



Meeting Date: July 1, 2009
Issue Date: July 2, 2009

**Wicomico Library
Wicomico County, MD**

**Meeting Minutes
Library Joint Task Force Meeting #1**

ATTENDANCE

Vicki Greene	WPL - Deputy Director	410-749-3612x12	vgreene@wicomico.org
Marvin Long	WPL - Board Member	410-742-1385	marvlong@comcast.net
Tom Hehman	WPL - Director	410-749-3612x13	tomh@wicomico.org
Valerie Murphy	WPL - Board Member	410-548-9417	vmmurphy@comcast.net
Leslie Russo	WPL – Board Member	410-749-3900	lhrusso@otwayrusso.com
Terry Cohen	Salisbury City Council	410-845-0296	terry@terrycohen.com
Jack Lennox	Salisbury / Wicomico Planning	410-548-4860	jlenox@wicomicocounty.org
Ed Heatwole	Wicomico Public Works	410-548-4810	ehatwole@wicomicocounty.org
Brad Gillis	WPL Board – SUN	410-543-2440	bradley.gillis@sun.com
Karen Reddersen	City of Salisbury	410-548-3190	kreddereson@ci.salisbury.md.us
John Pick	City of Salisbury	410-548-3100	jpick@ci.salisbury.md.us
Melanie Hennigan	Grimm + Parker Architects (G+P)	301-523-0007	mhennigan@gparch.com
Jason Palkewicz	McCrone	410-548-1492	jpalkewicz@mccrone-inc.com

DISTRIBUTION

All attendees. Tom to distribute as needed to other Stakeholders.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

This meeting is the first meeting of a Joint Task Force comprised of Library, City, and County representatives charged with gathering information in order to respond to issues and questions raised at the June 1 City Council work session where the Library requested the acquisition of City Parking Lot #10. The next meeting of this Task Force is scheduled for July 21st, 2009 with a goal of presenting its findings to the City Council on August 3rd, 2009.

INTRODUCTIONS & GENERAL OVERVIEW:

Tom Hehman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, conducting introductions, and explaining the purpose and charge of this Task Force. Tom reviewed the recent history of the Library: it performed a system wide planning study in 2005, it performed a feasibility study to determine whether to renovate or replace the existing library, and it is in the process of selecting a site for the urgently needed new library.

A. REVIEW OF LIBRARY SPACE NEEDS + NEED FOR NEW STRUCTURE:

1. Melanie Hennigan of Grimm + Parker Architects presented a summary of findings that were culled from various different studies dating back to 2005, including the Library Facilities Study & Plan by Ruth O'Donnell, Library Consultant, and the Beacon Study from 2006. G+P also reported on the findings of the Existing Library Feasibility Study completed in September 2008 by G+P. These reports conclude that the Library system is seriously undersized and is not meeting the present needs of the population in Wicomico County. The current library system is 38% smaller in square footage size than it should be to meet current demand. A demographic study shows that the population in the County is expected to grow and in the coming 20 to 30 years the library will be woefully undersized to meet population needs. Library construction projects can take a fair amount of time to accomplish, and the Library has been trying to repair or expand their existing facilities for over four years. The Library Board believes there is a great deal of urgency required to keep up the momentum that has accrued over the last four years and there is a need to acquire a site and begin serious fund raising as soon as possible.

2. Ms. Hennigan reported on the fact that the Library draws 370,000 visitors to Downtown Salisbury each year – possibly

more than any other entity in Downtown. The Library contributes to economic development in the City and a new Library would contribute even more so, as documented by the Beacon Study. Libraries are recognized as strong anchors for Downtowns and as destinations. They can be catalysts to spurring future economic development as documented in dozens of cities around the country. She explained that the American Library Association has statistics showing that the use of public libraries goes up significantly during economic downturns.

3. Ms. Hennigan reviewed the inadequacies of the exiting building as a library, due to structural deficiencies, accessibility issues, and mechanical and technology issues. Ms. Hennigan explained that the building could be repurposed as something other than a library for a reasonable cost, and that the structural deficiencies found apply only when considering book floor loads and not when considering typical office floor loads.

4. Ms. Hennigan reviewed general guidelines for locating a new public library – some “do’s and don’ts” of locating libraries, including do locate the library near where most users come from and do locate where retail would like to be, i.e. in a high traffic area. Walkability issues were presented, along with a graphic showing walks in 5 minute increments from the current library location. Vehicular and pedestrian accessibility issues were discussed, as well as the regional responsibility of the library to be located in a place where the greatest number of County users could access the building, not just City users of the library.

A. 10 SITES INITIALLY CONSIDERED:

1. Melanie Hennigan explained the site feasibility process that the Library Board has engaged in for the last 6 months, including creating a list of 10 sites which were studied for their feasibility as a new library site. It was acknowledged that the list of sites could have been 20 or 30 sites long. The Library Board did research and held discussions with numerous folks in the community, and held productive discussions amongst the Board, in order to create a list of 10 sites for the architects and engineers to study. The presentation illustrated the tax map property boundaries and aerial topography of each site. G+P Architects and McCrone Engineers then engaged in a month long study of the 10 initial sites and the Board narrowed down the list to the 5 strongest candidates (see below). The 10 sites included:

1. Parking Lot #1 East
2. Parking Lot #1 West (
3. Parking Lot #11 (Parking Lot West of Existing Library.
4. Parking Lot #10 at Route 13
5. Beaglin Park Drive + Glen Avenue
6. Feldman’s Site
7. Daily Times Site
8. Beaglin Park Crossing (lots 5, 6, 7 + 8)
9. Beaglin Park Crossing (lots 1, 2, 3 +4)
10. Existing Library (Plus Extra Area?)

B. SITE EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR THE 10 SITES:

1. A matrix chart outlining the data compiled by G+P and McCrone was presented and copies were given to all attendees. The matrix chart compared and contrasted the advantages and disadvantages of the 10 sites in the following categories:

1. Location
2. Zoning
3. Lot Size
4. Shape and Topography
5. Accessibility
6. Visibility
7. On Site Parking
8. Pedestrian and Bicycle Accessibility

9. Site synergies (how does site support ideas of development and quality of life for delivering services)
10. Revitalization Impact
11. Scenic or View Opportunities
12. Number of Stories Needed to Achieve Library Program
13. Site Acquisition Cost
14. Real Estate Development Loss
15. Who Currently Owns the Site
16. Are Utilities Nearby
17. Storm Water Management
18. Will Location Support the Library's Mission of Serving the Greater Wicomico Area

C. SELECTION OF FIVE CITY SITES

1. Melanie explained that prior to this Task Force meeting, the Library Board had met previously (on April 23, 2009) to look at the weak spots of each of the sites, as well as the strengths of each of the site. The Board then discussed numerous sites and quickly discerned that five of the 10 sites did not warrant further study due to their disadvantages (like being too small or being inaccessible). The Committee discussed that were the five strongest sites that deserved further consideration and deserved a more detailed investigation of how each site may be suited to house the new library. Listed below are the top Five Sites, from most preferred to least:

1. Site 4: Parking Lot #10 at Route 13 (overwhelmingly preferred)
2. Site 1: Parking Lot #1
3. Site 5: East of Old Mall
4. Site 10: Existing Library (Plus Extra Area)
5. Site 8: Beaglin Park Crossing (5, 6, 7 & 8)

2. The Library Board made a decision at that the April 23rd meeting to go to the City on June 1st and request the acquisition of Parking Lot #10.

D. JUNE 1ST, 2009 REQUEST FOR ACQUISITION OF PARKING LOT #10:

1. The Library requested an opportunity to acquire Parking Lot 10 from the City Council on June 1st. The City responded with a series of questions and requests for more information that brought us to this Task Force meeting today. The City asked to know which other sites were considered and why (covered herewith in today's presentation) and the City wished to learn more about two other sites: Parking Lot #1 and the existing library site.

2. Reasons Why Site #4: Parking Lot at Route 13 (parking Lot East of the Multi-Service Center) was the preferred location for a new library building by the Library Board on June 1st:

1. A new library could be built on Parking Lot 10 along Route 13 while still maintaining the vast majority of parking spaces on the site. This win-win scenario can be accomplished due to the slope of the grade on the site.
2. The existing library can remain open in its current location while the new library is under construction on the Parking Lot 10 site.
3. The existing Library building can either be repurposed by a developer or it can be razed entirely – allowing for a much larger parcel of free and unencumbered space to be developed in the core downtown area.
4. The freedom to develop more core downtown area will be extremely attractive to a developer. By razing the existing library, a developer might be able to achieve a critical mass of development, unencumbered by the existing building. The newly available site has great frontage on Division Street and excellent views of the river and is within close walking distance to the core of downtown. Removing this one obstacle might create the necessary maneuvering room for a developer in the downtown.

5. The current Library site, when vacated, offers more desirable waterfront views that appeal to developers.
6. A new Library at Route 13 would occupy and celebrate the gateway into downtown, while being very accessible to both north/south traffic and east/west traffic in Wicomico County.
7. The Parking Lot 10 / Route 13 site gives the Library perhaps the most optimal location possible for an accessible regional library.
8. In this economy, the commercial market is currently dormant and no one is rushing to develop the Parking Lot 10 site. Furthermore, commercial anchor stores are going bankrupt and closing in droves. Having a library serve as an anchor on the Parking Lot 10 site could be an extremely smart and prescient move. The library would serve as a beacon and a gateway on the edge of downtown. It would draw visitors travelling along both the east/west corridor of Route 50 and the north/south corridor of Route 13.
9. Right now, commercial deals are not happening very frequently or with a sense of urgency. This means the Route 13 site might not be developed commercially for many more years to come. On the other hand, the Route 13 site could be developed quickly and positively as a Library.
10. The value of the Route 13 site may be similar to the value of the existing Library property. It is worth considering swapping the existing Library building and site for the Parking Lot 10 site at Route 13. The Library would then take on the responsibility of developing this site to accommodate a new 72,000 square foot library with at least 120 TO 180 parking spaces (shared by the City and the Library).

E. PRESENTATION, COMPARISON, & ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LIBRARY SITE, PARKING LOT 1, AND PARKING LOT 10 SITES FOLLOWED BY DISCUSSION:

1. Melanie presented a PowerPoint presentation graphically depicting the potential for developing a new library on either the existing library site, the Parking Lot #1 site, or the Parking Lot #10 site. Melanie acknowledged that the “point of view” for analyzing these three sites at this time was from the Library’s perspective (i.e. not from the City’s perspective). Given this point of view, which focused on the idea of serving the greatest number of County residents as possible with the new library location, the Library had concluded the existing library site was a GOOD site, the Parking Lot #1 site was a BETTER site, and the Parking Lot #10 site was the BEST site. A variety of solutions were shown for how to develop each of these sites into a new, 20th Century Library. Each site option addressed major issues of concern that the City had highlighted in the June 1st meeting, including: main entrance location, relationship to the City and pedestrian traffic, walkability, vehicular traffic, service entrance location, and location of parking. The PowerPoint documents the various possibilities and how each scheme could connect with the development plans presented on June 1st by Urban Salisbury.

2. Melanie reported that all three sites under consideration would provide landmarks and beacons that could be celebrated in the City. All three sites created win/win scenarios where the library would benefit from a new home and the City would benefit from the vitality and presence of the new Library. The Library had serious concerns about staying on their existing property as rebuilding on the present site location would require relocating the Library (and its extensive technology hub for the entire Eastern Shore Library system) two times in a two year period. This disruption would be extremely problematic and the Library would like to minimize this as much as possible. The Library also expressed their customer’s concerns over parking in parking garages and having to cross major roads to get in and out of the library. The architect showed that Parking Lot #10 afforded a unique win/win solution that no other site afforded the same way- the ability to co-locate the parking and the building in the same footprint area, given the grade on the Parking Lot 10 site.

3. The City gave many good suggestions to the architects and the Library about ideas to incorporate into their site feasibility studies. The City suggested that the Library look at combining Parking Lots #1 East and West and studying that location for a new Library; G+P agreed to do so. The City suggested that parking for the Library could be accomplished to the rear of the Library on Lot 1, rather than by crossing the street or using the garage. The City offered to move its current permit parking from Lot 1 into the garage. It was recommended that by combining both of Lots 1

East & West, additional fall in the grade might be picked up to allow for some below grade parking. G+P will study this.

4. The City cautioned that they have concerns over several items that need further consideration, either by the City Council and Mayor, or by the Library Board. The City expressed concern over losing assets. The City expressed concern over how the Library would impact development if located in the eastern half of Downtown. The City decided to perform several property appraisals (of parking lots 10 and 1). The City urged the Library to contact Urban Salisbury and get a copy of their plan and see how the concepts mesh together. Mr. Lenox pointed out that the City really would prefer if the Library were in the core area of Downtown, and not on the Eastern edge of Town. Mr. Lenox pointed out that if the study of these three sites had been from the City's point of view that Parking Lot 1 would be BEST, the existing Library site would be BETTER, and Parking Lot 10 would be GOOD.

5. Ms. Cohen asked if a Library "market study" had been prepared. Tom and Melanie explained that a national library consultant had performed such a study in 2005. It was agreed to e-mail Ms. Cohen a copy of the report. There was a good deal of consensus about the need and the desire for a new library in Downtown. The City clarified that they are hoping the Library will locate in the core of Downtown. Melanie explained that the regional qualities of the Library service area make sites located on major arterial roads more attractive as possible locations, but given the fact that the existing library is in Downtown, staying in Downtown can also be win/win.

6. Many opportunities to connect the library to various entities were discussed – to the hospital, to surrounding neighborhoods, across the river, etc. Walkability and accessibility in general was discussed. The opportunity to create a gateway to downtown was discussed, as well as the opportunity to bridge across the river. Parking concerns, traffic patterns, retail development, use patterns, and economic development concerns were discussed in healthy detail.

7. The City expressed their concern that a Library on Lot 10 would be cut off from surrounding neighborhoods to the east and north in terms of walking. This was acknowledged as correct as these busy roads prevent pedestrian access. Conversely, the Lot 10 site provides visibility and accessibility for those travelling to the library by car.

8. It was acknowledged that Historic Downtown would suffer if the Library were lost as a neighbor. It was also acknowledged that the Library needs to serve as many needs as possible, and that the Library alone cannot be responsible for the viability of Historic Downtown Salisbury. It was also discussed that the Library has looked at sites outside of the Downtown area and it needs to give those locations serious consideration in case a deal with the City is not accomplished.

9. It was agreed that all players need to have a successful outcome and that this project is a remarkable opportunity for the City, the County, and the Library. It was discussed whether this Task Force should make a recommendation to the City Council and Mayor. This issue will be discussed in our next meeting after Task Force members have had time to reflect on this. Melanie pointed out that in her experience, these types of committees do make recommendations. Marvin pointed out that in his experience as an elected official, working with staff and committees, he counted on those entities doing the research for him and making recommendations to him based upon their extensive research.

10. The Task Force was asked "What is it going to take to move this project forward?" or "What are the next steps needed?" A variety of excellent ideas and points were made:

- Momentum is needed to close the deal.
- A site must be selected! That is the number one issue that –without selecting a site – none of these other things can happen. We need to select a site.
- We need to put a concept in front of the Mayor right now. We need to start raising awareness and raising money.
- The City and the County will all WIN if the Library remains Downtown.

- Whether the Library goes east or west, the Downtown already has parking there- take advantage of it. Include CCDC in the process to give advice.
- We have already reached consensus on many issues, such as: If the Library can be Downtown, it shall be Downtown.
- We need endorsements of many other organizations so we can expand the enthusiasm, the support, and increase the momentum.
- We have an opportunity to come together and increase momentum. – even in advance of a building design.
- The Council wants to hear from Mr.Lenox.
- Consider an International Design Competition for the New Library. Imagine the energy and excitement that that could bring to Downtown Salisbury.
- We need to select a site – and then we can show a picture of what the possibilities are on that site. That is what will generate energy and enthusiasm.
- The next step is to select the site.
- In order to create a Vision that others can see and appreciate, we need to select a site.
- Making a decision on a site is the most important thing. The Library cannot apply for any more grants or state monies until a site is selected.
- Fund raising is on “pause” due to not having a site upon which to draw an illustration of what is possible.
- We do need a site. We need to confirm between the City and the County that the sites under consideration are really available to be purchased and actually developed by the Library and the County.

2. Each option had merits, as well as advantages and disadvantages, from various viewpoints, and

Next Steps:

1. This Task Force will reconvene on July 21st and further investigate the three site options.
2. Prior to July 21st, G+P will investigate the combined Parking Lots 1 East and West.
3. The City Council will meet on Monday July 6th to discuss developments at this meeting.
4. The Library Board will meet to discuss internally what they learned from this meeting to figure out their next steps.

If your understanding of the items in this meeting is different from that listed above, please do not hesitate to call within 24 hours of receiving meeting minutes.

**Author: Melanie Hennigan
MH/mh**