

**PUBLIC MEETING
TO DISCUSS
PORTSMOUTH ARMORY BUILDING
&
SECTION 106 PROCESS**

7:00 PM

CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

MAY 6, 2003

Present: Cindy Hayden, Community Development Director
Dr. Richard Betterly, New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources
Sherm Pridham, Library Director

Cindy Hayden, the City's Community Development Director, welcomed the public and introduced Dr. Richard Betterly, of the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources and Sherm Pridham, Director of the Public Library. She indicated that this was primarily a public meeting to hear from the residents, however, she started with some background information.

She indicated that the City has gone through a very extensive site selection process for a new library. This was done under the direction of the New Library Building Committee who looked at at least 14 different sites and used very specific selection criteria to determine which site to select. The JFK Memorial Building on Parrott Avenue, also known as the Armory, is the site which was selected by the committee and endorsed by the Planning Board and the City Council. The Armory building is eligible to be on the National Register of Historic Buildings. In order to construct a library on the Parrott Avenue site, the Armory building would have to be removed.

Ms. Hayden stated that the evening's meeting had a very specific focus and that was to hear how the residents of Portsmouth feel about the loss of that historic resource known as the Armory versus the public benefit of constructing a public library in its place.

She clarified that they were not present to talk about parking, drainage, legal issue, or whether the City wants to have a new library. All of those issues have been the subject of many meetings over the last several years that many people have spoken at.

Ms. Hayden gave a brief history of the Armory Building. It was constructed in 2 phases, in 1914 and 1916. It was built for the purpose of being an armory although the city later turned it into a recreational center. It was designed by Chase Whitcher, who at one time served as State Architect and the reason it is eligible to be on the Historic Register as determined by the NH Division of Historical Resources is both for its architectural and military significance.

Dr. Betterly was invited to act as a technical resource to the city, particularly with regard to the historic review process that the City has to go through. Ms. Hayden pointed out that the State's Division of Historical Resources does not have any authority over whether the City chooses to remove the Armory

building from the site. He was present as a professional courtesy to the City. It is ultimately the City Council's decision of whether the Armory building will be removed or not.

Ms. Hayden spoke about the Section 106 Historic Review process. Section 106 is a section within the National Historic Preservation Act. The historic review process is triggered when a community is going to adversely effect, in this case removal of, an historic structure and a federal permit is required for other reasons. In this particular case, the City needs one single Federal permit which is an EPA stormwater discharge permit. This is a new permit for EPA which the City needs because we would be disturbing more than an acre of land on the site. It is so new that there isn't even an application form yet for us to fill out. The City will be submitting to the EPA a Notice of Intent, letting them know that we intend to fill out a stormwater permit.

Lastly, Ms. Hayden stated that, assuming the construction of the library moves forward on the site on Parrott Avenue, the City would do a number of things to recognize the historic resource. Those things could include reusing bricks, documenting what was there through, for example, photographs done by a professional, possibly creating an exhibit inside that describes the armory and what it was as a resource. It has been concluded that reuse of the entire building or even a large section of the building was not feasible.

Ms. Hayden turned the floor over to Dr. Betterly to give him an opportunity to speak about the Section 106 process. She also reminded the audience that he was not present as a decision-maker and that we don't need to convince him of anything. He is simply present to share information on the Federal process.

Dr. Richard Betterly was glad to see so many people in attendance and indicated that it was the largest group of people that he had spoken to since he was teaching at University. Dr. Betterly indicated that his primary purpose was to clarify the Section 106 Review and Compliance Process. Dr. Betterly pointed out a period photograph that was on display at the entrance and he felt it was taken around 1930. He handed out a sheet explaining the five steps in the 106 process. As you go through the steps, as soon as you satisfy one of the steps, you may stop. If findings dictate, you must go to the next step.

Dr. Betterly's job is to make sure that the Agency responsible and, in this case, the applicant for the permit, don't get into legal problems by missing a step in the process. The NHDHR doesn't have the power to permit anything, regulate anything or dictate anything. They are a consulting agency and a reviewer. They work with the Federal Agency and they work with the public and, in this case, work with the applicant which would be the City of Portsmouth. When there are historic resources, such as the Armory building, the public will get an idea of whether it is important and will be given an opportunity to comment on their opinions. One of the key items in Section 106 is public involvement.

Dr. Betterly went through the five steps. The first requirement is to determine whether or not there is an undertaking. In this case that means any Federal involvement. That is the trigger that sets up Section 106. The City of Portsmouth has an undertaking which is the EPA permit. The City must define the area of potential affect which is the area immediately around the Armory building. Another part of step 1 is to get the public involved.

Step 2 is to identify and evaluate historic properties. The city has already done that. The Armory building has been determined to be individually eligible for the National Register. The Armory's

association with military history and the National Guard makes it distinctive. They did not find the architectural history significant enough to be part of the classification nor was the State architect significant enough for the classification.

The next step was its architectural distinctiveness, style or design and whether it retains enough of its architectural integrity for an element. It was an armory building and it still looks like an armory building. This criteria was also accepted as a reason for it being eligible.

In this particular case they are pretty much done with step 2. If they had found that there were not any eligible resources, they would have been done. They had also submitted to the City that, in addition to the Armory building, it was possible that the area around it would meet the requirements for a National Register Historic District. They did not determine that eligibility and they have not submitted a form on that. It's possible that the Armory building and the surrounding residential neighborhood could technically be two resources.

As they found a historic property, they had to go to Step 3. They had to look at what the project's goal was in relation to the resources that are there. His office, the City, EPA, interested consulting parties and the public would have to assess whether the proposed goals of the project have an effect on historic resources. It was very important to understand this was not a listed property and was not on the National Register. For Section 106 purposes, the Federal Government Agencies and the State Historic Preservation Offices came to an agreement in the 1980's that rather than slowing Federal projects down by requiring that they actually have things listed on the National Register, which is a long, tedious process, the Federal Agency and his office could agree that the property could be listed, to expedite the project and they would be treated the same.

He has to look to see if there is an effect on the resource and what type of effect it will be. It could be found that the project would have no effect on the resource and you would be done with Step 3. However, if your project would have an adverse effect on the resource, the process would have to continue. They are currently looking at what type of effect this project will have on the resource. Obviously, a demolition, which is being proposed, would have an adverse effect. If there is an adverse effect, you then have to proceed to the next step in the process.

The last step is to resolve the adverse effect. This is the nitty gritty of the consultation process. You try to seek ways to avoid, minimize or mitigate what is causing the adverse effect. The idea here it to take into consideration the historic property, along with essential points of the projects needs. What does the project have to do? What are its goals and needs and what are the resource's values? The object is to put the two things together and come up with some way that you can meet the project needs and avoid, minimize or mitigate the effect on the resource. The public has to be given an opportunity to see what those different alternatives are and an opportunity to comment on them. Hopefully, an agreement would be reached and a document signed by all concerned parties which, in this case, would be the EPA, the City, and any consulting parties that have been identified. And that is the conclusion of the Section 106 process. Usually 99% of the time, without having any regulatory power, without having any authority to come in and tell anyone what to do, this process actually works and comes to a conclusion with a signed agreement. Very rarely, the parties can't agree and one of the parties will request an end to the consultation. They notify the Federal Advisory Council and send them all of the documentation and give them an opportunity to comment on the project. The Federal Agency has to take into consideration the Advisory Council's comments, but doesn't have to follow them.

Dr. Betterly felt that the important thing that has happened with the regulations that govern the 106 process is that the Council in Washington D.C. is very strict on Federal Agencies making sure that the public is involved. The Federal Agencies are the responsible parties in these proceedings. They make the call on what is eligible and what the effect is. They send the information to his office where they review it and let them know whether they agree with them or not. Many Federal Agencies do not do this themselves but delegate it down to their applicants for permits. For instance, the EPA may delegate this down to the City to carry out the process, but they are still technically the responsible party.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Hayden indicated that she would move on to the public comment portion of the meeting. She indicated that they had received 3-4 dozen written comments over the last couple of weeks from people who could not be present for the meeting. She read a few of the comments into the public record (see end of public comments).

Ms. Hayden asked that the speakers be as precise as possible. She asked them to state their name and address and stay on the topic which is how the residents feel about the loss of the Armory building versus the benefit of a public library.

Mayor Evelyn Sirrell discussed a little bit of history. She indicated that a non-binding referendum question was placed on the ballot on November 2, 1999, and it said, "Do you believe that the City of Portsmouth should build a new public library?" 2,542 people voted yes, 1,789 people voted no. The voters spoke and they overwhelmingly said that they wanted a new library. There are two groups – no library and not the JFK site. When she stepped into the office of Mayor five years ago, the first thing she did was establish a New Library Building Committee with 17 members. They looked at 14 sites and went back many times to look at those sites. The final vote of the committee was for the JFK site, which was passed by all committee members except one vote. Many guidelines were set by just a few people and these guidelines have been carried out as far as Boards, Commissions, TAC and the Historic District. What she wants to say tonight is that the questions have been answered. It is time to move on with the project as the people of Portsmouth have been waiting long enough.

Lou Harriman, 57 South Street, stated that it was his perspective that every structure and object has some historic value, however, at the same time every structure and object will at some time be dust. The question is when is the appropriate time for that transition to occur. In his opinion, the time for the armory is now. It is an appropriate time for the armory to make that transition to another use.

Councilor Ruth Griffin, of 479 South Street, spoke that she was in favor of a new library in the City of Portsmouth but she is in opposition to destroying a historic landmark. Recognition has been given to those in Newcastle who have saved the Wentworth by the Sea from the wrecking ball. One week ago, through nature, we lost the Old Man of the Mountain. Those are two extremes but her point is that they should look closely at what is historic and should be preserved for many generations to come. Sometimes the building isn't a mansion or a good looking building but happens to be a building that has had tremendous impact on the lives and the history of the City of Portsmouth. That is how she looks at the Armory. She hopes that as the hearing goes on and as time goes on, they will realize that one by one, as historic structures are destroyed by people in not only Portsmouth but other cities and towns, we are losing a very important link to our history. She remembers when the National Guard left Parrott Avenue to leave on their journey south and eventually to Australia during World War II. She

reminded the crowd that Portsmouth is a very old city and we have a lot of history. That does not mean that we have to weed it out and get rid of some of it. She believes the Armory is an important part of the military history of the City of Portsmouth.

Joni Hill, 48 Sleepy Hollow, indicated she was an employee of the Portsmouth School District as the Head of the String Music Program and is also a realtor in the City. She felt it was important for the public to show their support for what she considers a very noble cause. She is Co-President of Friends of the Portsmouth Public Library and in that pursuit she pointed out that we all have a respect for history and those who have lived before us. We also value our resources in the City and the United States of America. She felt that we should value the hearts and the minds of our children and our grandchildren and our future. She felt it would behoove us to support the library in this location.

Eugene Ritzo, 341 Locke Road, Rye, NH, indicated that he was a retired Lt. Col., formerly stationed at the Armory in Portsmouth. He is honored and proud to represent his colleagues who served in this historical building on Parrott Avenue. The Armory has a long and distinguished history. He believes the Armory could be retained as part of the construction and design of the new library. Rye recently incorporated an old building with a new building with their Public Library and the City should look at that.

Jason Karlin, 88 Lincoln Avenue, felt that it would drive up the cost of the project to attempt to incorporate the Armory building into the new library. It would have to be brought up to code and that cost would be very expensive. Also, the new library needs to be an energy efficient, modern building. He supports demolishing the existing building and building a new library building.

Tom Ferrini, 69 Taft Road, spoke in favor of constructing the new library on the Armory site. He believes it is in the best interest of the community. He also has complete confidence in the designers and constructors of the library that proper interpretive consideration of the Armory for all to remember what actually stood on that site is possible and could be incorporated into the new library and he would endorse that as well.

Dana Levinson, 6 Currier's Cove, serves as a Library Trustee. It is his opinion that the greater good and future of our community is better served by a new library, rather than the preservation in any way of an old and tired Armory.

Betsy Schultess, Ocean Road, talked about Portsmouth and her respect for historic preservation. She moved to Portsmouth because of the historic value of the community. She was in support of a new library on the Parrott Avenue site. She was one of the Founders of the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Foundation in New York and they preserved that home which was also the site of the first women's rights convention. She felt the City could look at creative ways to respect the materials of the Armory and give respect for that to the community.

Raimond Bowles, 43 Pray Street, stated that he was a veteran of World War II. He felt that the pertinent idea of the armory can be preserved at the same time that they go ahead and take down the building either by putting the name of the Armory on the building or mentioning it on the stationery of the new public library. He felt we have a strong and successful presence in Portsmouth and there is no reason that we can't find a way to preserve the memory of the old Armory. He served on the Library Building Committee, he is a Library Trustee and serves on the School Board. He has been involved since the very beginning and he hopes that we can go ahead with the new library plan.

Bill Hamilton, Lawrence Street, indicated that he used the JFK for over 20 years as a recreation center. All the years that he was using the Rec Center, no one ever said anything about it being an Armory. He never saw a plaque on the building or anything in the paper indicating that it was a historically significant building. He felt that this town deserves a decent, modern library. His position is to build the new library on the JFK site.

Carla D. Rogers, 15 Dunlin Way, was in favor of the Parrott Avenue location for the new Public Library. She researched the history of the Armory. She noticed that of the 71 historic sites on the Portsmouth Harbour Trail, the Armory is not included. Portsmouth is a community full of well preserved historical sites and does not lack in this area. Sometimes we have to say goodbye to the past to make room for the future. The Armory building has served the City well in the past, however, it can further serve the community by making way for the future in the new public library.

Amy Berenger, 139 Clinton Street, indicated she was in favor of the Parrott Avenue location for the public library. She indicated it is hard to let go of a building but she talked about the value of a mind and the value that she has received from the library. She supports the new location.

Diane Kelley Tefft, 69 Richards Avenue, gave a history of the Armory building. She agrees that the library is an important resource but not at the expense of our historical, environmental and recreational resources. She does not feel that the JFK site is appropriate for the new library. She feels our greatest value is our history and it is our identity. The Portsmouth Armory played a pivotal role in military significance as a part of the State's defenses. The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources stated, "Architecturally, the Armory is an important and well preserved example of its functional type. The Armory was designed by prominent and prolific architect Chase Whitcher," She felt the Portsmouth Armory was a symbol of our military role and our effort to assist with the defense of our country.

Harold Whitehouse, 58 Humphreys Court, indicated that he never thought he would be back before the City to save another brick building. He referred back to the 1950's and urban renewal where they demolished many buildings before the town fathers stopped them. He is in opposition of tearing down the building and feels it has historical significance. He felt Portsmouth had lost enough brick buildings and there were other sites for the new library.

Leah Caswell, 37 South Street, felt that Armory has been part of the landscape of that particular point in the city for her entire lifetime. She spoke of Dorothy Vaughn, who was Portsmouth Librarian for 53 years. We have Dorothy Vaughn to thank for the preservation of much of Portsmouth. She also mentioned the Peirce Family Trust.

Harold Ecker, 422 Banfield Road, indicated that we recently were at war with Iraq and he did not believe that we destroyed any of their Mosques with our missiles and that is how this country should be.

Lucy Salyer, 1 Kane Street, is an American History teacher at UNH and she spends a great deal of her time trying to impress on people the importance of history and the artifacts that we have of past lives. If we were talking about tearing the Armory down to build condos or a business she would feel differently but we are talking about a library that is sorely needed. She feels we need the library more than we need the Armory.

Mary Keenan, 921 Lafayette Road, favored removing the Armory building. The building represents only the past but the library represents the past and the future. It is our children's ticket to their future. We must not hang on to the past at the cost of the future. Using the City's own land cuts the cost of the library and, in this case, she feels the end justifies the means.

Jack Kelley, 137 Newcastle Avenue, serves as Chairman of the Portsmouth Police Commission and has served on the Board of Adjustment, the Vision Committee, and the Mayor's Committee on Youth. As part of his involvement with the Vision Committee, he held a meeting at the high school with students. There was a chorus from every single student to please not destroy our old, historic buildings. When you consider the historic history of Portsmouth, it became a key focal point for the military. We had Pease Air Force Base, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, the army was prevalent throughout the region with shore batteries. He felt the future of the Armory Building should be a museum for the armed services and that the building should be preserved.

Ralph Di Bernardo, 1374 Islington Street, noticed that one's opinion of the Armory Building is quite subjective, which he finds to be very interesting. He feels the Armory has limited historic value and it doesn't outweigh the need for a library and feels it is an ideal location.

Robert Padian, 312 Cabot Street, has been interested in historic preservation for quite some time. The first criteria for the Historic Preservation would be a historic event or people that would be recognizable to the people. Until a week ago, people in Portsmouth didn't know much about the Armory. It is a small, ugly, dilapidated structure. The interior bears no relation to any glorious past. However, building a library serves a great purpose because we do not inherit our community from our parents but rather we borrow it from our children. He felt the Library was by far a better use of the land than the so-called historic structure.

Phyllis Eldredge, 199 Middle Road, spoke as a resident of Portsmouth and Chairperson of the Library Trustees. She served on the Historic District Commission for 8 years and was Chairman for 4 of those years. She is very familiar with the hard decisions that have to do with preservation. In this situation, she does not think this process is about architecture but it is about trade offs and costs and benefits. For the City of Portsmouth, the cost of not building the new library is enormous, both in a population that will be underserved as well as the cost to keep the old library running. The benefits will be enormous. She felt the spirit of the Armory could be preserved within the library with a plaque, along with a plaque honoring the people who have worked on the new library for over a decade.

Lee Lorusso, 380 Greenside Avenue, is on the Board of Trustees for the Library, however, she spoke on behalf of being a mother of 2 small children. She respects the history and past of Portsmouth, however, she does not believe our history would mind stepping aside for our future. It is not about demolishing a building but it is about making way for new minds to grow and build their own future.

Grace Lushner, Newcastle Avenue, voiced her support for building a new library on the Parrott Avenue site. She is an archivist and has a personal and professional interest in preserving historic materials and buildings. She also believes the Armory building has some merit and she encourages the city to make every effort to reuse portions of the building and integrate its features into the design of the new building.

Emma Wager, 24 Kensington Road, was 9 years old and in the 4th grade. She really would like a new library and she felt that if the City didn't build it now it might not be done until she and her fellow 4th graders have graduated from high school. She knows that the Armory is a very historic site but she does not believe the City has any use for it. She was in favor of taking down the Armory to build a new library.

Jackie Ellis, 79 Haven Road, has had 3 children go through the Portsmouth school system. She believes one of the wonderful things about Parrott Avenue is the proximity to the Middle School, which does not have a particularly good library resource. Not only will the citizens of Portsmouth have a much better library but also the students. It seems a very cost-effective use of our resources and although she normally would be in favor of keeping old buildings, in this case the benefit of the new outweighs the benefit of the old.

Effie Malley, 44 Lookout Lane, supports historic preservation but the case for the new library is much stronger. She feels the armory has limited historic significance.

Mary Ellen Burke, 101 Crescent Way, is the former President of the Portsmouth Historical Society and is a member of The Friends of the Wentworth. She spoke on behalf of building a new library on the Parrott Avenue site and was in favor of that. She felt that there are other ways to document the history of the Armory and educate the public about the great deeds that our World War II veterans have done.

Dennis Robertson, 101 Crescent Way, makes a living writing about the history of Portsmouth. He has written over 1,000 articles about Portsmouth. He was involved with The Friends of the Wentworth. In the 30,000 people who read his website a week, the 100's of people who write letters and the years that he has been in Portsmouth, he has never heard anyone ever talk about the Armory. He never read about it in a book and he never heard anyone tell him a story about it until tonight. He felt it was time to move on. He thought we could reuse the current Library building as the new Portsmouth Historic Society and have a place for a military museum. He does not see the historic importance of the Armory building. He is in favor of everything historic in Portsmouth, right now, except the Armory building because of the library. This is not about preservation, it is about politics. He felt the City should build the new library. We have been waiting 30 years.

Bob Nilson, 184 Concord Way, indicated that he loved Portsmouth and has lived here 40 years. He has been doing the Seacoast Sketchbook for the Portsmouth Herald. Three years ago, Pro Portsmouth gave out 2 awards for historic preservation work in the community and one went to his Seacoast Sketchbook. He is in favor of historic preservation whenever possible, but in this case he feels the library takes precedence.

Fred Engelbach, 305 Marcy Street, referred to the Section 106 review. He pointed out that on one hand no one wanted to see the demise of a historic building. On the other hand, there is a compelling need for a new library on an in-town location. He supports the new library on the Parrott Avenue location.

Carvel Tefft, 69 Richards Avenue, was on the Library Building Committee. He feels the real question is not whether we are going to build a new library but where is the best site. He was the dissenting vote for the site. He felt the public should know that there are alternative sites and Parrott Avenue is not the only site. The South Mill Pond and park is the epicenter of our parks and

recreational system. He felt the JFK building was the anchor to that epicenter. The Armory supports many sports fields, recreational programs and middle school programs and that is why it's important. The Armory was also the gymnasium for St. Patrick's school and has been rented by private groups for activities. He stated that the city owns more land downtown and we shouldn't be boxed in to think this is the only site.

John Grossman, 170 Mechanic Street, is on the New Library Building Committee. He did research on Armories on the East Coast and they are very large and tall buildings often looking like castles that came out of Europe, usually built around the late 1800's. Many famous architects were involved in them. As the 1900's came, the economics changed and Armories were built to be more practical buildings, such as the Portsmouth Armory. He felt the Portsmouth Armory was a very practical building and not in the same league as the historic buildings that were built on the East Coast in the late 1800's. He feels the preservation of it would fall into a gray area and so he then weighed the alternative uses. That is why he favors putting the new library on the Parrott Avenue site.

James Horrigan, 34 Elwyn Avenue, stated that he could see the JFK building from his front steps. He stated that he would be in favor of replacing it with a new library along the lines of the model that we currently have on display at the library. If part of the façade of the existing building could be preserved that would be good but, if it were a choice between removing the existing Armory building and replacing it with a newer, larger structure, he would be in favor of that. Ironically enough, he believes it is a wonderful and logical site for all of the reasons that Mr. Tefft cited. It is the epicenter of recreation and sports by the youth in Portsmouth and it is the most intensely used area in our City by young people. Exercising the body is an important activity for our children but so is exercising the mind. A library and sports facility are not competing but are complementary. Speaking as a veteran, military history is not our entire history. The history of Portsmouth is rich in events and achievements in many fields – literature, the arts, science, technology, commerce, and politics. There is really only one institution that preserves that for us and that is the library. If it is a choice between preserving a building that conjures up some military history versus a new library that will allow us to have a complete accessible collection of Portsmouth historic materials, he feels there is no contest.

Suzanne Foley, 14 Regina Road, is the newest member of the Library Trustees. She believes a town library effects each of us, not just today but in the future. She referred to the book "They Came to Fish" by Ray Brighton and she feels if the Armory was truly historical there would have been some mention in this book. There was only a very brief paragraph indicating that it had an uneventful history. The Armory never lived up to its expectations and had to be replaced. There are no legends or grand historical stories to remember or write about. It has been used as an adult center for the past 20 years. The basketball court was not large enough for regulation games. The facilities were minimal. Many times the parking lot would be full yet the inside was empty so she could only assume it was the residents using the parking. To put the historical significance of this building at the front line isn't right. The physical location and its proximity to downtown makes the property suited in a way that best meets the needs of the community. She believes we need a common sense approach to dealing with the subject.

Peter Somssich, 34 Swett Avenue, was a Library Trustee in Amherst prior to moving to Portsmouth. He felt that tearing down the Armory was not tearing down veterans or members of the military. Portsmouth is a historic town and we all appreciate that. He feels it would be a good idea to accommodate historical parts of the Armory into the new library. That doesn't take away from the issue at hand, which is that the people of Portsmouth have said over and over again that they want to

have a new library and that they want to have it build on Parrott Avenue. He felt we should look at the expense of the library very carefully. This was not an expense, it was an investment. They would be creating an asset for the future that would benefit everyone. The whole process is a little bit frustrating and it appears that it is subverting the large majority opinion of the residents of Portsmouth. How often and how many meetings do hundreds of people have to show up to in order to say to five people that the majority wants the library. He believes it is a folly and makes fools of the voters to ask them to keep on doing this over and over again.

Paul McEachern, 70 Dennett Street, is currently a State Legislator. He indicated that he learned a lot about the Armory tonight. He believes the architecture of the Armory is mundane and just because it's built out of red brick, it shouldn't lock us forever in a time war. He did not see anything redeeming about the Armory architecture and it should not lock our hands in 2003 from doing what is right for this generation and the next generation. Section 106 may be wonderful, but next time we may have 400 to speak at our next meeting. He does not feel we should enshrine the building.

John O'Leary, 15 Nathaniel Drive, was the Chair of the NewLibrary Building Committee. He felt that the object was to provide the citizens of Portsmouth with a quality library facility. He disagreed with an earlier speaker who felt the greatest value of our City was its history, he felt our greatest value was our people. He felt we should do everything we can to enhance the people. The Library Building Committee invited the public to suggest sites for the Public Library. They hired an outside consultant to look at 14 sites. They established criteria in how to evaluate those sites. The Parrott Avenue site was, on three separate occasions, voted as the preferred site. Mr. Tefft was the lone dissenting vote. We are not being boxed into this site. The Committee has determined that this is the best site. The City Council endorsed their recommendation. It has been before the Planning Board, the Technical Advisory Committee and Site Review, receiving approvals. The Committee included the President of the Portsmouth Advocates and three members who served in the past on the Historic District Commission. The Committee has also discussed memorializing the Armory at the Library site. As a Committee, they feel that the City will be better served with a library on the site.

Ned Reynolds, 31 Willow Lane, represents a demographic in the City that tends to be underrepresented at public meetings, which is a parent of young children. As a graduate from one of the Country's Military Academies and still an active reserve officer in the Armed Services, he has great appreciation and respect for the contribution of the military to this nation. It strikes him that the reuse of the site that was once required in the serve of military purposes as a library, which is dedicated to education and learning, is something close to poetic. He feels that reusing part of the Armory in the building of the new library would be entirely appropriate and an excellent way to incorporate the spirit of the Armory into the new library. He would like to see the City move forward with the Library.

Kevin Lafond, 120 Crescent Way, is a past Library Chair and a past member of the New Library Building Committee. Land reuse in Portsmouth is a fact of life and it has been for over 375 years. The library needs a new site. The Armory has outlived its use. It was reinvented as a recreational facility and has also outgrown that use. It is now serving as a magnet for a variety of groups, not unlike an empty closet. At this point in time the citizens of Portsmouth need a new library. This is the site. Please build it.

Leslie Gardner, Morning Street, is proud of the history of Portsmouth but she is living her life in the present. She believes this community needs a library much more than a building that has outlived its usefulness many times over.

Lindsey Carmichael, 252 Wibird Street, weighed the benefit of the townspeople of preserving the Armory building versus eliminating it and building a new library on the site, she definitely advocates for the new library to be built. Portsmouth is rich with history and the loss of the Armory building won't do major damage or dilute the richness of the history of the town. The community and the taxpayers will be served by building the new library on this site.

Todd Hanson, 376 Middle Road, is a member of the New Library Building Committee and is also an architect by profession. He is an avid history reader and has passed this on to his children, who are also avid readers. He does not believe anyone can demean the military history of the Armory building. The process of the New Library Building Committee process was not a random process. It was a long and careful process. He agrees that this is the cornerstone of the green area of Portsmouth and that is what the true opportunity is. It is within a few hundred yards of 3 senior housing towers, the senior citizen tower, the Middle School and a beautiful open green space which is used by the children of this community. He studied each of the recommended sites and he did some research on the Armory. That building did not capture the essence of what a lot of New England armories are. He found it had a very limited budget and a low bid contractor from Laconia. It was not well funded and it was not built as a treasure. Its time has passed and it's time to do something wonderful with a truly wonderful location in the City. He believes the right step is to build a new library in this wonderful location.

Barbara Ward, 16 Nixon Park, is a member of the Portsmouth Public Libraries Trustees and is also the Director and Curator of a historic house in Portsmouth. She has dedicated her entire professional career to museums and history and she finds herself in the position of saying that we need a new library more than we need this Armory. She was told that the reason the Armory is eligible for the Historic Register was not based on the appearance of the building but rather on its use. She feels we are being myopic if we won't realize that we have a number of other sites in Portsmouth that do memorialize our military history very well. The bridge over the Piscataqua River is dedicated to our World War I veterans. Many of the buildings on the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard have already been designated and put on the National Register of Historic Places. The Connie Bean Center is where the USO held court during World War II. Among the 8 or 9 sites that are listed as National landmarks, which is a higher designation than the National Register, is the Albacore. What is important that, as a City, we have decided that our history was part of our vitality but we have not let our history take over and push out the vitality of a strong city center which continues to serve its population. She agrees that the chosen site is absolutely wonderful. She believes we are preserving the vitality of our community and it is important to realize that this old building, that is not terribly elaborate, really should give way to a new public library.

Ellen Marlett, 97 Morning Street, always liked the Armory and was pretty vocal about not tearing the Armory down in the beginning. She at least thought we could reuse it as part of the new library design. She is an archaeological and historical researcher by profession and she has an overarching preservation concern. She works with historic documents and irreplaceable photographs, archives, maps, that are treasures to Portsmouth but they are now in an old cramped space and would benefit greatly by being in a well designed climate controlled library. The longer these documents stay in a poor environment, the more they are damaged and the more costly it is to preserve them. She has been convinced that the Armory building cannot effectively be made into a suitable library environment and we really need a new well-designed building. Her decision stands with her old friends, the documents. She strongly urges that the Armory be carefully recorded as it is being taken down so that the record of its last days become part of the public record.

Bill Sylla, 323 Union Street, thought Parrott Avenue was the place to build the new library. It abuts fine examples of fine historic architecture and he feels the current design for the new library will not fit in. Another example of misplaced architecture is the Federal Building. His opinion was if we cannot save the Armory as it stands or use it as the library, lets build a building that is appropriate for the site and which will pass the test of time.

Marueen Donnolly, 41 Kensington Road, is excited about hearing from the public about ways to incorporate the historic spirit of the Armory into the new library.

Michael Skelly, 594 Colonial Drive, indicated that the library and its great staff is his favorite city resource. He feels we should respect and follow the recommendation of the Library Committee.

Peter Bresciano, 101 O'Leary Place, was a member of the Library Building Committee and is a member of the New Library Building Committee. He spent over 30 years in the military and he was not looking for anything to be dedicated or memorialized on behalf of him. He feels that living in the United States is thanks enough. He feels the library should be built on the Parrott Avenue site. If the Armory was that important to military history then something should have been done a long time ago.

Carolyn Marvin, 129 Raleigh Way, went on record as a supporter of building the new library on this site. As a librarian she is frequently given the job of weeding the collection and this is always subject to controversy. One has to realize that sometimes the old has to go and not all books are equally valuable because they are old. She believes that is also true of buildings. With what she has read and heard tonight, she does not believe the Armory has the type of value that would merit it remaining. She hopes the residents of Portsmouth recognize that the creation of a new library far exceeds the need to preserve this particular old Armory. As Andrew Carnegie stated so well, "There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the Earth as the free public library."

Claudia Mourner, 305 Sagamore Avenue, was on the Building Committee and the New Building Committee. She has listened for 2 ½ hours to comments and she doesn't want to repeat. She is in favor of the site and feels it is the best place for our library. She would prefer that we not try to incorporate the structure of the Armory to hamper the usefulness of our public library. She does think the library can make a wonderful exhibit about the Armory. She feels that would be better than the current old building that no one ever goes into and is deteriorating day by day.

Basil Richardson, 369 Court Street, heard consistently all night that the Armory might be placed on the Historic Register. We haven't heard anyone say that we don't need a new library. He feels the Armory is a good site. He would like to see some portion of it incorporated in the new library. He would like to see the new library as we need it.

Ed DeValle, 166 Buckminister Way, listened to wonderful debate all night. He feels it's about 98% in favor of putting the library on this site which has been looked at for an overwhelmingly long period of time. He hopes we move forward and do that. He is extremely impressed with the number of people who came out, everywhere from a 9 year old to people who have been incredibly involved with this town. As he has nothing better to add than what those people have added tonight, he hopes that this group of people, once we move forward in putting this library in this location, will turn out and help create a structure that will be a living testament for a long time in this town. He hopes it will be the type of place that we will all be proud of.

Ms Hayden thanked everyone for coming out.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse,
Secretary
Planning Department

WRITTEN COMMENTS RECEIVED PRIOR TO THE MEETING

Mr. & Mrs. Milton Roberts, 47 Sherburne Avenue. My husband and I would like to express our feeling for the library site. A lot of planning has gone into this site and plans. This site has been studied and has been approved. We do not need to save the Armory. What would it be used for? Portsmouth should move on – not hold back on an old brick building.

Alanson H. Sturgis, PO Box 6697. With the availability of the athletic and exercise facilities of the Spinnaker Point gym, as well as those of the Connie Bean Center, it appears that the physical exercise needs of the public are being pretty well provided for. In sharp contrast is the present public library. The building is far too small for the demands placed on it, it is not wholly handicapped accessible (or so I believe) and are, of necessity, piled everywhere. How the staff is able to function as well as it does is a mystery to me, and a great credit to them. There seem to be two possible courses of action. One is to preserve a building which, while it may have some historic value is in poor condition and not capable of filling recreation need to the full. The other is to replace that structure with an up-to-date library building having adequate parking, is within walking distance of a great deal of downtown and has enough well-planned space for efficient service to its users. To me, at least, the choice is quite clear: a new library on that site offers by far the greater public benefit.

Mary C. Rash, 1507 Islington Street. I believe the benefits of building a new library at the JFK site far outweigh the historical significance of the Armory building. What better tribute to the Veterans of this city than a new library where they can enjoy a pleasant and serene atmosphere? I am a firm believer in historic preservation, but do not see the value of this building. Please, let us move on and build a new library on this site. Thank you for listening.

N.L. Webster, 1 Webster Way. It is ridiculous that this issue is still fulminating by people who have another agenda. Please do not consider the Portsmouth Armory as National Register standing.

Maria Sillari, 171 Jones Avenue. I believe the benefits gained from replacing the existing structure with a new “green” municipal library far outweigh any benefits gleaned from deeming the existing building an historic site. Let’s move forward!

Elizabeth Tabor, 55 Pleasant Point Drive. I urge the Council to NOT pursue getting the Armory building into the National Register if such an effort would hold up plans for a new library. If in fact the new library is built on that site, perhaps it could incorporate some part of the Armory building. If anything should cause the new library effort to pause, it should be the question of scale. The new building and the parking around it should be in scale with the other buildings on Parrott Avenue. If this is not possible, another site should be found. The public would benefit from having the new library in a location close to town and to the middle and high schools.

Adolph Berounsky, 274 Thaxter Road. I wish to be put on record that I am in favor of building a new library on the site of the JFK center on Parrott Avenue.

Nancy Lehoux, 53 Wibird Street. I am in favor of building the new library on the current JFK site. I would like to see as much preservation of the old building into the new library. I strongly support

having space in the new library that serves as a museum and tribute to the armory building and those who served our country.

John Wenstock, Union Street. Contrary to the opinion of one of the Council members, a Public Library is NOT a luxury, but an essential part of the community. The location on Parrott is within walking distance of many in town, and provides parking for the others. The fact that the economy is slow is no excuse to limit the mind opening experiences available to those who use or might use the library.

Carol Hollis, 557 Union Street. I support constructing a new library on the site and I support demolition of the armory. The most important thing is build a library.

Marion Landry, Portsmouth. I believe we need a new library very bad. Parrott Avenue is the perfect place for it. I do not believe a 50 year old building with only 4 brick walls is a very necessary keepsake. Please give us a new library.

D. Bruce Montgomery, 111 Bow Street. I would like to see the new library built on the site of the JFK building.

Meredith DiMambro, 7 Islington Street. I feel that the benefits of a new library building for Portsmouth residents are far more important than the preservation of the Armory building. Please, please do not derail the process of building a new library on this site.

John Blain, 873 Middle Street. I strongly believe that a new and enlarged library would be of much greater benefit to Portsmouth and its residents than the preservation of a rather undistinguished, even if technically historic, structure such as the armory.

MaryAnn Blanchard, 34 Harrison Avenue. I think the proposed library construction should go forward. The Armory's importance is insufficiently significant in a city such as ours which has for generations worked to reconcile it's rich historic "built" heritage with the community's contemporary needs.

Amy Bruger, 139 Clinton Street. The Armory/JFK building seems to me an architecturally uninspired building with nothing to offer to citizens of Portsmouth or tourists to this city. I would never visit the Armory building if it was a Nationally Registered Historic building but I will visit a new library. It will be a much more inspiring and thought provoking building than the current structure.

Marie E. Wilson, 56 Ruby Road. This is absolutely no reason the library cannot be located on Parrott Avenue. Bogus reasons not to built it there.

Penny L. Reynolds, 21 Prospect Street. The Armory is not a historic building and it is time to stop the delaying tactics and get this library built. This library is far more important to this community than the Armory is.

Carol Hollis, 557 Union Street. The site will serve the public much more as a new library than as the historic preservation of a non-historic building. The library will improve the neighborhood and I live there. I want the library sooner.

Paloma J. Sylvan, 636 Kearsarge Way. The public benefits that will result from replacing the existing Armory with our new fabulous library will far outweigh the benefit of saving this building. It seems the people who are spearheading this “historical preservation effort” have an agenda which perpetuates their own “not in my backyard” mentality rather than furthering the true interests of this neighborhood and our lovely city. Let the library be built!

Holly Lantinen, 795 Middle Street. The space now occupied by the JFK building on Parrott Avenue would give much more to our community if it were used to build the library that a city such as Portsmouth so desperately needs. I hope we will move ahead with this project.

Shirley L. MacGregor, 19 Spinnaker Way. Portsmouth needs a new library now! The JFK building is hardly historic or beautiful. The present library is doing its best but it is not enough for a city that prides itself for art and culture.

Genevieve Keimontz, 249 Islington Street, #5. Portsmouth needs a new library but adult recreation is also important. Maybe someone should consider renovating one of the mill buildings by Pic N Pay for the new library. That way the JFK center would be preserved and we could get a much needed new library.

Beth Hartnett, 219 Sherburne Avenue. I feel that the JFK building site is the best option for the library and look forward to work beginning as soon as possible. I live in that neighborhood and welcome its addition to our lives.

Unsigned. Portsmouth needs a new library. Should this building/site not be able to be used the city should devote serious and fastidious effort in locating a new one. Although historical buildings are a treasure, it doesn't seem as though this has been of concern in the past nor a site of use.

Lisa Carchidi, 194 Elwyn Road. There's got to be a way to make a new library and National Historic site in one

Susan Turner, 111 Wibird. There is not reason to keep the JFK building as an historical site. What is the value? We need a library – it needs to be in a reasonable space. The JFK space works for all citizens, old and young. We need a new library building soon. This is a waste of time and money to prevent the Library from this space.

Barbara G. Hilton, 587 Union Street. I see no historic merit to the Armory. I think that this entire issue is a smokescreen because certain residents didn't get their way about the proposed site. We need a new library on this site without any more delays. A new library will raise the standards of life for all citizens by educating them. The current library is not longer suitable. It has been too long a process to turn back now.

Sheri Nadeau, 138 Rockland Street. Please, please, please go forward with the library at the JFK site. It will be a positive improvement and it is incredibly over needed after year of delay!

Judy Ringer, 76 Park Street. I strongly support using the JFK building as the new public library, regardless of the historic merit of the Armory building. Please begin renovations and redevelopment as soon as possible.

James M. Ringer, 76 Park Street. I strongly support the use of the Portsmouth Armory as the site for the new Portsmouth library. I feel a new public library is of overwhelming importance to this community and far outweighing any historic importance of the site.

Grace Dugas, 96 Miller Avenue, #6. I am against the Portsmouth Armory building being demolished. To disregard our historical buildings is unforgiving. There must be many other sites around town for a new library.

Lorissa Summermatter, 370 F.W. Hartford Drive. It is appalling to me that this movement still continues to block the construction of a desperately needed new library facility. The JFK center's historical significance certainly seems to be a conveniently timed stalling procedure rather than a genuine interest in historical preservation. This building (the armory) has outlived its usefulness and in fact is in very poor condition. It is not particularly handicapped or stroller accessible and is poorly heated and cooled. It seems to be a very poorly functioning space for any purpose. To that end, is this building a prime destination for tourist groups? No. If the armory was such a local "gem" this conversation should have happened 5, 10, 20 years ago before it was painted institutional green and brown and smelled like over-ripe athletic equipment. We need this library for the residents of this community and we needed it yesterday. Just because a building is old doesn't mean it is an architectural masterpiece by virtue of age. Re-use of portions of the building for other purposes and projects is fine, however, keep the good parts, ditch the rest. We need to move on. The point of the space originally was storage. Are we going to preserve Lafayette Self-Storage 100 years from now? No. This is one of the busiest libraries in the country. Let's make it functional too. Everyone will benefit from an expanded facility.

Diane Monti, Spinnaker Point. I believe the city of Portsmouth needs a new public library building for its citizens more than another limited use historic building such as the Armory. It is time for us to move forward on building the library. Spinnaker helped to start the process by leasing its gym. We'd like to see it completed in our lifetime.

Mary Ellen Voarhees, 140 Court Street, Apt. 510. The Portsmouth Library should be near downtown. Not everyone has a car and anyway to get around. There are many senior citizens who would have to do without reading! Please consider the older generation and the little ones too. Use the JFK center.

Carol Theuret, Portsmouth. I think the JFK building on Parrott Avenue is the perfect location for the new public library. The new building's long overdue. Let's get started!

Lucy Clarke, 22 Winter Street. I am a resident who walks regularly to the library and will continue to if it moves to the armory site – a great location for the public library. Although architecturally the armory is interesting I feel it has already been so compromised and is of such awkward configuration that its value as an important building is second to its potential as a new library. As an aside, I'd like to suggest that the current library would make a fine Museum of Historical Portsmouth. Our city could use another cultural attraction and bringing visitors down Congress Street could help to revitalize downtown.

Nancy Stone, 174 Blue Heron Drive. We need a new place for the library, not another historical building.

Robyn Gallant, 9 Prospect Street. I think the Armory location is a good idea for the new library. It would be nice though if the building could be used (incorporated into new library) rather than torn down. The library definitely needs a new building because there is not enough room to house all the books it has, let alone those it is to have in the future. I use the library on a regular basis (at least once a week) and even though I enjoy its location, its building and the fact that I can purchase books at a discount that have been removed from the shelves, I strongly believe that we need more space. There just isn't enough room for all that we need. It is time to move forward, stop fighting this issue and get the job done. Move the library. I think Parrott Avenue is a good location. I, for one, would love the scenery while visiting the library.

Stephanie Krenn, 13 Porpoise Way. The library needs to grow. The function that the library provides to the city outweigh the benefits of preserving a not very old, not very distinguished building.

Susan Tetro, Portsmouth. I think the most important thing is the new library to be built as soon as possible. The armory (which is an ugly building) needs to be torn down. This would provide space for a new design geared specifically to the library's needs.

Sarah O'Callagh, 209 Cass Street We need a library we can walk to. I think the Armory is a great location. It is not an historic destination.

Rebecca Dunn, 149 Melbourne Street. I think the need for a new library far outweighs the benefits of preserving the Armory.

Michal Twine, 1275 Maplewood, #40. Please build the new library according to the plans. The JFK building is mediocre at best, and not worth saving.

Mary Faux, 82 Brewster Street. I live in downtown Portsmouth and adore walking to the current library. But, I know we need more parking, room for books, etc. The new space "appears" to meet those demands and although the Armory is an historic building, I believe memorials in literature are as valid (if not more) than armory memorials/buildings.

Renee Silverman, Miller Avenue. A new library is long overdue. It is vital for the health of the Portsmouth community. Just build it, the funds will come and so will a volunteer core.

Chris Berman, 191 Park Street. I think the JFK Center would be a wonderful location for the library.

Gates Street, Portsmouth. Please! Enough already. We badly need a new library. There is no "perfect" site. Let's built it and get on to other business!

Robin Nitschelm, 535 Union Street. We are regular users of the library and I have hoped for years that a new facility would soon house this wonderful city resource. Why such delay? The JFK site is centrally located, near schools and walking distance to downtown, and of adequate acreage. We could quibble about parking and traffic forever. This is silly. A library enhances a neighborhood, it does not detract from it. My family would be thrilled to see the library moved to the JFK site. Stop the silliness and let's get building !

Sarah E. Keller, 181 Elwyn Avenue. The search for a new library site was finally approved after many years of effort. Please let us move forward and begin building ASAP. No more obstructive moves, please.

James Murphy, 898 Maplewood Avenue. Give me a break. This is just a few “types” keeping a NIMBY going.

Kathleen J. Hansen, 1155 Islington Street. The JFK site would be a wonderful place for the library.

Belinda J. Braley, 96 Highland Street. I’m sorry I cannot attend this meeting. It feels that in many ways we, the people of Portsmouth, have become our own worst enemy in the efforts to create a new public library. It is my opinion that a city as rich in history and as strongly committed to preserving it would find a creative way to re-use portions of the Armory building. However, why would we be willing to further delay a new library at a site that was approved following an exhaustive process? To remain a vital, progressive city, we must be careful not to remain trapped by our sense of history but rather motivated by it to move forward in appropriate ways. Our history has taught us that things change and part of this means compromise or sacrifice, perhaps in this case, all or part of one building. For the numerous reasons that many others have articulated so eloquently, Portsmouth needs a new library !!!! Let us as the citizens of Portsmouth look more to our future and make it happen!

Renee LeVemer, Salter Point Cove. I support the building of the new library at the site of the Armory Building. The city’s library is of greater benefit, in my opinion, than an armory museum.

Kem Taylor, 58 Washington Street. I was unable to attend the public meeting this evening. I am writing in support of the construction of the green, environmentally friendly library building on Parrott Avenue. The benefits of a new library outweigh the benefit of preserving the Armory Building. This is a wonderful opportunity for Portsmouth. Not only will our library be filled with books to educate and inform us, the building itself will educate and inform us. It will be a resource for young people by inspiring them to be environmental advocates as they get older. It will foster discussion about the future of our planet. It will be an example for other communities. It will put Portsmouth on the map as a city embracing the future. Portsmouth has a strong, diverse physical history. Not only are there dozens of 100+ year-old buildings in use everyday, we are fortunate to have many other historic buildings preserved as museums. The loss of a building that could be historically important is not ideal. However, having an old, empty building that is past its useful life is not ideal. In life there are very few unanimous decisions. We must do what is best for the majority of our population. What is best for this community is to move forward with the construction plans for our new library.