

Donna Conkling

From: Mayor
Sent: Thursday, February 25, 2016 10:42 AM
To: Donna Conkling
Cc: Steve Pappalardo; Robert Cole; David Lee (dlee.trustee@gmail.com); Bill Stern; dpekarek@verizon.net; Marc Samwick (marc.samwick@verizon.net); Carl Finger; Matt Callaghan
Subject: Fw: Proposed library renovations

FYI. JM

From: Mayor
Sent: Thursday, February 25, 2016 10:41 AM
To: Harvey Barten
Subject: Re: Proposed library renovations

Dear Mr. Barton -- Thank you for attending and commenting at the BOT meeting, and for your email.

Very truly yours, Jon Mark

From: Harvey Barten <harveybarten@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 25, 2016 8:23 AM
To: Mayor; kristinwfriedman@gmail.com
Subject: Proposed library renovations

Mr Mayor and Members of the Board of Trustees

Yesterday, February 24th, my wife and I attended a meeting conducted by the Library Board to explain the proposed renovations and answer any questions from the community. Unfortunately, the meeting was very sparsely attended, but this gave the few of us there the opportunity to raise many concerns. The presentations were enlightening but even more troubling than I had anticipated. I asked a great many questions, and I hope that I was not perceived as a negative curmudgeon.

As best I could understand, the planning process included focus groups of some 200 individuals, who were encouraged to voice their preferences and came up with a wish list that included such items as badly needed expansion of children's facilities, more meeting spaces, a Starbucks like minicafe, more comfortable seating, and a view of the pond. The focus groups were not asked to prioritize or factor in relative costs. Several of us asked whether the Library Board itself had envisioned a hierarchy of priorities, were all of the funds being sought not to have materialized. This has not been done. I will try as best I can to reconstruct the logic.

The Village engineer was asked what it would cost to remedy existing deficiencies such as a leaking roof, leaking and energy inefficient windows, and requirements to conform to the ADA guidelines. This list is by no means complete, but to my astonishment, the cost was estimated at \$4,500,000. The Library Board had no idea of how these costs were arrived at, and I wonder whether the Trustees have examined this. The Library Board, given this starting point, understandably reasoned that it might make more sense to attempt a complete overhaul, and as this proceeded, eventually settled on construction costs of roughly \$14,000,000 and \$4,000,000 for architects fees, other managerial and consulting costs, and the overdue updating of computer facilities. Asked how these costs, if necessary, could be reduced and what components might be sacrificed, the response was that such a contingency had not been anticipated.

The Board believes that they can raise their share, and has the impression that they have been given strong support and encouragement from the Village, who is likely to provide the remainder.

Here is my sense of the process. A group of committed, public-spirited, able individuals, with the very best of intentions, has given selflessly and generously of their time and energy to make our library as fine as it can be. Over six long years they have dedicated themselves to cobbling together a plan that they fervently believe will best serve our community. And they may have it right. They have reached a sense of completion. Detailed architectural plans have been drafted and paid for. Community and Trustee support appears solid. Any suggested modifications at this point are dismissed as unconstructive or nit picking(my words). In short, the train has left the station. Thus discussion such as last night's is unlikely to bring about much change. Such discussion could have addressed issues such as the need for eliminating the second floor stacks, or relocating the entire library for at least 18 months, with all the disruption that would cause, but it appears too late for that. We could discuss whether some of the architectural changes justify their cost. Or we could discuss whether there are good reasons for transforming a significant part of the library's function into that of a community center. With regard to the latter, we are told that this what the library of the future is destined to become. Just look at what other libraries in Westchester are doing, one of the Trustees possibly admonished me at the meeting on Tuesday night. Of course that doesn't mean that we must follow suit. And it hasn't yet been established that the target groups envisioned can or will utilize the expanded facilities. For example, will a "living room feel" bring more adults to spend more time in the library? Perhaps, perhaps not. I can speak with some authority about the needs of the mentally disabled, who would require extensive and expensive staffing and would probably be best served elsewhere. The devil is in the details, and I don't see those details being addressed.

My own expertise is in planning and delivering mental health programs. We always operated under severe monetary constraints, which necessitated looking at a hierarchy of possibilities. When I developed the New Rochelle program to serve 300 hard-core heroin addicts, we were forced to make many compromises in providing for this most challenging and dangerous population. Later, when I chaired the Sound Shore mental health catchment area planning committee, serving a population of 150,000, those compromises and revisions were incessant, and that was the way I was mandated to proceed. Actually, it was in medical school that this discipline was first inculcated. It served me well when I ultimately become responsible for overseeing planning at the community level for all of Westchester. Those are my credentials, and my mind set. I have nothing at stake in how the library project turns out. I have always believed in critically examining proposals from every possible perspective, to avoid subsequent disappointment or worse. In this instance, I would be more than pleased if all my concerns prove unfounded.

Respectfully,

Harvey H. Barten

Sent from my iPad