

MINUTES OF THE LIBRARY BUILDING COMMITTEE

July 18, 2001

VAUGHAN ROOM

Present: John O'Leary, George Robinson, John Grossman, Todd Hanson, Peter Bresciano, Cary Rothenburger, Suzanne Ford, Lenore Bronson, Claudia Morner, John Bohenko, Carvel Tefft, Noele Clews, and Sherm Pridham

Absent: Paul McEachern, Stephen Mowry, and Kate Leith

Chairman O'Leary called meeting to order at 7:05 PM. He highlighted the agenda and requested a motion to accept the Oct. 5, 2000 minutes. MOTION "To accept October 5, 2000 minutes" Robinson, seconded Clews, accepted.

O'Leary suggested that the NLBC discuss and revisit the motion of October 5, 2000 meeting that moved the JFK to the top slot for the library site. Bohenko added that if the NLBC reaffirmed the Oct. 5 vote to move the JFK site to the top choice for siting the new library, he would recommend that the City Council approve the JFK site and move forward with the design phase. Bohenko viewed revisiting the motion as beneficial since time has elapsed while waiting for approval of the agreement between the City and Spinnaker Point for adult recreation facility. He said that another "false start" should be avoided. MOTION "To reaffirm the JFK site as the New Library Building Committee's top site." Bresciano, seconded by Robinson.

Tefft felt that JFK only seems like an ideal site because NLBC was backed into that site. He discussed his concerns surrounding JFK: 1. It would bring more traffic to the school area,. 2. Parking is an issue, 3. Room for expansion issue, 4. Landfill issue, Richards Avenue has problems with water in cellars.

Tefft felt he would not have chosen the JFK site if not guided to the spot. He added that certain criteria boxed NLBC into the JFK decision (i.e. number of miles from downtown). Tefft felt JFK site's number one problem was traffic. He said that twice a day, for ½ hour periods, cars couldn't move down Parrott Avenue.

Grossman added that he didn't feel "backed into" the JFK site. He didn't see two 1/2 hour periods of traffic as a problem when compared with keeping downtown viable. Buildings such as city hall, library, post office, etc. must remain downtown for a downtown to remain viable. When institutions move out of downtown, a city falls apart. Portsmouth is a successful city with a viable downtown. Grossman felt that the JFK site is an appropriate site. For example, it's not blocking historic views and fits into a group of buildings.

Bresciano also did not feel backed into the JFK site. For years, it has been his number two spot. He noted that space usage might change. He added that traffic has increased in that area due to increased usage of the District Court and no one has studied that increase.

Clews also felt that JFK is her second choice. Overall, she would prefer Parrott Avenue in terms of cityscape, but she is aware of the financial issues surrounding the site. She personally likes the JFK building. Clews also felt that the parking is a concern. The Middle School can be a mob scene of cars; especially if parking spaces at Middle School are eliminated. She hopes the traffic issues will be resolved, but she is glad that the site is downtown.

Hanson shared Clews' thoughts as to the JFK site being his second choice but felt that all sites have compromises. JFK is most available. Parrott Avenue parking lot would be part of a gorgeous cityscape but the site is too small. Hanson liked the vibrancy of evenings at the ball fields. The library would add to it and benefit from it. Hanson is also aware of traffic and buses. The Library is not open at the 7:30AM time slot when the buses arrive at school.. He added that JFK would be located near senior housing and the senior center.

Parking issues were discussed by NLBC members. Hanson estimated that there were approximately 114 total parking spaces shown on the sketch of a library at JFK site, but added the diagram is very schematic and one of several configurations. Tefft raised concerns of neighborhood loss of parking. Bohenko responded that he would work closely with the neighborhood, library, middle school, and senior center. Bohenko agreed that Parrott Avenue was his personal favorite site in terms of cityscape, but the cost to secure enough land for parking and expansion is prohibitive. Bresciano added that all would probably prefer Parrott Avenue if the bank property was available. Bresciano stated that the proximity to the ball field was beneficial since library programs can be geared to draw in children. He suggested a traffic pattern study be conducted before August. Bohenko agreed that a traffic count could be made and flow examined, but added that school is not in session. Morner added that AM buses arrive before library is even open, so there would only be afternoon traffic concerns. Library traffic patterns might be examined as well. Pridham stated that library peak times include after 5PM with a quick turnover evenings and summer. He added that this has been one of the busiest summers. He felt that the close proximity of the Middle School would have added benefits of attracting kids and targeting the young adults to visit the library.

Bronson asked if parking would be designated for library use only? Bohenko felt that establishing time limits within the library parking lot was a better tactic.

The earlier motion to reaffirm JFK site, was brought to a vote.

Tefft stated that he would vote against the motion. He feels that it is bad public policy to move more people to school areas. He stated that it was negative to bring more people near a school as much as others like to think it synergistic. The vote was taken and the count was 10 in favor (Robinson, Rothenburger, Morner, Bronson, Hanson, Bresciano, Grossman, O'Leary, Clews, and Ford) 1 opposed (Tefft). The Motion passed.

O'Leary stated that anyone interested in continuing to serve on the Committee should contact the Mayor. The Mayor will make assignments. The Library Trustees will also be involved.

Phyllis Eldridge, Chair of Library Trustees, introduced herself. She stated that there are 9 Trustees. She is not sure how many will join the NLBC since it hasn't yet been broached.

Bohenko stated that he would go before City Council in August with the NLBC's recommendation to proceed with the JFK site. He said that to make it easier for NLBC members to communicate to the Mayor their willingness to continue on the Committee, any members of NLBC present this evening could simply indicate their desire to continue by initialing the NLBC roster.

Grossman recommended that the Richards Avenue Neighborhood be involved as the process moves forward. Pridham added that there are many positives to having a library in the neighborhood; it's important to let the neighbors know what resources the library will be able to offer.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM/