

BROOKS MEMORIAL LIBRARY  
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2015, Local History Room

**Present:** Jane Southworth, Mary Ide, Pam Becker, Elizabeth Tannenbaum, Jennifer Lann (minutes keeper); Jeanne Walsh, Howard Burrows; later: guest presenter Lindsay Bellville

**Meeting called to order 4:37 p.m.**

**No public; no public comment.**

**September 3, 2015 Minutes reviewed and approved.**

**Discussion of Aspen Report:**

Jane expressed it was jarring; the issues facing libraries haven't fundamentally changed in the past 100 years other than the presence of the Internet. Report indicates all other institutions have failed so it's up to the library to lead the way to educate and support the public. Happy for opposing viewpoints from the committee about the report.

Jerry: Most important word in report is "collaborate." Not a solo endeavor. We support other town endeavors but don't replace them. We provide resources, digital literacy development as a form of economic development, as well as the needs of the traditional library patron.

Equity, access, opportunity, openness are the main themes, and libraries have been and will still be all about that.

We're here to discern community needs and support them.

Jeanne: The library doesn't wait passively to learn what the needs are; we go out in the community and seek where we're needed (e.g., Brown Bag tech lunches, BCTV). Didn't get the sense from the executive summary that it was saying that other institutions have failed and so it's all up to the library.

Mary: Really liked this report and the Pew Research Center report (which dovetails nicely). We need to think about next generation and answer the question of "Why do we still need a library?" Education is in crisis, and we have a supportive role in helping community's educational needs. The creativity part is an opportunity. Exciting and challenging.

Pam: The report felt spot-on for how to do a strategic plan. During the last strategic planning meeting, the brainstorming responses were textbook. Staffing and funding has always been the limit, but now we have somewhat of a buffer with a stronger endowment. We're already in good shape with regard with what the report says.

A need to discern what the community needs vs. wants.

Elizabeth: We really need some young people in this process.

Jennifer: Agree with Pam that we're already on the right track as a library. Aspen still values print and library as place, which is good.

Howard: Agree that we're in a good place, and it's helpful to remember that. Scott Bonner from Ferguson, key note speaker at VLA: learned three things about the primary role of a library: community center, cultural literacy (includes digital literacy, and includes down-to-earth cultural

issues), lifelong learning. Another speaker emphasized how to get the community involved with the library.

Howard: Hates surveys—their wording influences the outcome. Thinks maker spaces and 3D printers are a great idea. Library as a place is outdated; your place is your device, and the library connects you with that. Need to take an active rather than passive role.

Jerry: Aspen has an “Action Guide for Re-envisioning Your Public Library.” Could be too much for a single small library. Heavy on process.

Rather than bringing people in, go out into neighborhoods and schools. Disagree that surveys are always limiting; the last survey was open ended and resulted in many patron comments that were of use with the Selectboard.

Amy also sent us Pennsylvania libraries planning document (“Reinventing the Public Library, A Workbook for Pennsylvania Libraries”). Or Amy’s five-page “Strategic Planning in a Nutshell.”

Amy had told us in the last meeting that in the past, remote meeting sites weren’t well attended.

Pam: We could ask for feedback at the end of some other library gathering, such as the Brown Bag session, the First Wednesday speakers, children’s programs, etc. Such attendees are already there and thinking about the library. Quick, easy two-question, open-ended survey. “We’re changing; how do you want us to change?”

Jerry: New director is going to generate a lot of interest. Two things that boost circulation the most: build a new building and hire a new library director. We’ll have a renovated building and new director at about the same time.

Elizabeth quoted Aspen under People, Place and Platform: “In the creative design of its physical and virtual spaces the public library defines what makes a great public space.”

Howard: Brattleboro is a magnet town. Our community extends well beyond the town line. Also, we can’t think of doing everything ourselves; we need to be a catalyst. Technology is changing so fast (especially in jobs) that we need to support the community in that.

Jane: Assignment for next meeting: Look at planning docs:

- “Strategic Planning in a Nutshell”
- PA planning doc: “Reinventing the Public Library”
- Aspen planning doc: “Action Guide for Re-envisioning Public Libraries”

**Next Action:** With minutes, Jennifer will send out links again.

**Next Action:** Howard will email us a link to an article by Scott Bonner about his vision for libraries.

### **Community Involvement in the Plan:**

Jane: Amy at last meeting shared with us a list of who we invited to the last planning meeting.

Jeanne: Thinks it’s a good idea to invite individuals rather than make an open-ended invitation. Creates more commitment. Need to ensure we get a really broad representation, including those who don’t think it’s relevant to their lives to tell us why.

Pam: We would have to invite a lot of that group, to ensure we get some of them. Need a good facilitator.

Elizabeth: Idea of inviting a person and asking them to bring one guest who is a non-user of the library. (Perhaps a **next action?**)

Jane: How many invitees? How many gatherings?

Jerry read us the very long, broad list of types and names of invitees from the last planning efforts. They were all together with breakout groups.

Jerry: “Your library looks to the future” Alvin Gamage as speaker, Oct. 29. Showcase the building plans. A good place for planning recruitment. (Perhaps a **next action?**)

Jeanne: skewed over 50, so we need to reach younger folk.

Jane met two local MLS students; we can invite them. (Perhaps a **next action?**)

### **“Lead the Change” Summary, by Youth Services Librarian Lindsay Bellville**

Lindsay and Therese attended workshop “Lead the Change” about marketing one’s library. Workshop leader not a library person; a marketing leader. Started working with libraries past year or two. Two big points:

- 1) Know your main goal (despite your many roles): he says we are about reading, period. Workshop was about increasing your circulation; getting people in the door and borrowing books/ebooks. Need to focus on reading aspect.
- 2) Focus on readers’ advisory. In the 1950s 11,000 books printed per year; now over a million titles this year. We’re no longer aiming as libraries to archive them. Shift from “We house books” to “We help people connect with the right books.” From warehouse to showcase.

Different types of patrons: high touch with need for us to spend a lot of time with them vs. high touch but low on time (Facebook, website, email helpful). Then there are people who don’t want our help but still need it, so displays and bookmarks for them. Tailoring emails based on patron-selected interests. “Staff picks” books are helpful—especially with the staff name identified.

Jerry: New Rutland library director sought to increase print circulation (it was declining). Created bunches of mini book displays, and that worked. Aspen indicates that people *trust* the library, and so they trust what we recommend to them.

**Meeting adjourned** at 5:55 p.m.

**Next meeting:** Nov. 5, Local Meeting Room, 4:30-6 p.m.