

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

Main Library Expansion Project

Initial Meeting

June 27, 2002

Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi opened the meeting at 6:05 P.M. in the Lecture Hall of the Cambridge Public Library, 449 Broadway.

Members present: Janet Axelrod, Eric Bird, Carla Bosco, Ted Carpenter, Alex Duval, Fred Fantini, Elizabeth Gibb, John Gintell, Wen Quing Han, Arlyne Jackson, Emily Norris, James Roosevelt Jr., Hugh Russell, Victoria Solomon, Carole Sousa.

Mr. Rossi said that the city was now entering a new era in the library building process and that the Design Review Committee members were expected to play an important part in shaping the new library. He introduced Susan Flannery, Library Director; Alan Burne, Project Director for the city; and William Rawn, lead architect.

Mr. Rossi described the Design Review Committee membership as balanced, including the members' geographic representation of city-wide residency. Members includes representatives of the Library staff and trustees, the School Committee, the Historical Commission, the Community Development Department, and citizens with a mix of expertise as well as a mix of long and short term involvement in the project. The purpose of the committee is to provide guidance and overviews, raise questions, and assist in making decisions; enabling the city and architects to achieve the best design possible for the new library. Thanking the members for their interest, he said that by the end of the process they will have provided a valuable public service in helping design one of the most significant city buildings for the next one hundred years.

Alan Burne described his background as architect / owner's representative / contractor and experience working in a crowded city neighborhood. He asked the committee members to introduce themselves, explain why they had wanted to serve on the committee, and describe visions they have for the library.

An audience member asked if the public would be able to participate.

Mr. Rossi explained that this was a working committee meeting and that such meetings would conclude with fifteen minutes for public comment. Besides the working meetings, there will be other meetings for public presentations at which public input/discussion will be solicited. The committee will also welcome any written comments, either by mail or through the web,

Mr. Burne said there would be a time frame for exploring three alternative designs and picking one to develop fully. Meetings will always have a purpose and not be held just for the sake of having a meeting. He turned the meeting over to Susan Flannery, Library Director.

Ms. Flannery read to the committee the vision for the library put together by the trustees and staff of the library. She provided copies of the library's long term plan and mission statement, a list of newly expanded area libraries that committee members might like to visit, general statistics concerning the library, and an article describing a library renaissance nationwide. A tour of the "behind-the-scenes" areas of the library on July 11 was offered to anyone interested. Ms. Flannery thanked the members on behalf of the library for their involvement.

Mr. Rossi introduced committee member Fred Fantini of the School Committee who had just arrived. Mr. Fantini expressed his excitement about the project and hopes that the high school's relationship to the library would be considered as part of the process.

Mr. Burne presented a time frame for the process:

1st Phase Explore alternatives and Completed by Nov., 2002

select basic approach/concept

for design

2nd Phase Project Design November 2002 to winter/

spring 2004

Public bidding & construction Ground-breaking: spring,2004

24 to 27 months for construction

Opening June-September, 2006

Mr. Rossi said he and Mr. Burne would be pushing the committee to keep to schedule. Keeping on schedule is very important as delays would severely impact the overall project budget and adversely affect library services and staff. Money saved by avoiding delays can be far better spent in furnishing the new building.

Mr. Rossi introduced William Rawn of *William Rawn Associates, Architects*. Mr. Rawn said that the year 2006 seemed a long time away but he could assure everyone that it was not. He said that his firm would work collaboratively with the firm of *Ann Beha, Architects*. He introduced key members of the Rawn firm, Cliff Gayley, Philip Gray, and Vinicius Gorgati, who will play major roles in this project.

Mr. Rawn said that his firm believes deeply in community interaction as part of the process and cares deeply about the public realm. The fascinating thing about architecture is that each site and its needs are different. The building needs to respond to its natural setting or landscape. Architecture has to be about people and their needs. Libraries and schools capture all the hopes of democracy. Civic buildings are portals for opportunity and should architecturally capture the democracy of the city and the diversity of its population. He looks forward to working with the committee to define this building for Cambridge.

Cliff Gayley said that the best architecture comes from intensive engagement with the constituents of clients, listening and drawing from member's views. They will work with a variety of drawings and models, exploring ideas and possibilities. He is very interested in having dialogues around Cambridge in a variety of settings.

He described the 18 month design process. First 4 months – discuss and understand issues, hear views of committee. Respond in August. September – take discussions and integrate into 3 possible approaches. During the entire design process in both phases one and two there will be opportunity to fine tune ideas.

In the absence of Ann Beha, Scott Acquilina spoke on behalf of *Ann Beha, Architects* introducing Lisa Gomes, another member of the Ann Beha team. He described their firm as devoted to the preservation and restoration of buildings and said that they are very excited at the opportunity to work with this building. They will try to work seamlessly with Rawn Associates but will be responsible primarily for

restoration of the original building. They are presently looking into the original goals for the building, not as an end, but as a starting point. They will also be responsible for community outreach and will work to promote public participation. They will build a process for getting information out to the public, including an off-set to the Library's web site and a variety of other approaches. They will be responsible for meeting the various historic requirement aspects of the program.

Laura Salerno of *Michael Van Volkenberg Associates*, the landscape architects, said that their firm had jumped at the chance of being a part of the project as they shared the same commitment to the process as *William Rawn Associates, Architects*, with whom they will work interactively. They have no set "office style" but look to the needs of each site and the appreciations of the site by its users.

Mr. Burne invited member discussion and or questions.

Public comment was invited for the last 15 minutes of the meeting.

Comments:

Rebecca Flemming said that she was disappointed that throughout the meeting she had not once heard the word "book". Books are what brings her to the library on a weekly basis and she hopes the planning will provide a beautiful public space for housing the books in an arrangement friendly to users. She does not want to have anything done that lessens the very comfortable interaction between staff and users. Technology cannot replace the welcoming feeling that you get from dealing with a friendly and knowledgeable staff.

Nancy Woods said she resonated to the previous speakers comments. She had not heard the word "beautiful". A beautiful building will appeal to all.

The next meeting will be held during the week of July 22. Mr. Rossi invited ideas on meeting places.

Mr. Burne provided his telephone number and e-mail address and said he would be interested in any comments.

Ms. Flannery provided a telephone number to register for taking the July 11 "Behind-the-Scenes" tour.

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Gibbs: Pointed out the difficulty of expanding from 34,000 to 90,000 square feet while respecting existing site

Russell: Observed that there is not a single park but about 8 small parks, adjacent but different, with awkward access.

Carpenter: Asked if members would be able to share architects' information and ideas. Mr. Rawn replied "Yes" and Scott Acquilina said that at the next meeting they planned to present information about their findings.

Gintell: Said that it is important for interior spaces to work together.

Sousa: ???