

Brooks Memorial Library
Buildings and Grounds Committee
Monday, June 28, 2021 8:45 AM - 9:45 AM (EST)
Main Floor, Brooks Memorial Library

Present: Jenny Rowe, Jane Southworth, Sirkka Kauffman, trustees; Starr LaTronica, director; Jeanne Walsh, staff member; Elizabeth Tannenbaum, community member.

MINUTES

- 1) Call to Order at 8:50.
- 2) Agenda/Changes or additions: none.
- 3) Approval of Minutes of May 24, 2021: motion to approve by Jane, second by Elizabeth. Approved.

Note: A question arose as to whether staff members of the committee are eligible to vote. The answer is yes, except for votes to expend funds. From the Board's Bylaws:

"Votes by the committee to expend funds, whether allocated for the committee's use by the full Board or from some other source, shall require the assent of a majority of the committee's Trustee members, or if there are only two Trustee members, by all of the Trustee members.

Members of the public, particularly Library staff, bring valuable expertise to the work of Board committees and are encouraged to join at the invitation of the committee chair. Committee members shall have a vote in committee decisions and may act on behalf of the committee at the request of the committee."

- 4) Public Comment: See discussion with Bob Stevens, below.
- 5) Old Business

- Questions regarding assessment of building structure -- discussion with guest Bob Stevens of Stevens & Associates, P.C., the Brattleboro civil and structural engineering and architectural consulting firm. The committee and Bob examined the original blueprints and went outside to take a brief look at the front and side of the building.

Building codes have changed since the 1960s so even though the library building was reportedly designed to take a third floor, Bob advised that seismic reinforcing requirements would be different now. A third floor would be "possible – anything can be fixed" but it would not be possible to keep the library open while building up. We would need to plan on shutting down for around a year while lower structural elements were upgraded and tower systems such as the elevator shaft, stairways, and heating/cooling were extended. It would be a premium cost for the resulting space.

Bob encouraged the committee to consider other existing spaces in the downtown area to augment the library's current space, since in general renovating an old building is less expensive than a new addition.

Identifying space needs more precisely is an important next step. Would remote storage free up enough space in the current building? What possible space is adjacent to the current building that could be annexed? Storage for historical archives should be climate controlled; where could that be achieved? Are there ways to make existing space more easily convertible (for example, a large screen that could drop down into the main floor space? *Starr commented that the screen idea has already been explored and found to be too difficult with the double-height ceiling.*)

Exploring the possibilities of an addition to the side and back of the building instead of to the top, the discussion ranged to a four-story addition with a side exit, wrapping around the back. This would add some street frontage – important for announcing the building's uses – and might be a good way to connect physically to the Town Hall building. There is a lot of parking lot space that might be used.

The current building is not a concrete structure but a conventional steel building, wrapped in concrete panels. This is a little easier to work with. A green roof would be a possibility.

To pursue the addition idea, the next step would be to work with a design professional to develop a concept plan, a feasibility study, and a cost estimate.

The committee thanked Bob for his generous contribution of time and expertise, which helped the committee advance the space discussion considerably.

- Status of ongoing projects and proposed projects:

Following on the building addition discussion, the committee focused on space needs: One example of what is currently needed is staff work space in the Children's Room. A computer training lab and a dedicated maker space are two more ideas, in addition to the standing demand for small and large meeting spaces. Might the committee contribute questions to the Strategic Planning survey? Should we also undertake an internal assessment? Jane suggested the ALA may have advice on how to do a space needs study. Jenny commented that all of these proposed space uses would allow incremental improvement in activities already underway at the library – there is no activity we are completely prevented from undertaking in the space we already have.

The Brooks Building fund will cover the cost for the Children's Room chairs and they have been ordered.

For the Children's Room vicinity especially, it would be an improvement to replace the stairway doors with high-quality glass doors. This would improve light in the stairwell and allow people to see whether someone is on the other side of the door before pushing it open.

Sign: Jane will invite Helen Merena to the next meeting to advise on the look and materials of a "Library" sign. Helen suggests looking at the sign on the new Groundworks building for a good example – brushed aluminum, individual letters.

- Status of Board funding pre-approved for committee use: The Board approved \$40,000 for the furniture purchase.

6) New Business

- Possible use of ARPA funds for furniture: Many of these items are on the furniture purchase list and may be added to the ARPA list: "Indoor furniture for COVID response, such as dividers, un-upholstered furniture, smaller tables for separation, sneeze guards, lockers, etc., or furniture with embedded digital/electrical components, i.e., or tables, chairs, shelves with built-in chargers or outlets."

7) Set next meeting: TBD.

8) Meeting adjourned at 10:00.