

Sharon Public Library Board of Trustees
Special Session
August 20, 2020

Attendance:

Trustees: Carolyn Weeks, Cheryl Weinstein, Geoff Gerrietts, Wendy MacArthur, Sarah Windman

Library Staff: Lee Ann Amend (Library Director)

Guests: Dick Gellerman, Brian Winner, Gordon Gladstone, Fred Turkington, Emily Smith-Lee, Ira Miller, Mike Berkley, Ruth Beckerman-Rodeau, Pat Panone, Sarah Graf

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 by Cheryl Weinstein.

A moment of silence for Bob Levin.

Cheryl's presentation.

- The year of 2015 was spent creating the building program with a building program consultant. The building program does not include a location. It is the library spaces that are needed for and the size of the spaces needed due to service population.
- Importance of individual rooms such as rooms used for library programming like the community room. Not possible to break the building into pieces and have parts of the library in different locations.
- The room labeled "community room" is for the main purpose of library programming.
- In 2016 time to choose the location and create a preliminary schematic. The only available land for the library was 11 N. Main st and 1 School st.
- 11 N Main st required more extensive variances and was approx 1/3 the size of 1 School St.
- Historic committee rejected 11 N Main
- Went back to choosing a new location. Lee Ann created the grant application. Great job.
- There is room for growth on the property if the general residential district is extended across the way to 1 School st. Lot coverage maximum per zoning would then be 40%.
- Mike Berkley asked Fred if 1 School st was the only location. Fred said that all the other locations that were looked at were not viable. Additionally, the town wants the library to be in the center of town.
- Cheryl discussed how the Square footage was calculated. The submission to the MBLC added the spaces together and did not use an exterior wall to exterior wall square footage. Therefore, the square footage in the application is less than the required minimum square footage.
- Project went to standing building in 2019. They made necessary modifications to the design. What was presented to town meeting was approved.
- Town meeting approved 11,519 sf footprint.
- It would cost over \$1 million to reduce the building by a 1 percentage point lot coverage. No public good to anyone to reduce the sq footage.

- Ruth brought up the issue that the abbutters did not receive notification of the meeting.
- Emily admitted that the notice was not sent to the abbutters. There was lack of clarity. Notice did not go out but it wasn't intentional. The meeting was posted in accordance with law.
- Discussion of the building exterior footprint drawing and the change in square footage. To reduce it needs to be completely redesigned. It can't just be quickly changed.
- Fred asked if there was a discussion of moving some of the spaces to another location with the MBLC. Would they consider an adjustment. Did we ask them if they would pro rate the grant. He proposed that the community room isn't necessary in the building. Can we use the rooms in a different building?
- Gordon used the analogy that should the high school not get an auditorium since there is a new one at the middle school? Should the children march back and forth from school to school to use the auditorium? Fred did not agree with the analogy. Are there services that we are included in this building that could be moved to another location.
- Second analogy was second language learners doesn't have to be in the library. But the tutors use the materials in the library.
- Lee Ann responded that the library programming room (community room) is an integral part of all public libraries. Every single library in any area has one. It supports all the initiatives and everything we are doing in the library for life long learning, early literacy and the support of the collections materials. She can't imagine parents with their kids driving back and forth from one building to another. When kids are involved the parents are checking out materials. It is just not possible to move it.
- Cheryl said that Trustees are responsible for making sure we have a functioning library. And that it works for all of our community.
- Dick. Was the basement of the building changed? Cheryl said it was and showed the slide with the change. The square footage in the basement was not included in reduction numbers as it would not reduce the lot coverage.
- Dick. If Deborah Sampson property could be used. If are there other reasons why we don't want to put the building there?
- Cheryl responded that the grant would be nullified and we would be starting all over again. Dick said the grant was on the design but not the location. Cheryl said that the grant is tied to the location and design. We would also have to get town meeting approval again. Dick wants to know why we can't inquire about it. Cheryl stated that this would be starting the project all over again. Additionally, the longer the process gets dragged on the more expensive everything will be and this is the preferred location.
- Ira said that we have discussed Deborah Sampson property for decades. We didn't want to put it there because we want to revitalize the town center. The revitalization of town hall has been discussed for many years. We are so close to building this library. How many people aren't at this meeting because they didn't know it would be going on today. He is troubled by the meeting not getting more coverage. He wants us to move forward so we can all come together. As fin comm member he wants the zba to open their meeting and get things rolling again.

- Brian didn't think anyone wanted to hear about arguments and processes so he is stating what is happening next. Tonight was a presentation of where the trustees are with the library and get feedback and vet out questions. We need to get another meeting with the zba. Everyone may not have gotten notice, but this isn't the one and only meeting that this will be discussed. Other opportunities will arise. We don't know what will happen next but we are leaning towards doing the best we can in completing records and the understanding between all the parties.
- Dick agrees with Brian. His inquiry into Deborah Sampson was just that an inquiry. He was just wondering if we knew if it could be considered. We are asking him when the zba finding will be written or when the hearing will be reopened. Things are fluid. We will have another meeting after this meeting so Fred will understand why the size of the building can not be reduced. He thinks the zba should be told why we can't reduce the size. We should go to the Mblc and find out why they would or would not approve. Once the town leaders are satisfied that we understand what is going on that we either can or can not reduce it. We then either go back to the zba or just write the decision of the hearing.
- Cheryl stated that what Dick was addressing was clearly stated during the hearing. An MBLC member was at the hearing and clearly stated that they would not approve a smaller library. We have written information from them and Cheryl welcomed anyone to go and discuss this issue with the commissioners. Anyone can do that. Trustees have to do our job but anyone can go to the commissioners and ask them to do whatever they are looking for.
- Mike. He agrees with Dick's idea that we should look outside the box even though it may seem ridiculous. It is a good place to start.
- Ira. Which idea is it? Mike said we could look again for a reduction in size or a different location..
- Cheryl said it wasn't a possibility before and we are at this location. The town wants the library in the center of town. This is an educational building. The Dover Amendment does apply and we are at a site that if it were directly across the street it would be 40% allowable lot coverage. Trustees are not looking at starting the process all over again. Trying to build a new library has happened 3 4 times in the last 20 years and we never made it this far before. This is amazing. We are ready to go.
- Mike. Is this really starting over again? We don't know unless someone asked.
- Cheryl has asked the MBLC. They have said no. They have written it and said it so many times in so many ways. We would also need a new town meeting vote. Trustees are not interested in having another town meeting vote. Dick discussed again about moving to Deborah Sampson.
- Cheryl is concerned that nothing has happened. If it wasn't for COVID we would have a decision by now or it would have defaulted and we would be moving forward. We are in limbo doing nothing. If someone wants to look into Deborah Sampson while we continue with the process at school st that would be ok. Anyone can go to the MBLC, that could happen at the same time.
- Dick. Gordon. What is the cost differential to put it on Deborah Sampson

- Gordon how long has this been going on. Each day that passes adds cost to the library. Building committee can't go forward. They have a fiduciary responsibility to the town. They can not spend money until and unless we know this is the site that will be built. We won't know for a long time. We just won't.
- Gordon brought up the civil defense building that got approval many years ago and still isn't built and the land hasn't been approved. Fred said that we are trying to do a land swap.
- Sarah Graf. She attended the select board meeting a month ago and Heiten said that we could obtain adjacent land. Fin comm also said we could take the land by eminent domain. Is there any discussion about that land?
- Fred is exchanging messages to have a meeting with the landowner about the land.
- Ira. Talking about moving to a new location is premature. Dick sounded like he was unwilling to compromise from what he was saying from the zba.
- Dick denied it. He said that we either show the zba that there can't be a reduction or material change or that we can make a change.
- Cheryl said that it already happened that it had been clearly stated that there can't be reductions. At the zba meeting the trustees did not know that the state rep was there. The state rep clearly stated the MBLC opinion both verbally and written that the building program cannot be reduced in size..
- Ira wants Pat to be involved about downtown being used for the library Since that appears in the Master Plan many times.
- Pat. He is puzzled. Utterly dumbfounded why they don't just extend the general residential district across the street. It doesn't make any sense to him that the lot restrictions are not 40%. Why are we banging our heads against the wall.
- Cheryl agrees. We should extend that district.
- Ira. How does the select board see this moving quickly to a resolution giving that the parties may not come together in agreement. How do we move the process forward in a timely way. So we don't jeopardize the grant money and we end up with a library in town that the town overwhelmingly wants.
- Fred. The zba meeting was on July 8. We have asked to explore ways to reduce the library size. The MBLC person said they have never done it before. They sited Woburn that they turned down. Changing the lot requirements does not get approval for all the variances. He will work hard with Brian to find ways to move the process forward. Either more proof that the changes cannot be done or if there is a way to modify the building. We need to determine if we can compromise or not in the next couple of weeks. The zba decision will be given and the trustees will react accordingly. It has not been dragged.
- Fred. Town meeting passed it but it's not that simple. We want to have the building built without a court case 8-10 months a year from now. Litigation will drag out this process. It is not too much to ask for a week or two to finish off the process we have started. He has been working with the abbutters and funding for mitigation. we all had an assignment so it is moving as quick as possible. Brian and Dick are talking and everyone knows that. He will call the MBLC to have a meeting next week before Labor Day weekend.

- Cheryl wants to move on. She says Fred is talking about the cost. Making the building a little smaller will cost \$1 million. It won't cost that if we go to litigation. The least costly route is litigation.
- Gordon. Fred offering to call the MBLC is the first time he has seen anything concrete with the concept of talking to the MBLC. We heard the select board's interest in doing so but to the best of his knowledge it hasn't occurred. So Fred's statement that he will call the MBLC is a step in the right direction. Nobody even knows what is being asked of the trustees. They keep being told no but it keeps dragging on. Using all these red hearings. The town voted to have the library in the center of town. The master planning commission wants to have the library in the center of town. We have talked for decades about ways of improving the center of town and making it a more robust area. Nothing happens. This is another instance of people trying to undo the towns' wishes. People want the library in the center so they can run multiple errands at the same time. It's part of the community. He is clear he doesn't have a dog in this. The SSBC will build a building or not. As a committee it is irrelevant. Some have strong opinions if we have a library in the center of town and whether we have a library that meets the needs per the community as determined by the consultants which the library trustees paid for. Which created a library in line with what other communities do. Library should never have called it a community room it should have been called a library programming room or something like that. The concept of moving it across town or elsewhere is totally absurd. To Ira's point it is time to move this along. We are just spinning wheels and wasting time. If the zba feels that they are in the right. We will have to move forward and the trustees will have to litigate.
- Ruth. As an abutter who wants the library on school st. She wants an opportunity to discuss compromises. Everything is perspective. Her perspective is that Cheryl is unwilling to compromise. It is perspective. Alternatives were discussed. She favors the alternative. She publicly stated this and was not responded to. She wants the zoning laws to be respected. As an immediate abutter she wanted the opportunity to discuss alternatives. Everything is perspective. She does want the library in the center. She has wants and she sees it as a total impasse.
- Mike. Agrees with Ruth she made excellent points. This process is not being delayed by a few neighbors or abutters. They are not the ones who designed the building and brought it to the zba.
- Ira. This isn't personal. This is an impasse. There was talk about the select board bringing people together to discuss the issues going forward. It hasn't happened. Trustees tried to bring it forward. Ira lived through lots of projects and they all take a lot of time. Attorney Gelerman has been here as well. He understands process and he has gotten us through many of our projects. He represents the zba. We don't know in detail what the issues are so that we can go forward. We need to hear what their issues are so we can have the two different sides who do not appear to be able to come together to compromise. We don't know what the zba wants to do. From the library perspective. They have gone through a process to build and get the town a new library. School comm has to get the schools to be the best they can be. Trustees have to get the library the

best it can be. The town master plan mentions the library 94 times in the document. The plan shows the library on that site. This is not new. It has been going on for decades to get a new library. The old library is crumbling. We pour money into it to keep it going. It is just a stop gap measure until the new library is built. I don't want to see litigation. Zba has the cards now and they are keeping them close to the vest if they don't want to change their minds that is the process not all the other stuff. Having all these people talking to each other is not the way to do it. A public forum with the public is the way to come together not in a back room.

- Cheryl. We will wait for the next step and the select board will make sure everyone is notified of the next meeting.

Motion to adjourn at 8:33 Sarah moved and Carolyn seconded. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted
Sarah Windman