

LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SECOND MEETING

May 30, 1996

MINUTES

(As approved at the June 13th Meeting)

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Nancy B. Woods at 6:40 p.m. at the Mildred A. O'Neill (North Cambridge) Branch Library.

Co-Chair Woods briefly reviewed the agenda topics for the evening and identified the chair's role as one of managing the process and assuring that it moves along. Her vision is that the Committee establish a far-reaching public process and that we bring in many resources to help us.

MINUTES: The minutes of the May 16, 1996 meeting were approved. Copies of the minutes will be available in the main and branch libraries, as well as electronically on the Town Crier and the City home page. John Gintell has offered to help with this.

STATE GRANT PROPOSAL AND IMPLICATION FOR THE COMMITTEE: Members of the committee had previously received a copy of City Manager's letter to the City Council informing the Council of his intent not to request the Council to pass an order approving the plan submitted to the State Board of Library Commissioners.

Lisa Peterson of the City Manager's Office advised that the grant request could be considered dead. No impact is seen upon the Library Advisory Committee's assignment except that the July 15th time frame for the Committee's report to the City Council is now open to adjustment, allowing a wider time frame and a broader focus to the Committee's work.

THE PREVIOUS PROCESS - LESSONS LEARNED: The Committee members suggested the following as lessons learned from the previous process that should guide the new committee in its work:

- David Szlag stated his belief that the process was not open.
- The Committee must involve key people in the process.
- Decisions were made quickly, not necessarily correctly.

DECISIONS MADE / NOT MADE: Comments and questions were invited concerning the listing of decisions made and not made as presented by Co-Chair Richard Rossi at the previous meeting.

The Committee identified a need to know who had made the decisions or where the decisions had come from, and the basis for the decisions. Of the list of 13 decisions made, Lisa Peterson at the Co-Chair's request identified the following sources:

- #1. Main Library will stay at the current location.

City Council Order, 3/25/96

- #2. Historic building will remain as Main Library.

City Council Order, 3/25/96

- #3. Historic building will be renovated and expanded.

An implication of the first two decisions, City Council Order 3/25/96; also a City Manager decision; Mass. Historical Commission holds a Preservation Restriction on the building and all proposed internal and external alterations must receive state approval; also Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission needs to review any exterior alterations.

- #4. Additional parking will be built into the program.

This decision was at least partially driven by the requirements for the Grant Proposal and there is now some question on the wording with the grant proposal no longer being a factor.

- #5. Shared parking arrangement should be considered.

City Manager

- #6. Full analysis of traffic related issues necessary.

City Manager

- #7. Significant trees on "library site" must not be damaged.

City Manager

- #8. Commitment to protect open space on "library site".

City Manager

- #9. Grant application was submitted on April 10th.

City Manager, City Council (Council Order 3/25/96), and Library Trustees

- #10. Two committees formed by City Council order:

Advisory Committee of residents and City officials.

Joint City Council/School Committee to consider shared use issues.

City Council Orders (2) 3/25/96; City Manager has appointed the first committee (this committee), the second committee is not yet fully implemented.

#11. Design Advisory Committee is on-hold.

City Manager

#12. Library services/programs that cannot be accommodated in the Main Library may be located in other locations.

City Council

#13 City Manager's commitment to funding branches.

City Manager - various public statements

Discussion ensued concerning the decision of keeping the main library at its present location, with a point being raised that this decision might have been too hasty, based around the timing of the grant proposal, and that with the nullification of the grant proposal there should be an option for reconsideration of the decision based upon the library program that evolves. Co-Chair Woods reiterated that the Main Library will stay where it is now; however the extent of its possible expansion has not been determined.

PROBLEM DEFINITION: The Co-Chair read aloud the draft version previously distributed to the committee members. In discussion, the question was raised again regarding the Main Library site decision, with the suggestion that a large program for the same site could result in the same conflict as the previous process.

The Co-Chair said that the Committee should start by studying the Library's program of services, letting an agreed upon program drive other decisions.

In discussing what committee members hope to achieve during the process, committee members presented the following ideas:

- An ambitious, full program and a building to be proud of even if private fund raising must be done to supplement city funds.
- Focus on Main Library building including program.
- Build a broad consensus on library needs, remove barriers.
- Look at the whole library system.

- Attempt to identify a 21st Century definition of a library and its needs - be visionaries.
- Define Main/Branch Libraries - Identify what Main Library needs and determine the physical requirements for expansion in balance with the neighborhood.
- Correct decisions, not quick decisions.

There is a need to work on the draft statement. Charles Sullivan, Karen Carmean, Roger Boothe, and David Szlag volunteered to form a small sub-group working with Co-Chair Woods on revision of the statement. Bill Barry, not present, was subsequently asked by the Co-Chair to be part of the sub-group.

TITLE OF COMMITTEE: It was recommended that the title be "Library 21"; no decision was made.

LIBRARY PROGRAMMING OVERVIEW: Susan Flannery, Library Director, made a presentation on the organization and service programs of libraries.

The oldest element of a library program is the establishment of a collection of books and a place to read them. Later, the scope of collections was extended to include magazines, audio-visual materials and electronic resources.

As libraries have evolved, they have added a variety of service functions to their program, including the lending of books for home use (circulation), providing a reference service to answer questions or locate specific information, providing homework assistance, reserving books, reference service by telephone, inter-library loans, etc.

By the mid-twentieth century, library services had expanded to include a variety of active programming functions to draw in new constituencies of users such as newly arrived immigrants, the illiterate, and pre-school age children not yet able to read. The new programs included story hours, lectures, and literacy training.

Main/Branch Library definitions:

Main Library The chief library in a system, containing the administrative departments and the largest collection of books; usually situated in the center of a town.

Branch Library Usually comprises adult lending and children's departments, a quick-reference collection, and possibly a news room [magazines], and is intended to meet the needs of the surrounding population, particularly in the matter of books for home reading.

The Main - Branch relationship from a user viewpoint is

analogous to that of a Sears full service store versus a catalog outlet. Branch Libraries provide an access point to the system's entire collection of resources, while stocking in-house materials of high demand.

The Main library provides centralized services such as book acquisitions and cataloging for the branches, as well as maintenance services, back-up staff coverage, and administration.

There are many roles that libraries can play depending upon the nature and needs of their communities. The American Library Association has grouped these roles into 8 major categories for library planning purposes.

- 1. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES CENTER: The library is a central focus point for community activities, meetings, and services; provides meeting space.
- 2. COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTER: The library is a clearinghouse for current information on community organizations, issues, and services; creates local directories and maintains files of local organizations.
- 3. FORMAL EDUCATION SUPPORT CENTER: The library assists students of all ages in meeting educational objectives established during their formal courses of study; purchases materials to support curriculum and assignments. (For CPL this stops at the community college level.)
- 4. INDEPENDENT LEARNING CENTER: The library supports individuals of all ages pursuing a sustained program of learning independent of any educational provider; supports pursuit of individual learning objectives, from job related topics to cultural interests..
- 5. POPULAR MATERIALS LIBRARY: The library features current, high demand, high interest materials in a variety of formats for persons of all ages.
- 6. CHILD'S DOOR TO LEARNING: The library encourages young children to develop an interest on reading and learning through services for children, and for parents and children together. (Amended by CPL from a more restrictive "Preschooler's Door to Learning")
- 7. REFERENCE LIBRARY: The library actively provides timely, accurate, and useful information for community residents; answers practical questions.
- 8. RESEARCH CENTER: The library assists scholars and researchers to conduct in-depth studies, investigate specific areas of knowledge, and create new knowledge. (Because of the large number of research libraries in the greater Boston area, CPL does not attempt this role.)

Libraries fulfil varying combinations of these roles based on individual circumstances. In developing a strategic plan for public library services in Cambridge, the Cambridge Public Library focused on identifying the predominant major and minor roles of each branch library and the main library.

Roles #3, #4, #5, #6, and #7 are the primary roles of the system, with the Main Library aiming to fulfil all of these but the branch libraries selecting those most appropriate to their neighborhoods. All branches have roles #6 and #7 as primary roles, with the Central Square branch including role # 4 also. Secondary roles of branches are: Central Sq. - #1, #2, #3; O'Connell - #2; and both O'Neill and Valente - #2 and #3.

Ms. Flannery called attention to the O'Neill Branch, site of the meeting, and introduced Branch Librarian Jessica Rabban. A user of the branch, John Hildebidle, who until moving to the neighborhood had used only main libraries, expressed his enjoyment of the intimate focus of the smaller branch library, describing it as a neighborhood focal point and saying that it always had something going on, had a magnificent staff, always had some interesting books available, and was warm to come to - not just physically, but also spiritually.

Problems with the branch were identified as it not being handicapped accessible, lacking meeting/programming space, and not yet having adequate electronic resources although this is planned.

In the discussion which followed the presentation, a request was made for a list of branch libraries with their addresses. Copies of the Cambridge Public Library services brochure which includes the names, addresses, telephone numbers and hours of the branches was distributed. In addressing a question concerning the library's strategic plan, referenced in the presentation, Ms. Flannery described its background and purpose and said that copies would be available to the Committee. A member ascribed a symbolic function to libraries and library buildings as a reflection of a community's values.

NEXT STEPS:

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS/LOCATIONS:

June 13, 1996	Valente Branch Library, 826 Cambridge St. (by Harrington School) At corner of Cambridge and Berkshire St.s, with parking lot off Berkshire St.
June 27, 1996	Main Library, 449 Broadway
July 11, 1996	Collins Branch, 64 Aberdeen Ave,

July 25, 1996

Central Square Branch, 45 Pearl Street

AGENDA SUB-COMMITTEE: Co-Chair Woods asked for volunteers to form a sub-committee to shape the agenda of the next meeting. Responding were Karen Carmaen, Ed DeAngelo, and Emily West.

Co-Chair Woods brought the meeting to a close at 8:40 p.m. and requested comments from the audience.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS:

Carlos Brossard, Rindge Ave., North Cambridge, described problems with the O'Neill Branch including the lack of a quiet space for people who come to read and the lack of electronic resources to connect him to news and other sources.

Bob Boulrice, Soden St., Central Square Neighborhood Coalition, spoke concerning the attempts to define a "problem" statement, suggesting that the Committee focus instead on an "opportunity" statement. He expressed concern that the Committee have the quality of members to do its job, adding additional members if necessary. Building form should follow functions, functions should follow the pull of residents' wishes. Co-Chair Woods was invited to be present for discussions at the Central Square Neighborhood Coalition annual meeting.

Julia Gregory, Market St., Area 4, Central Square Neighborhood Coalition, encouraged the Committee to make the process as open and visionary as possible, feeling that the roles described tonight were Nineteenth Century ones and more appropriate for Lexington or a suburb.

Niki Gilsdorf, Cogswell Ave., North Cambridge, felt that the Main Library was very important and hoped that holding meetings in the Branch Libraries wouldn't shift the Committee's focus away from Main Library needs to those of the branches. She expressed a need for one very large collection to be located somewhere that one could go to and browse through extensive materials on a subject.

Councillor Triantafillou wished the Committee the best of luck in reconciling issues.

Councillor Sullivan expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Committee and assured everyone that technology funding was coming,

John Hildebidle, Cogswell Ave., North Cambridge, urged the Committee to not create an "either/or" situation between use of technology and traditional library services, saying that a lot of the traditional functions are there because they work and people wish for them. The Committee should work to improve the past to

what it should have been but not make war between the past and the future. He expressed his appreciation for the O'Neill Branch and its functions in the neighborhood and stated that the one thing lacking in the Cambridge library system is a comfortable place to sit and read a book.

Margaret Brown, 20 Granville Road, said that being over 80 years old and having been a librarian for many years, she felt the greatest problem facing the libraries of today is the rapid rate of change. She saw rapid growth of problems in today's society for children, teenagers, adults, and elderly, all of whom need library services, and asked the Committee to retain flexibility in library services and not bring down a curtain between the elderly and the library.