

Astoria Library Board Meeting

Astoria Public Library

June 28, 2016

5:30 pm

Present: Library Board members Kate Summers, David Oser, and Susan Stein. Staff Interim Manager Anne Odom, City Manager Brett Estes, and ALFA Representative Steve Emmons.

Excused: Kimberley Chaput and Chris Womack

Others Present: Anne MacGregor and Drew Herzig

Call to Order: Chair Kate Summers called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm.

Approval of Agenda: The agenda was approved with the addition of an update on the search for a new Library Director.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of May 24, 2016 were approved as presented.

Library Options:

Item 4(a): Develop a Formal Recommendation to City Council

David Oser reviewed the City's past efforts to renovate the library or build a new one and explained how those efforts resulted in the options currently being considered by City Council. Board members reviewed a memorandum drafted by Mr. Oser, which included a draft recommendation, excerpts from the Metz Study, and findings in support of the recommendation. Chair Summers read the memorandum, which indicated the Board was in favor of building a new 18,000 square foot library in Heritage Square east of the Garden of Surging Waves. The Board and Staff discussed the memorandum with the following key comments:

- A second joint Library Board/City Council meeting will be scheduled in July that will provide the Board with the opportunity to advise Council on their recommendation.
- The Board agreed it was appropriate to include portions of the Metz Study because it so accurately reflected the community's needs.
- Board members discussed some minor wording and formatting changes that would add clarity, reasoning, and background information to their recommendation.
- The Board and Staff briefly discussed cost estimates for a renovation, which accounted for building challenges and included high contingencies.
- The Board agreed the benefits of Option E included the square footage and the ability to keep the library open during the construction of a new building.

A member of the audience who did not give her name asked how likely the public would be to pass a bond if City Council adopted Option E or F. Mr. Oser explained that current funding is already sufficient to get the project started and would spur philanthropic fundraising that would move the project forward. However, a housing component would affect total project costs. Gap funding through a bond will be necessary, regardless of the option chosen. He believed the Board's recommendation had the highest likelihood of reducing the gap in funding.

City Manager Estes added it would be up to Council to decide to move forward with a bond.

Chair Summers commented there were few better investments than a library for children and the entire community. She noted she had benefitted quite a bit from people making similar large investments in the past, so she hoped Astorians would see that while library would be expensive to build, the community would get that money back. She called for public comments.

Steve Emmons said he has always supported a less expensive and less ambitious version of Option A. More than two years ago, he donated \$500 to the library renovation project. If every man, woman, and child followed his lead, the project would now have more than \$5 million. However, this is an unrealistic expectation. If the community truly wants a grand palace of information, show him the money.

Anne MacGregor said she questioned the idea of building apartments above the library. She believed living spaces would create more parking problems.

Chair Summers and Mr. Oser explained it would be up to City Council to consider the details of the housing aspect of the project, noting that the Board's focus is restricted to the library.

The Board continued with the remaining agenda items at this time and returned to this discussion just prior to adjournment.

Board Reports:

Item 5(a): Reports of Community Presentations

Chair Summers and Mr. Oser attended the Sunday Market to share the library options.

Library Director's Report:

Interim Manager Odom reported that no new projects would be started while the City was still looking for a Library Director. She also reported on permanent and temporary staffing changes, including Patty Skinner's retirement in the fall. Staff has been very supportive through the changes and the summer reading program is going well.

Update on ALFA Activities:

Steve Emmons reported that ALFA's balance was \$6,178.02. He read a letter ALFA wrote to the City of Astoria volunteering to clean the mold from the planters outside the building and thanking Staff for working on the library's lighting.

Mr. Oser thanked ALFA for providing the library with so much over the years.

New Business: None

Old Business:

Item 9(a): Director Search Update

City Manager Estes said five candidates would be interviewed in July. He described the City's standard hiring process, which includes public involvement and round robin interviews.

Public Comments: Chair Summers confirmed there were no additional comments.

Items for Next Meeting's Agenda: There were none.

The Board returned to the discussion of the memorandum.

The Board reviewed each paragraph of the memorandum and agreed to minor wording and formatting changes. The final document would be sent to Interim Director Anne Odom for distribution to the other Board members.

David Oser moved that the Astoria Library Board recommend to City Council approval of Option E along with the Board's formal written recommendation. The motion was seconded by Susan Stein and passed unanimously.

The Board proceeded to Adjournment at this time.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Pinyerd, ABC Transcription Services, Inc.

Library Recommendation

Approved June 28, 2016

The Advisory Board of the Astoria Public Library unanimously recommends that the City build a new 18,000 square foot library in Heritage Square, east of the Garden of Surging Waves. As a board our focus is solely on the library. We express no formal preference between Options E and F.

We believe that a new library will most closely meet the needs and vision of the citizens of Astoria as voiced in the 2013 Needs Assessment Study. The Study's findings are summarized as follows:

Needs Assessment:

"Several hundred Astorians participated in the study which identified community needs, vision concepts, and service priorities with respect to the Public Library. They identified the library as an important player in meeting these important community needs:

- Life-long learning opportunities for all ages.
- Places for children and families to engage in activities that develop the language and literacy skills of young children so that they can be ready for school.
- Positive options for teens that will spark and nurture their self-development, creativity, and self-esteem.
- Beauty, light, spaces, and activities to help residents counter the negative side of the prevailing climate.
- Spaces and activities that bring people together to help break their isolation.

"These concepts express the community's vision for the Astoria Public Library

- A building that is attractive, enjoyable, sustainable, affordable and that is an inviting, comfortable destination place for the community and visitors.
- A collection rich with information and learning resources that spark a passion for learning in the next generation.
- City financial support to strengthen the library's capacity to realize the vision and provide the desired services.
- A space that is inclusive of everyone in the community and provides a "level playing field" for all ages.
- A program that helps create community by engaging the public, creating opportunity for people of Astoria to connect with one another, and that makes the library the community's favorite gathering place.

"Astorians are interested in a broad range of services but most important is the renovation of the building itself to provide an "attractive, enjoyable, sustainable, and affordable" public library. Once in that facility, they most want:

- Improved quality, currency, and quantity of books--collections that are ample and easily accessible in any format, physical or e-content.
- More space dedicated to creating a much improved children's room.
- Updated technology, including more computers, self-service options, laptop plug-in capacity.
- Dedicated zones for "quiet", children, teens, and small and large meeting room spaces.
- More open hours."

Recommendation Support for Option E:

- Economical Alternative During Construction
 - o Total Renovation: Required to bring the existing library building up to code, let alone create the kind of library Astorians want. Possible concern regarding hidden unexpected expense.
 - o Seamless Library Operations: Renovation would necessitate identifying and outfitting alternative space for library operations and collections during construction, which is detrimental to a high level of library service.
 - o Construction Timeline: It has been estimated that the work will take at least a year. Extended timelines would exacerbate library service issues and may negatively impact funding opportunities.
- Economic Alternative After Construction and Beyond:
 - o Clear Sight Lines: Lacking in all renovation plans, clear sight lines make a new building less expensive and safer to operate.
 - o Maintenance: Renovation with two levels necessitates higher maintenance costs for extra bathrooms, stairways and elevator.
- Funding Opportunities:
 - o Foundation, Grant, and Individual Fundraising Opportunities: Desired fundraising targets are likely to be more achievable with tangible new construction as compared to renovation.

A new library would be an economic anchor for 12th Street and effectively expand downtown farther south. While these ancillary benefits are difficult to quantify, a beautiful, modern library is a beacon for residents and visitors alike. A new library at Heritage Square will be a cultural, social, and economic benefit to Astoria for generations to come.


Kate Summers, Board Chair