, including a recent grand opening of a new library in Annapolis, Maryland. It is a single large space with short shelves (ADA requirement), and from the entry you can see the entire space. In her opinion a single-story building is preferable to a multi-story building. Additional staff is required for multi-story buildings and requires an elevator which is a substantial cost. She discussed so called 'Maker Space' and the types of activities that those spaces are used for. The library should have meeting rooms with appropriate easy to use technology. She discussed the library having a café space and the need to have a separate entrance/exit for the café so that it can remain open when the library is closed.

   Chairman Barney indicated that this committee is not a building committee, but a committee to provide a direction and indicate the things a new building should contain. Ms. Sullivan indicated that the Building Committee should, for continuity, contain several members from this committee. Additionally, it is especially important to have staff input both for this committee and for the building committee as they will be able to provide insight into how design choices will impact day-to-day operations that building committee members may not be cognizant of. The new building design should have space set aside for a 'staff' room and it should have significant natural light (windows).

E. Dillon raised a question regarding technology and how to future-proof the building. J. Bielot indicated that it was his opinion that the building have a professionally designed WiFi infrastructure. For a ~16,000 sq. ft. building the network infrastructure space required would only be something like a 2 ft. tall 19" rack for the switches and associated equipment. Ms. Sullivan indicated that the Christine Gauvreau from the Division of Library Development would be a contact to assist with technology.

J. Leatherbee questioned what the space above the stacks is used for since the stacks cannot be as tall as they are in the current buildings due to ADA requirements. Ms. Sullivan indicated that the space is generally used for lighting or displays. Newer libraries are designed to have shorter ceilings than what our current buildings have. E. Dillon pointed out that old buildings such as what we have were not designed to accommodate handicapped people, didn't have air conditioning, etc.

Chairman Barney asked if the audience had any questions. D. Barlow, Chairperson of the Library Board of Trustees, asked Ms. Sullivan how important the results of the survey of the public should be in fashioning of the committee's recommendations. Ms. Sullivan indicated that having conversations with the public are important, but we will likely find that the staff will already be aware of most of the concerns/issues, and that between the staff and best practices from the state, the library will likely mirror the community raised issues.

One of the citizens raised the question as to whether the town will be providing the level of funding necessary to support the new library. Ms. Sullivan indicated that is something that M. Gilroy, our Library Director, will need to discuss with the Board of Selectmen during the building design process. Layout of the building will impact staffing needs, so that needs to be considered by the Building Committee. There are standards regarding the number of staff people based on building size and services provided that can be consulted. Future staff requirements are changing to recognize that it is more about capability and willingness to learn and less about library credentials.

B. Discussion of Points Raised by Ms. Sullivan – There was no additional discussion outside of the give and take with Ms. Sullivan.

C. CMA Regarding EHFPL Building by Dee Hasuly – The building was compared to multiple properties in the area. Her estimate is that the building would be selling as a mixed use for $399,999 - $429,000. It was Chairman Barney's recollection that the property was assessed for around $510,000.

D. Other – Some discussion took place regarding several of the properties that have been previously mentioned as potential locations for a new building.

Old Business –

A. Discussion of Initial Draft Report developed by J. Bielot – Chairman Barney would like to have some volunteers take specific sections of the document and work on that; for instance, sites, community input, comments on the Fellner reports and why it does not make sense to move forward with the existing buildings, etc.

B. Other -

Audience of Citizens – K. Stofko indicated that it would be optimum for researchers if the library were in relative proximity to the Town Office complex as researchers would likely be visiting both. Chairman Barney indicated that was something that the committee had discussed several times. The properties that the committee has looked at are generally located in the corridor between the existing Senior Center, the Municipal Office Complex, and on Plains Road/Town Street up to Rte. 82.

The YouTube recording of the meeting is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYQ48Ra9t80.

Adjournment -
Without objection, the meeting was adjourned at 8:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John Bielot, Secretary