

LIBRARY STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 28, 2014

Attendees:

Jan Rosenbaum (Jan), chair
Ames Curtis (AC)
Warren Erickson (WE)
Judy Lindahl (JL)

Ex-officio attendees:

Bill Chapman (BC), Select Board
Ann Filley (Ann), Library Director
Kathleen Meil (KM), Library Committee, acting chair

Absent:

Carole Gartley (CG)
Pat Messler (PM)
Charlton Ames (CA), Select Board (ex-officio)

Also in attendance:

Stevie Kumble (SK)
Staci Coomer (SC)
Rick Bates (Rick), Town Manager

NOTE on notations:

The name or initials following the attendee list are the shorthand notation as to how attendees are identified in the following minutes though I have tried to spell out the name of the person the first time he/she is mentioned.

NOTE on follow-up assignments:

Where appropriate, I have highlighted assignments or volunteer commitments in **red**.

Meeting opened at 4:03 by Jan Rosenbaum (Jan), chair. He informed the everyone that Staci Coomer (SC), Executive Director of the Penobscot Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce, would be joining us shortly.

Jan announced that, in supplement to the agenda, he had two goals for the meeting: (1) discussing/assigning responsibility for the need to define and describe each site under consideration and (2) the need to re-rank and prioritize each criteria.

Ames Curtis (AC) raised to additional items that she would like to see considered and dealt with at the meeting: (1) dealing with Memorial Park issues such as had been raised by David Jackson (DJ) and Bill Chapman (BC) regarding the memorials and (2) discussion of the "old" school

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(located between Church and Summer streets) as a possible site as mentioned at a previous meeting.

As to the matter of the “old” school, the final decision was to not add it to the list with the following observations being made:

- It is not listed for sale on any of the realty websites (Rick Bates (RB))
- It is a warren of apartments (Jan)
- Given the age, it will have the same issues as with the MCMA siit
- The cost mentioned (\$1.8 million being asked, even possibly settling for \$1.2 million) is prohibitive

In conjunction with the above observations, the following comments were provided:

- We need to be able to say why we didn’t consider this site (Warren Erickson (WE))
- We should list reasons for not considering this or any other reasonable site (Jan)
- The Erickson Farm property on West St. (Route 90) at Cross St. is available (Stevie Kumble (SK))
- We should be looking only at town-owned property outside of the downtown village area (Kathleen Meil (KM))
- We should ask ourselves why we would want to spend \$1 million (and up) for a piece of property that is (or could be) on the tax rolls (RB)

Getting back on topic, KM asked if it would be possible to discuss what it means to be “iconic” and the “emotional impact” of the current site.

Agreement was reached that the three principal goals for the committee for the meeting would be:

1. Weighting the criteria
2. Define what “sense of iconic” meant
3. The “psychology” of Memorial Park

The committee then diverted to trying to better understand Rockport Properties and who locally would stand to gain financially if the decision was made to build the new library on the site adjacent to Mary Lea Park. RB explained how Leucadia has restructured itself and divested the real estate portion of the conglomerate which is now HomeFed Corporation of Carlsbad, CA. Rockport Properties is a subsidiary of HomeFed and unrelated to anyone in Rockport.

A brief discussion was then held regarding libraries as economic drivers which lead to a question from AC about what and where is an “anchor point.”

WE then asked if Rockport Properties might be willing to donate the land?

Jan asked about the cost of building on a sloped parcel.

RB: actually significantly lower. Most of the cost is in the 1st story. After that, the foundation and roof are set and only the actual cost of each story is the factor.

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Ann Filley (Ann) then related the conversation she (and apparently RB) had with Bill Najpauer regarding a “vision” for what a library could look like from a “here’s where we could do with that space” perspective. The gist is:

- Parking under the building, opening off the Sandy’s Way (the parking lot behind and below Mary Lea
- Library of floor level with the sidewalk and one story down
- Commercial or residential space above
- Atrium facing the harbor
- Easily 10,000 square feet
- Link to Opera House below grade
- Mary Lea Park leveled upwards at the rear making it more attractive for weddings, etc.
- Rooftop garden a possibility with reading area (making it eligible for “green” grants)

Thinking and conversation with Mike Sabatini indicated that it might be a project by Rockport Properties to build to suit and then the town would have a 99-year lease (or similar long-term lease).

KM related what one woman had told her: that the library is the only place in the downtown area where she felt welcome which lead to the issue about noise, that libraries aren’t for “shush” any more but some libraries overpower you when you walk in (a.k.a., Camden Public Library).

WE suggested this be considered a new option. Questioned whether parking would remain a problem.

RB replied that Najpauer told him that parking “can be solved” in several different ways.

It was pointed out that the library has very little overlap with ROH and the restaurants in regards to hours of operation.

Najpauer also mentioned that “congestion is a small town benefit.”

RB reiterated an observation made by John Priestly during the Library Listening Tour that libraries today need connections to the outside/outdoors, something the RES conceptual design made full use of.

AC observed that libraries need parks and equipment.

Jan pointed out that gardens, especially formal ones, take a lot to maintain.

At this point, Staci Coomer (SC) arrived and was introduced.

Jan then got the meeting back on track by asking KM to go over the issue of “iconic” for SC’s benefit.

KM described to SC the matrix (someone provided SC with a clean copy) with a synopsis of each of the options and criteria.

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The term “iconic” was kicked around with it having different meanings to different people present at the meeting. SK mentioned that some thought it applied to the current physical structure while others thought it a psychological “feel” of the “experience.”

SC asked about the rankings and where this effort was going.

WE responded that the criteria were unweighted.

KM mentioned the desire on the part of the Library Committee (LC) to have a non-binding question on the November warrant.

A discussion ensued about what information would be needed for a ballot question to be understood and yield a result that can be recognized.

Jan said we need to realize how much “we” can raise and that November might be too early. We need more answers to costs, designs, etc., or the result will/could be a NO vote. Whatever question goes to the voters can’t have open ends that could be misconstrued or open to interpretation.

KM: how do we ask people to donate if we don’t have a sense that the voters will approve a specific site?

KM: the Rockport Properties site option (called MLP for Mary Lea Park from here on to distinguish the site from the owner of the property) might be the game changer. If MLP can be a consensus solution, we may not need a non-binding referendum but could spend the time developing the concept and go to the voters in June, 2015, with a bond request.

AC asked about seeing the sketches that Richard Anderson and Bill Leone had prepared for the Memorial Park location. And, could those be compared to the RES and other non-MLP options?

RB asked Ann about what she thought the connection was to the current location and building.

Ann pointed out:

- About a 50/50 split (keep or stay vs. new)
- Some can’t wait to get into a new facility
- “Many” want absolutely nothing to change

BC pointed out three things that need to be kept in mind when looking at what Ann is hearing:

1. A number of people think there is no need for a library (can get anything needed from Amazon or use Camden and Rockland libraries)
2. Yes, there are a lot that love the current building because it is all they know
3. What about those who can’t use the current library because of the acknowledged shortcomings

SK mentioned the encounter with a driver of a pickup truck while SK was lugging a bag of books, her cane and other stuff down Union St...“when will you library people get parking?” Evidently from someone who didn’t use the library but recognized the problem which might be keeping that person away.

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Ann: improved libraries result in increased usage.

RB: libraries are like gold fish...they grow to fill the space available.

AC: aesthetic vs. iconic? How it looks in a space dictates how people think of it.

RB: putting a building (any building) on Memorial Park will change the flavor of that section of downtown; will increase the feel of density.

KM: the visual impact on Central St. and how it is a focus when one is driving up Central from Union Hall.

BC: quintessential New England style building. Not recognizable as a library but fitting into peoples concept of what small-town New England buildings should look like.

KM pointed out that RES has that potential and maybe the MLP site as well.

Ann: regardless of location, we have to ask “does it invite you into the building?”

WE: a library is symbolic of a town’s values. Do those who want to keep it as is and where it is really want to keep it for/to themselves and exclude those who don’t share that value?

AC: what do the kids think of the library?

SC pointed out that when she comes with her family (5 including husband), they make it crowded regardless of how many other people are there.

SK pointed out how the Belfast Public Library has seen increased use by children with the renovation of their 2nd floor.

NOTE: at this point the committee pretty much skipped addressing the Memorial Park issue.

Planning the next step:

Jan:

- **people who worked on specific sites need to:**
 1. **Distill each site (give it a description)**
 2. **List the assets/pluses**
 3. **List the negatives**
- **These need to be sent to Jan.**
- **We need to start developing a “program” of how the library is to be arranged, e.g., like Portland where none of the interior walls are fixed so they have future flexibility to reorganize the space.**
- **We need to start thinking about the size we want which leads to the cost. We need to have a sit-down with the Library Committee (LC) and Ann to come to a conclusion on the size.**

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AC: good points, but what do “I” have to do? Are we saying that the RES and the MLP sites have risen to the top? Would we be spinning our wheels on trying to further define the other sites? Do we need to document why we dropped the other sites?

WE: shouldn't we include the combined site (Memorial Park together with the current library site)?

AC: wouldn't that require closing the library and disrupting the memorials in Memorial Park?

Judy Lindahl (JL): I think we can drop CMCA, CHRHS and the Route 1 sites. She pointed out that the town has not taken a vote regarding the library; we need to stop fearing the reaction; we should present the ideas and stop worrying about the “what if they ask why we didn't consider...” question.

RB: do we have a sense of what level of a bond the town would be willing to support? Do we have any sense of the “community?”

Jan: pointed out that he would feel really uncomfortable asking the town to support more than 50% of a bond and that any bond that is taken out should have the provision for being paid off early. The bond would really be more of a construction bond plus some period of time to finish raising the money.

KM pointed out that the LC always wanted/said the town should never be asked to pay more than 50% of the bond.

The committee then descended into a discussion of MSAD 28 getting ready to ask for a \$20-something million bond to rebuild the Middle School and what impact that would have on Rockport asking for a bond to build a new library.

Jan got the committee back on track by raising the question of raising donations. He gave a preliminary timeline for when things needed to be done. That there would need to be some non-refundable seed money (several \$100,000 donations?) to get the initial work done before funding commitments could be asked for. Do we need a bond of some amount to get the planning going. He pointed out that we don't/shouldn't start raising serious money until 80% of the work is done to get us to the ground breaking.

AC pointed out (the a chorus of agreement) that we shouldn't even consider selling “naming” rights to a new library building; maybe naming of rooms (such as the current Children's Room is “named” for a benefactor whose picture hangs in the room).

Jan and RB mentioned we might be able to get a “seed bond question” in front of the voters in November along the lines done by the Camden Snow Bowl/Ragged Mountain Recreation Area.

Jan mentioned that it would require an extensive education campaign.

KM said she was uncomfortable with that timeline.

Jan said that a Feasibility Study would require about 8 months, the Feasibility Study would determine if there is the ability to raise sufficient money and that SC and Charlton Ames (CA) know how to raise significant amounts of money.

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SC: the introductory steps can be sped up

- Will still need a bond to do the Feasibility Study
- Will need a lead donor or group that will match other money raised
- Will need to be a local person to lead that effort

AC: that goes back to what CA has been asking for: “capstone” ideas to give people the reason to donate.

SC: look at a list of people who have donated to other, similar campaigns. Need someone (a “lead”) who is willing to ask other people for money or, at least, make the introductions on behalf of another person (the “coordinator”) who will make the “pitch” and “sell” the reason for someone to donate.

The person raising the money needs to build a relationship with the person who will be the “lead.”

The “lead” plus the “coordinator” build connections (training the “lead” how to).

A coordinator identifies where the “good fit” is between a donor and the project (everyone is different) – applies to the big donors; required research and development. Consultants create these linkages through study and education of the leads. Usually want 10% of what is raised.

KM: we need to consider a mix of grants.

AC: look to foundations.

SC: many of the big donations come from family foundations. This is where the education of the donor comes in as he/she/they control the foundation and are the principal decision makers regarding expenditures from the foundations.

Jan: the consultant does the feasibility study. We must have a feasibility study to show that the project is feasible and with the support of both community and major donors; it indicates a likelihood of success. Consultants can tell us the amount of support we can expect and then can help launch the capital campaign (and tell us how long the campaign will probably have to last).

SC then listed a template of what Jan had just said, but no one was able to write down each step quick enough. The rest of the group hoped she would be able to remember it and provide it in writing before the next meeting.

WE asked if the site dictates the ease of raising money?

AC pointed out that we need to know which site before we can proceed.

Jan said that we will have to sit down with Mike Sabatini to get some things ironed out: is MLP a viable site?

RB reiterated that if it wasn't for the emotional attachment by a few who are willing to make it a major issue and probably launch a well-funded campaign to oppose it, the RES site would be an hands down winner; it has everything that is being looked for in a site. The issues become:

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(1) can we get it passed and (2) recognize that most of the opposition will be against the RES site.

KM said that the LC wants a joint meeting on June 16 at 4:30 p.m. She is certain the LC will entertain the idea of hiring a consultant as it appears there is money available for such a purpose.

Jan reminded everyone that the consultant would want 10% of whatever is raised.

Next meeting:

Monday, May 12 at 4 p.m.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned by acclamation at 6:14 p.m.

DRAFT