

Deerfield Public Library
Library Board Special Board Meeting Minutes
June 2, 2010

1) Call to order and attendance:

Board President Ken Abosch called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Attending: Board Members: Ken Abosch-President, Ron Simon, Sunday Mueller, Marla Bark Dembitz, Mary Courtney, Jeff Rivlin. Staff: Mary Pergander-Library Director, Carol Dolin-Business Manager.

Guests: Rick Lynn-CIG Co-chair, Steve Larson-Library Consultant, and Polly Koenigsknecht-Library Consultant. Matt Kiefer-Deerfield Review.

2) General purpose and structure of tonight's meeting

Mr. Abosch outlined the layout and objectives of the meeting, reiterating that the intent is to make a decision about which one of the four Options to pursue. Decisions will not be made about time table, strategies, or action plans related to the Building Improvement Plan this evening.

3) General Board discussion of previously presented data:

- NIU Telephone Survey results – This was the newest and broadest information source available to the Board and conveyed strongly that the community is satisfied with the Library. Total costs and the current state of the economy are important considerations, and the Board should act in a fiscally responsible manner. The majority of respondents would support a referendum for modest improvements to the Library costing additional taxes of \$50-\$75 per year to an owner of an average value (\$500,000) home. The survey also indicated that a vast majority of respondents are registered, but not necessarily active, Library users and voters.
- CIG presentation – The CIG previously presented a compelling case for educating people about the Library needs and how the project meets those needs and adds value to the community. When people understand the needs and benefits, they tend to support the project. The challenge is reaching enough people to generate sufficient support. The CIG feedback indicated a preference for Option 4.
- Ehlers presentation – Ehlers previously provided a range of project and per household costs that were very clear and easy for Open House attendees and survey respondents to understand. During the discussion, the Board asked Mr. Larson which of the four options the Library could finance without a referendum. Mr. Larson said Option 1 could possibly be funded with a combination of Library reserves and borrowing, but Option 2 and beyond would require a referendum or alternate financing.
- Architect study – The architects previously presented a space assessment and facility review, but not a full building plan. The costs associated with each option are comprehensive project costs, not just construction costs. The architect report does not specify interior finishes, but assumes comparable finishes across all options, of the quality indicated by the board as preferred at the project visioning meeting last year.

4) Opportunity for input from Library Director

Ms. Pergander believes that the community supports the Library's request for building improvements but people fear the economic downturn and their future financial stability. She suggested minimal improvements now using only available funds, while planning for a bigger project later, perhaps in 2012. A second option may be to pursue a referendum in the fall or spring for Option 2, while developing a ten year plan to look at expansion, beginning again in eight years. She also pledged strong support of whatever option the Board decides to pursue.

5) Opportunity for input from Ehlers

- Mr. Larson spoke about the following issues
 - The timeline for referendum - going for spring 2011 referendum allows time for optimism to build about the economy and to educate the public about the project.
 - Structuring debt to meet the \$50-\$75 per year target
 - a) Use an amortization period of 25 years rather than 20 years
 - b) Put more reserves toward the project and finance less
 - c) Use a slowly increasing, rather than level, debt serviceOptions a) and c) create lower annual payments, but increase the overall cost of the projects. These alternatives are not commonly used by libraries, but could be done given that the Library is in a home rule community and is not a district, which would be restricted by different statutes. Option b) depletes reserves below desirable levels. Option c) contradicts statements previously made to the public. The Board was concerned about any perception of not maintaining its perceived commitments.
 - Self-funding Option 1 would cost the Library approximately \$280,000 per year out of operations. This would be difficult to achieve.

6) Opportunity for input from CIG representatives

Mr. Lynn reiterated the CIG's belief that the public is receptive to the Library's vision and value that the project can bring to the community it serves. After hearing the message in March, Open House attendees preferred a new building to renovation because the incremental increase in benefit outweighed the incremental increase in cost. From a real estate perspective, Option 2 and Option 4 both cost about \$250 per square foot. Looking at the financing options, amortizing a new building over 25 years makes sense because some life would remain in the building. Amortizing Option 2 over 20 years does not make sense because work would be required again in ten years, well before the original project has been paid off. If a project is to be funded over 20 years, it should have, at minimum, a 20 year lifespan.

7) Board selection of preferred Option

Mr. Abosch thanked everyone for their comments. He outlined the influences on the decision at hand: public opinion from the survey and CIG report, financial and space-use advisory information. The Board has been elected to make the best decision possible, balancing the needs of the Library to serve the public in a way that adds value to the community with political reality. He then polled the Board members to see how many had made their individual decisions. All were ready to commit to one or two choices. No one supported Option 1, which would replace or repair the infrastructure and improve safety and access, but leave the building cosmetically unappealing and would address none of the space issues.

- Ms. Courtney preferred Option 3, but thought Option 2 would have the most community support.
- Ms. Dembitz preferred to bring Options 2 and 3 to the next round of Open Houses to get more public feedback before making a final decision.
- Mr. Simon preferred Option 2 or a phased expansion that moves toward Option 3 to keep the costs within the range supported by survey respondents.
- Ms. Mueller felt Option 2 did not fulfill the Library's needs and proposed a modified Option 3 "lite", perhaps expanding into just one of the gardens to reduce costs.
- Mr. Rivlin preferred repairing the HVAC now, especially if grant funding could cover a large portion of the cost, and wait for Option 4 in the future, to take advantage of the opportunity to change parking lot traffic patterns and incorporate technology more effectively. He also expressed support for Option 3 "lite".
- Mr. Goldberg submitted his opinion to Ms. Pergander via e-mail prior to the meeting. Ms. Pergander reported that while Mr. Goldberg indicated he could support Option 4, because it makes the most efficient use of funds and offers the most flexibility, he had indicated he felt Option 3 was the best overall option when considering the feedback from the public. Options 1 and 2 do not achieve the objectives of the project.
- Mr. Abosch said he initially preferred Option 3 prior to the meeting, but believed after the discussion that the best chance to achieve the plan is to go with a modified Option 3 "lite". Further investigation is needed to find optimal places to reduce cost and build in flexibility to pursue additional expansion as needed in the future.

Further discussion brought out the following advantages of pursuing a modified Option 3.

- Considering the short window to share the information with the public, a single option simplifies the message.
- Selecting a modification of Option 3 to reduce overall costs indicates to the public that the Board had been listening and incorporating the feedback in order to be responsible from a fiduciary standpoint.
- This alternative meets the most urgent needs of the Library and may allow for flexibility into the future.
- This plan solves more, rather than fewer, of the problems with the funds expended.

Mr. Simon made a motion to accept Option 3, Building Maintenance, Remodel, and Expansion of up to 10,000 square feet. Ms. Dembitz seconded. The motion passed by the following vote: Mr. Abosch-yes, Mr. Simon-yes, Ms. Mueller-yes, Ms. Courtney-yes, Ms. Dembitz-yes, Mr. Rivlin-yes.

Next steps:

- Messaging must be developed and disseminated for the Open Houses.
- New numbers will be developed for Option 3 "lite" or Option 2 "plus."
- The architects must be given direction about what is desired – scaling the project differently to lower costs without compromising quality, and presenting variations to achieve the objectives. These will not be ready for the Open Houses.
- A final decision about whether to move forward with a possible referendum will be made in late July.

Ms. Courtney made a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:42 p.m.