

## **Astoria Library Board Meeting**

Astoria Public Library

February 23, 2016

5:30 pm.

**Present:** Library Board members Kate Summers, David Oser, Kimberley Chaput, Chris Womack, and Staff Library Director Jane Tucker.

**Excused:** Susan Stein

**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 Item 8(b): Library Board Role Clarification in Renovation.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of January 26, 2016 were approved as presented.

### **Library Options:**

Director Tucker noted this item had been added to the agenda because Director Cronin planned to start giving reports in March and April.

### **Board Reports:**

#### **Item 5(a): Reports of Community Presentations**

Chair Summers reported on the Foundation's Facebook page and Write Astoria, both of which were gaining new participants. Director Tucker reported that the Foundation and the Osers each donated \$50 to Libraries ROCC.

### **Library Director's Report:**

Director Tucker reported that City Council voted to continue participation in the Oregon Library Association Resource Sharing Committee Passport Program at their meeting on February 1<sup>st</sup>. The Astoria Development Commission voted to amend the contract for the study of Heritage Square and the library renovation options at their meeting on February 1<sup>st</sup>. City Council authorized the contract amendment and reduced the scope by eliminating public involvement. On February 16<sup>th</sup>, City Council renewed the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) for the Libraries ROCC program for five years.

She briefly updated the Board on current library programs and described upcoming programs.

### **Update on ALFA Activities:**

### **New Business:**

#### **Item 8(a): Libraries ROCC Fundraising Event**

Director Tucker reported that the program administrators decided to reschedule the event to April 14<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm in honor of the memory of Sergeant Goodding. Ten libraries have now been donated to the fundraiser. A painting worth \$400 has been donated for the live auction and many Astoria merchants have donated smaller items for the silent auction. She discussed the difficulties with communicating the last minute change of the event date and noted her efforts to inform as many people as possible. She requested donations of bottles of wine to serve during the fundraiser.

#### **Item 8(b): New Business: Library Board Role Clarification in Renovation**

David Oser distributed copies of a letter addressing the role of the Library Board during the renovation project. He believed the resolution from 1990 that listed the duties of the Library Board was vague. He explained that in 2011, there was a lot of talk about renovating the library, but no definite plans. So, the Board had written a letter to the mayor requesting the Board be involved in the planning process. When

the Ruth Metz plan was being developed during the summer of 2013, the Board crafted a recommendation to City Council to renovate the existing library building, demolish the Merwyn Hotel, and utilize the cleared space. Ruth Metz was specifically directed to refrain from considering new construction in a new location and focus on the existing location. The study was based on the assumption that the City would have access to the land where the hotel was located. The two cost structures included in the study reflected the amount of space needed for various programs, services, and materials. The theory was that an architect could use the study to develop more specific details about a renovated building. Even though using the Merwyn site was somewhat less floor space, the Board believed at that time that the renovated building would have the library on one floor and the space to the east could be developed without disrupting library operations in the existing building. City Council approved the Board's recommendation at the same time that the Board created the Foundation to begin fundraising. The process came to a halt when a new Council was elected and new members were appointed to the Board. A renovation committee met over the course of about a year to come up with various ideas and eventually, the committee concurred with the Board's recommendation. However, many people supported preserving the hotel.

Currently, the Foundation has no work to do and the Board has not been consulted in an official manner. Although Mr. Oser has spoken with Director Cronin about the Foundation and several Councilors have contacted he and his wife individually, the Library Board is an advisory board to City Council. Therefore, he believed the Board should develop a proactive position with regard to the redevelopment of the library. Just as the Board asserted its position in 2011, he believed the Board should develop its position because the Board should have significant input into the work that is currently being done to develop cost estimates.

Chair Summers agreed and said communication could improve. City Council has so many questions about the library and the future of the library, which is the Board's specialty.

The Board discussed the public's inability to indicate what they want because there is no consensus about how to move forward. There are so many different ideas, but the vision of what the library should be was clearly described in the Ruth Metz report, which was developed according to the input from over 800 people in the community.

Chair Summers believed it was the Board's role to advocate in support of the plan without regard to costs because City Council has already adopted it and the costs are outside of what the public has asked for. Mr. Oser believed costs should be considered because some expenses could be counterproductive. He reiterated that the Board needed to insert itself into the process more than it has recently. Ms. Chaput noted that everyone wants a beautiful library; but the Library Board is not a fiscal body, so it may not be appropriate for the Board to advocate for affordability. Chair Summers responded that this project will be expensive and City Council has put off a decision for a long time. The library is crumbling, so doing nothing will incur costs as well.

Ms. Chaput believed Staff's reluctance to answer the Board's specific questions about costs reflected negatively on the Board when it became apparent at a City Council meeting that the Board was uninformed. Director Cronin should have told the Board the project would cost \$40 million prior to presenting this information at a City Council meeting. Director Tucker added that the total project costs were put forward as the library costs and it was clarified later in the meeting that the library's costs were a portion of the estimate. Mr. Oser believed the Board needed to reiterate that their focus is on getting a good modern library for the City of Astoria. It would be great if costs could be reduced by adding housing, but that is not the Board's focus.

Mr. Oser agreed that operating costs for a one- and two-story building would be different.

Board members discussed the necessity of the Board to focus on generating excitement about library improvements by interfacing with City Council and engaging with the public more. Studies have been done since 2009 and no action has been taken. The library is a tax-funded service of the City and is one of City Council's initiatives, like getting a new truck for the Fire Department. However, people in the community question why a new library is needed. Mr. Womack believed the initiative needed to be the focus of educating and communicating with the public. He discussed the current responsibilities of City

Council and the Community Development Director, noting that the City would not make a decision until funding sources have been identified.

Mr. Oser said the purpose of his recent meeting with Director Cronin was to update him on the status of the Foundation because there had been a lot of talk about the Foundation's ability to raise \$1 million right away. The Board and Staff agreed that the ability of the Foundation to raise money depended on the attractiveness of the project.

Ms. Chaput suggested the library advocate for a bond measure before discussing what the building will look like. Chair Summers agreed because the bond measure will be vital to the improvements. City Council has not made a decision yet, but the library is a City Council initiative so it will have to make a decision.

Board members and Staff discussed their sole responsibility is the library. It is possible that Council is trying to come to a consensus before making a decision. Because there are so many unknowns about this project, it might be helpful to City Staff if the Board made a commitment to review plans, work with the planners, and advise City Council on what plans the Board believes are best. The Board could reiterate to Council that as an advisory board, the Library Board would be happy to review plans and make a recommendation on the new information.

Ms. Chaput suggested the Board advocate that the library is crumbling, it is an uninviting space, and people do not come to the library because it is not a nice place to be. The library is cold and dark and does not provide any place to curl up and read a book. Ms. Chaput believed the Board should assert that library improvements will happen, and the Board will help City Council make it happen once they decide how. Instead of making recommendations, the Board should communicate that it will help City Council make a decision. Chair Summers and Mr. Oser agreed.

The Board shared ideas for communicating with City Council and Staff. The Board agreed communications should clearly indicate that the Board exists to help Council make the best decision. This will help alleviate Councilor's fears about project costs.

The Board agreed a different approach should be used at this point in the process. Board members discussed the appropriate time to send an email or letter to City Council; most agreed the Board should meet with Director Cronin first so he is aware of the Board's plans, and prior to the architect's report being complete. However, Mr. Oser suggested a Board member should tell Mayor LaMear, instead of Director Cronin, that the Board plans to send this letter to City Council.

Ms. Chaput believed it would be helpful to give Councilors a short biography of each Board member.

Mr. Womack believed the best way to present the letter to City Council was to have it added as a memorandum in a City Council agenda packet. This would be done through the City Manager's office and the mayor will decide if the memorandum will be included as an agenda item. The Board agreed that Ms. Chaput would draft the letter. Mr. Oser suggested the letter be read aloud during a City Council meeting as a presentation. Ms. Summers added a presentation would give Board members the opportunity to introduce themselves. Mr. Womack said a good second step would be to schedule a meeting between the Library Board and City Council. This would give the Board the opportunity to further describe their role to Councilors.

**Library Board Action:** Kimberly Chaput moved that the Astoria Library Board request a work session with the Astoria City Council to discuss moving forward with a new or renovated library; seconded by Kate Summers. Motion passed unanimously. Ayes: Kate Summers, Kimberly Chaput, David Oser, and Chris Womack. Nays: None.

Mr. Womack excused himself from the meeting.

The Board agreed to request their letter be put on the agenda for the March 21st City Council meeting. Ms. Chaput confirmed she would complete the letter by the end of the week so Board members could review it prior to submitting it to City Staff. Mr. Oser said he would speak with Mayor LaMear and get her

feedback about the letter. Board members also agreed to write biographies and send them to Ms. Chaput to be included with the letter.

**Old Business:**

Chair Summers thanked Director Tucker for her time working for the City.

**Public Comments:** There were none.

**Items for Next Meeting's Agenda:** Director Cronin will report on library options and the Board will discuss responses to their letter to City Council.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

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Jane Tucker, Director, Astoria Public Library