

BELMONT MEMORIAL LIBRARY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES February 12, 2008

Chair Hal Shubin called the meeting to order in the Flett Room at 7:31 p.m. Present were Trustees Elaine Alligood, Mary Keenan, Matt Lowrie, and Heli Tomford, Director Maureen Conners; David Rich, the library representative to the Belmont ITAC Committee; Steve Sala, the Permanent Building Committee liaison with the library; and by speaker phone, Patience Jackson, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) library building consultant to towns over 10,000 population.

Chair Shubin opened with the news that the Capital Planning Overview Committee (CPOC) in its interim report in October recommended to the Board of Selectmen that the police station relocate to the present library building which is still viable as a building. The CPOC also recommended the incorporation of the White Field House into plans of moving the library across the street. Director Conners added that the Police Dept. Feasibility Study recommends relocation to the present library building; thus three departments would be involved - library, police, and school (field house).

Ms. Jackson noted the synergy that could be created with the three departments working together. The library is more than a part of the sales and marketing of this plan; it is embedded in the community. She referred us to page 2 of a library circulation handout; Belmont has a phenomenal circulation figure.

Chair Shubin said that he spoke with the Belmont Library Foundation (BLF) to begin marketing the idea as the cluster plan had been turned down once. In response to Ms. Jackson's asking why this had happened, Chair Shubin spoke of the school department's loss of playing field area and the timing of the senior center plan.

Ms. Jackson said that moving the library across the street does not look as if the town would need to give up any playing field. She looked at the site in the afternoon.

(As the conversation with Ms. Jackson proceeded on a question and answer basis, that format will be used here to more accurately represent what was said. Those speaking are referred to by initials.)

HS - What is the status of the bond bill?

PJ - A hearing with the Joint Committee on Bonding was held a week and a half ago; Rob Maier (MBLC) spoke for two minutes of the three hour hearing. There was a cogent presentation from the Secretary of Administration and Finance, but the hearing board did not take testimonies from libraries. I learned today that a second hearing is likely on 2/27; the MBLC may have two hearings that day. I am still hopeful. The Governor submitted libraries as part of the overall bond bill in early January; the Governor's endorsement is a powerful piece. Currently there is a Senate bill and a House bill.

When the grants are made, the libraries on the waiting list would receive the initial payment, (30% of their total grant amount), which includes a 15% increase for inflation; this has been discussed with Administration and Finance. The amount needed for this bill is \$100M. This 15% increase is a recommendation, but there has been no official Board of Library Commissioners vote on this. If the bill passes, Belmont's \$4.6M with the 15% increase would amount to \$5.3M. Construction costs are increasing rapidly.

HS - Assuming the bill is approved, how will the money be distributed?

PJ- There will be a distribution of \$20M each year for five years. I have not seen future years of the capital budget.

HS - So, funding Belmont would require \$23M to be approved.

PJ - \$20M would fund the first year. The first year is NOT the TOTAL payment, therefore passage of this bill would fund libraries past Belmont on the list.

There is a vote by the MBLC for a provisional award.

There is a period of time for municipalities to accept the award. The six month period for acceptance may be extended (there is precedent for this) to eighteen months. This depends on the time of year; it is to a town's advantage to have the award match the spring or fall opportunity of a town meeting.

The steps then are

1. achieve local funding,
2. sign contract for building of X number of square feet,
3. when contract is approved, town will get the initial 30% of payment.

HS - Has any decision been made on timing?

PJ - The MBLC board will vote at the next board meeting after the approval of the bill. The first payment to Belmont would be \$1.5M.

ML - Will money be given to all the libraries ready for it?

PJ - This is one scenario. Belmont is now number eight; it would be in the first group.

HS - This presents a difficulty in planning, in sustaining interest and excitement. Having a longer period of time for town action makes it easier to plan.

PJ - Too much time is also a problem.

HS - What does it take to change a site for Belmont after the grant application has been submitted?

PJ - The present site (the site noted in the feasibility plan) must be declared unbuildable. There is not enough research on the brook and the wetlands, and it may be an unbuildable site.

HS - Would this be our case, that the present location is not a good site?

PJ - Yes.

HS - How does this happen?

PJ - I don't know; I have never done this. The trustees and town officials have local issues to orchestrate, such as where to put the library.

HT - We need substantive evidence as to the new site.

SS - Members of the PBC involved in environmental engineering say the present site is unbuildable.

PJ - The architect did draw plans with the building close to the brook. There are a number of hurdles using the present site: local and state conservation agencies.

HS - Will the MBLC help us build a case for a change of site?

PJ - YES. I know from coming to this library for sixteen years that it has a majestic outside and a shabby inside.

After the town signs the MBLC contract, there is a payment of 30% of the total grant amount.

You have at least a year of design work ahead. I have discussed with Director Conners about continuing with the present architect. Ms. Conners is to review the original ads and contract for the feasibility study. A project manager is needed. Design takes a year, maybe 15 months.

HS - Changes to the design are needed. We hope for CPOC support and don't want to start at the last minute.

PJ - I would like to sit down with the trustees and the architect. It is not my role to comment on the exterior appearance of the building, but there are some things to talk about regarding the inside of the building.

Being able to bid in July and then break ground in September is very different from bidding in December and breaking ground in February.

According to the regulations, a contract with the MBLC is signed. The initial payment is then issued. Nine months later, the town breaks ground for the new library. But in actuality you will need more than a year to get to this stage. So, after the nine months, every three months the MBLC reviews the project to ensure progress. If a year goes by and the local community is dragging its feet, the library trustees and the Town will be asked to address the MBLC Board. (This scenario happened last year.)

When the town signs a contract with the builder, another 30% of the grant money is released. This is on breaking ground.

When the project is 75% completed, a third 30% is released to the town.

When the building is opened, the final 10% is released to the town. The payments are scheduled out 30 - 30 - 30 - 10. It will be three years from the MBLC contract to the opening of the new library. That is, one year for design, 18-24 months for construction. Remember that when the stage of substantial "completion" is reached, there still may be a 30 page punch list! The final 10% is awarded when the library opens.

Consider the time. From the provisional award to the signing of the MBLC contract, it should be as quick as possible - 6 months. It is under discussion whether this can extend to 18 months.

The first decision for the MBLC is whether to fund 15 libraries or all 29 libraries. The question then is does the MBLC give these libraries longer than 6 months to achieve local approval? That has been done once in the past. Remember the story of the grasshopper and the ants; don't wait! Seven of the libraries on the final list failed at town meeting because they waited till the last minute.

I would be delighted to meet with the trustees at any time. In Belmont's circulation category, from Newburyport on down, of the 12 libraries, Belmont is the ONLY ONE without a new building or a renovation. This is the right thing to do!

HS and all present- Thank you for all your time and information.
This is the end of the conference call with Ms. Jackson.

Mr. Sala asked what is the library's game plan? Chair Shubin expressed the hope that the building a new library would move forward. Trustee Lowrie noted that with a change in site, the design from the feasibility study for a building on the present site cannot be kept. Mr. Sala noted that the location on the north side of Concord Av. would provide a nice southern exposure. Director Conners said no one has measured the proposed site across Concord Av. Chair Shubin will be in contact with the CPOC.

In response to Mr. Sala's query about the status of the reconfigured circulation desk project, Director Connors said that the notice would be in the Central Register and in the Legals on Thursday. Walk-thrus would be held after 3:30 p.m. Mr. Sala was thanked for his work. MINUTES - Minutes for the meetings of March 8, 2007, July 17, 2007, January 16, 2008, and February 2, 2008 were unanimously approved on a motion by Trustee Lowrie seconded by Trustee Alligood.

BUDGET MEETINGS Recent budget meetings were reviewed. Trustees Shubin, Tomford, and Keenan and Director Connors met with the warrant sub-committee on January 30th and again with the full committee on February 2nd. As the figure for electricity costs was revised, the book budget had to be decreased while making sure that the budget meets the municipal appropriation requirement (MAR).

Director Connors with Trustees Alligood and Keenan attended the presentation of the budget to the Warrant Committee on February 6th. At all three meetings, the question of the Benton branch was raised, the cost of keeping it open for use as a "community living room" (to quote a Warrant Comm. member), the positive effect on the main library if personnel need not be split with Benton, and the possibility of sale of the building for a private residence.

DUSTAN FUND - Trustee Tomford reported on the Dustan extension. Trustee Lowrie will draft this document.

LRP - The schedule for the five year long range plan which is due to the MBLC in October was discussed. The survey sub-committee will meet to begin this work. At the beginning of March, there will be publicity advertising for possible members of this committee. Trustee Tomford suggested solicitation for community members via the circulation desk, the newspaper, and the web-site. The committee will be named by the trustees.

ONE TOWN ONE BOOK - Director Connors reported on continuing events and the on-going work by the library staff and the committee. In response to a question from Trustee Tomford, Director Connors stated that it is too late to arrange to use tickets for the event at the high school on Feb. 26th - the talk by popular author Greg Mortensen. A police supervisor and four officers as well as a contact person will ensure public safety at this event.

TRUSTEE VACANCY - Chair Shubin will contact Tom Younger, town administrator, about the Selectmen's calendar, citing the approaching town election. Trustee Tomford cited the need to ask the town to enlarge the volunteer notebook with a specific check-off for library interests as well as to update this resource.

DISCRETIONARY FUND - Trustee Tomford presented the idea of establishing such a fund which would be used to pay for gifts for retiring employees, etc., rather than asking for contributions from trustees each time funds are needed. Each trustee would gift this fund to get it established. Director Connors will check with the town accountant on this.

CIRCULATION SUPERVISOR VACANCY - Director Connors is interviewing candidates for this position. The trustees asked if the job description for such a major position should be revised as the library is looking to the future.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT - The highlights of this were reviewed. Fines may now be paid on-line w/o a user fee. The policy committee is revising the behavior policies. Asked for a timeline of the work on the circulation desk, Director Connors explained that the mill work (8 - 12 weeks worth) must be completed before construction in the building commences. Trustees were reminded that, when one is writing as a trustee, it is imperative that he/she have another trustee check the document. Trustee Keenan reported on the Friends of the Library meeting on February 7th, noting the several opportunities to join the Board.

The next meeting of the trustees will be held on MARCH 25TH .

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.; Trustee Tomford's motion, seconded by Trustee Lowrie, passed unanimously.
Respectfully submitted, Mary E. Keenan, secretary