SPECIAL LIBRARY STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

May 29, 2014

Attendees:

Jan Rosenbaum (Jan), chair
Ames Curtis (AC)
Warren Erickson (WE)
Carole Gartley (CG)
Pat Messler (PM)
Peter Hall (PH)
David Jackson (DJ)

Ex-officio attendees:

Bill Chapman (BC), Select Board
Ann Filley (Ann), Library Director
Rick Bates (Rick), Town Manager

Absent:

Judy Lindahl (JL)
Staci Coomer (SC)
Kathleen Meil (KM), Library Committee, ex-officio
Charlton Ames (CA), Select Board, ex-officio

Also in attendance:

No public attendees

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.**

Call to Order:

Meeting opened at 4:10 p.m. by Jan Rosenbaum (Jan), chair.

Purpose of meeting:

To discuss the matrix rankings and criteria weighting.

Unapproved

Discussion of Peter Hall's handout:

Peter Hall (PH) handed out an updated version of the spreadsheet showing "comparable" libraries and the attendance, hours, circulation, etc. In addition, he added bullet points regarding "reasons for a new library," "RES" and "present locale." The last two related solely to what those sites had going for or against the specific site.

PH also pointed out, in regards to both the Camden and Rockland libraries, there were adjacent activities that drew people to the library and, conversely, provided other things for library patrons to do while visiting the library.

Of particular note, it was pointed out an apparent correlation between square footage and population and circulation to visits.

Carole Gartley (CG) asked what are the surrounding activities for other libraries on the list (Gray, Calais, Naples, Kennebunkport and Thompson).

Dave Jackson (DJ) pointed out that 15% of Camden Library Cards are held by Rockport residents. Rockport Public Library only tracks resident vs. non-resident and considers part-time Rockport "residents" as resident even though their true "home" is elsewhere.

Ann Filley (Ann) again pointed out that many libraries, particularly Camden, have door counters while Rockport only counts visually so someone coming in the back door, using the washroom and then departing would be counted in Camden, for example, but not in Rockport.

Warren Erickson (WE) asked what the downtown businesses were contributing to library patronage?

Ames Curtis (AC) asked if downtown Rockport could be considered "vibrant?"

Jan pointed out that downtown Rockport is more than just 2 restaurants and that the Bay Chamber music school has over 600 students enrolled.

At that point, Jan directed the attendees back to the purpose of the meeting.

Matrix:

WE and CG handed out the revised matrix with the following caveats:

- Weightings are a work in progress
- Weightings are shown in the right-hand column with one star (*) representing a double weight and two stars (**) represented a triple weight
- Ratings haven't changed (5 being high/best, 1 being low/worst)

CG then explained the reasoning for the weighting.

WE pointed out that some of the original criteria had been eliminated (e.g., "iconic") or were part of other criteria.

Pat Messler (PM) questions the lack of "economic impact."

PH asked about the construction cost criteria and why none of the sites were rated a "5."

Bill Chapman (BC) questioned the "current connectivity" criteria because those adjacent to the fiber optic line but not connected (e.g., CMCA, Rockport Properties) were given the same rating (5) as those

Unapproved

which were physically connected (e.g., current library site). This resulted in a small change in the ratings by dropping those not physically connected to a 4. The ratings for RES and Route 1 sites were reduced to a 3 because while adjacent to the main fiber there were no "drop boxes" for easy connection.

WE questioned the "N/A" ratings for some of the high school criteria.

Jan made the point that we can't eliminate a site solely based on the weighted criteria.

PH raised this question about "visual impact," noting that having the library on Memorial Park with blacktop on the current site could be a negative visual impact on the downtown. The same might be said of the Rockport Properties site if Mary Lea Park were altered.

AC stated that "aesthetics" is important and requested it be given a weighting. PH agreed stating that our criteria could be along the lines of, "would Anne Kilham paint it?" Also, "green space" should be considered part of the pros and cons of the evaluations.

DJ reminded all of the efforts several years ago by the RES Redevelopment Ad Hoc Committee which had at least one appeal made to consider the library for that site as an anchor for commercial development (the economic driver effect). DJ also said that it is still possible for that to happen and that the library conceptual design didn't include that possibility but the result of that effort doesn't rule such a project out of bounds.

CG then provided the thesaurus equivalents for "maintain" (as it applies to the issue of "maintain green space" criteria). Among the long list were conserve, preserve, sustain.

Jan then observed that use of the Rockport Properties site "preserves" the most "green space" in Rockport downtown and village and might even add green space if the current library were turned into a park.

The general consensus was not to include "green space" as a criteria because it creates a trade-off between sites: requires site to site comparison.

DJ pointed out that it (green space) is on the matrix.

CG reminded us that our language must be clear for how we describe each criteria.

BC then gave a brief explanation of Decision Making Analytics and reminded all that if a statement is made about a site, it needs to be evaluated against each site otherwise skewing occurs.

AC re-raised the question from the May 27 meeting about why we are retaining the rejected sites. She pointed out that we need to move to Matrix #2 and concentrate solely on the 3 remaining sites.

Ann suggested that the original matrix now be labeled "Phase 1 Site Evaluation Criteria."

BC reminded everyone that votes had been taken 2 meetings ago (May 12) to eliminate from further consideration all but 2 of the sites (RES and Rockport Properties) with a 3rd (the combined site) in limbo for further development (which was concluded at the May 27 meeting with a vote to retain).

AC stated that the current matrix (Phase 1 for lack of a better term) supports that.

PM said we now need to move to Phase 2 and deal only with the remaining 3 sites/properties.

WE opined that the new matrix should include the Pros and Cons.

The question came back up about what the Steering Committee's charge is. General agreement was that the committee is to present 2 recommended sites with the reasons for those 2 recommendations.

WE said that the two documents we are working with (matrix and pros and cons) fit well together. Now volunteers are needed early "next week" (the week of June 1-7) to help refine the matrix.

June 16 Presentation:

PM then moved the debate to one of what the presentation on June 16 to the Library Committee should look like.

Jan said he had been thinking about it and proposed 6 sections:

I.   Executive Summary
II. Introduction
III. Methodology
IV. Sites Evaluated, Results and Comments
V.   Financial Recommendations
VI. Documentation

Jan then said that he will be meeting next week with the experts (as mentioned at the May 27 meeting). He also said that a Steering Committee meeting may be needed next week (the week of June 1-7).

WE asked, again, about what the square footage the committee should be considering. Is 9,000SF the minimum or can it be 10,000SF?

AC suggested making it 12,000SF.

Jan said that 9,000 was the absolute minimum; it's 3,000SF now with actual program usage at 6,000SF. If the library was built 50% larger than the real usage that puts it at 9,000SF, the absolute minimum. So it would be hard to justify 12,000SF (100% larger than real usage and 4x larger than current size. 10,000SF might be OK.

AC: based on the Scott Simon Architects (SSA) video, 14,000SF is not unrealistic. AC pointed out that Jan's calculated space using the online formula, was nearly 12,000SF.

DJ: the committee should argue for the high side based on the "grinder" effect taking over and cutting the space, so we need to be very realistic.

PM: SSA numbers were well thought out – we need to think 25 years; don't lowball the space.

RB: we settled on 10,000SF for comparison, not a limitation. What can other sites support – development costs per square foot.

There ensued a lengthy discussion on what the minimum size should be/is.

BC: Recommended going with 14,000SF. If a site can't support that size, what will fit. Conversely, if a 14,000SF library is put on a site, what is the impact on the neighborhood? Also, keep in mind that if it is built too small (say 9,000SF) and an expansion is needed in 5 years, it will be hard to either get donors to re-up or voters to approve another bond.

AC, DJ, PH, etc., verbally supported 14,000SF.

Unapproved

Professional/expert meetings:

WE asked if the Steering Committee members were invited to sit in on the meetings with the experts?

Jan: no. If Steering Committee members want specific questions asked, they need to be sent to Jan no later than Sunday morning (June 1). There would be a single set of questions; no variations. The meetings were not intended to teach the professionals what we wanted, but rather to find out what the 3 sites could support and what the special costs for preparing or building on a specific site might be. He (Jan) would be making a presentation to the full Steering Committee on those findings, possibly with the LC and Select Board invited.

Jan acknowledged that each expert might not answer all the questions given their area of expertise.

PH went back to the matrix to ensure all present were comfortable with concentrating on just the 3 remaining sites.

WE suggested including all sites and pulling in the pros and cons to integrate all criteria and documentation but using the "hide" function for the columns representing the eliminated sites.

Next meeting:

Monday, June 9, at 4 p.m., in the Richardson Room.

Adjournment:

At 6:02 p.m. but unanimous consent.