



LIBRARY COMMISSION MINUTES

Regular Meeting
November 9, 2009 6:30 pm
Menlo Park Library
800 Alma Street
Menlo Park, Ca. 94025

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair McDonough called the meeting to order at approximately 6:40p.m.

ROLL CALL:

McDonough, Chair (P), Hamilton (A), Sloo (P), Soto (A), Vasudeva (P),
Wangberg (P), Zara (P)

STAFF PRESENT:

Glen Rojas, City Manager
Nick Szegda, Acting Director of Library Services, Reference Librarian & Interim Circulation
Manager

OTHERS PRESENT:

Matt Henry, Menlo Park resident, member Belle Haven Neighborhood Association

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Henry spoke in support of expanding library services to Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood. He noted that this is a request that has been consistently made of by Belle Haven residents who have attended city meetings regarding projects in the Belle Haven area over several years. He noted that the current branch library on the campus of Belle Haven School (a Ravenswood City School District school) has hours very similar to those of the school. This makes the city branch library services inaccessible to neighborhood children who do not attend that school. He also noted that the library's collection is focused on the needs of elementary and middle school children and does not serve older students or adults.

Mr. Henry also shared he will make a presentation to the City Council tomorrow of a list of items that neighborhood residents have determined as being needs of the neighborhood. Mr. Henry will share the presentation with the Library Commission via a follow up email.

B. INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Library and Community Services Departments – current and potential future direction
 - Mr. Rojas shared that he and city department heads are currently evaluating city service delivery for the long term with respect to hiring decisions. All vacancies are being evaluated before anyone is hired to fill them. The current focus of these evaluations is the Police Dept., the Community Services Dept and capital improvement programs of Public Works.

The Community Services Dept. head resigned in July, instead of filling that position, the possibility of consolidating that position with that of another department head is being investigated. Ms. Holmer, Library Services Dept. head, has been asked to oversee both departments while the management structure is being evaluated. Ms. Holmer and the interim Program Managers for Community Services are investigating options for departmental consolidation or organizational restructuring. Mr. Rojas is attending Library Commission and Parks & Rec. Commission meetings to gain feedback from a Commissioner perspective on this investigation.

- Discussion ensued regarding the library's role in the community.
 - There are synergies between the Library and Community Services.
 - Usage of Library services both at the city libraries and via the Internet is increasing. It is difficult to provide needed services without a full staff.
 - It was noted that the Library has a dedicated group of volunteers who fill in some background areas (e.g. shelving & processing books). However, volunteers can be sporadic in their work hours.
 - With the economy in stress all area libraries are seeing a surge in library use. The challenge is to provide the expected level of service with the current funding levels.

2. Introduction of new Library Commission members

- Ms. Vasudeva gave a brief introduction of herself. She is originally from Ohio and is a three year resident of Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood. She is an attorney in private practice with offices in Menlo Park. Ms. Vasudeva noted that she has an affinity for libraries, her first job was in a library of her hometown and she was involved as a student Library Commissioner while at university. Ms. Vasudeva is also a parent of a pre-school aged child, who regularly attends story times at the Belle Haven Branch.

3. Commissioner Reports

- Gym Traffic Subcommittee w/Park & Rec. Commission
 - Mr. McDonough passed out the notes from the first sub-committee meeting.
 - The subcommittee will meet again on Nov. 16. At this meeting staff from Public Works Dept. and the Police Dept. will attend to answer questions regarding logistics and communication with the public.
- Friends of the Menlo Park Library – Mr. McDonough
 - The September Book Fair had gross proceeds of \$17,913. The Bookstore has raised \$16,932 and on-line book sales from July to October have gross proceeds of \$25,546.
 - The Friends have formed an advocacy committee in reaction to the potential impact of the new gym on library patrons. It is felt that the Library is overlooked and under-appreciated given that the Library and its services are used by a broad spectrum of the community.
- "Meet Your Commissioner" – Mr. McDonough
 - At the next Commission meeting we will be discussing starting up this outreach activity again. This activity was done a few years ago and it is

felt that the Commission would benefit from more direct contact with library patrons and potential library patrons. This activity can also be used as a venue for publicizing the Library's services.

- Commission meeting times – Mr. McDonough.
 - Ms. Hamilton, a new Commissioner, has a conflicting meeting on the evening that the Library Commission meets and asked about the possibility of moving the Commission meeting date. Mr. McDonough noted that the Commission could only meet on Mondays, Tuesdays or Wednesdays if it is to meet in the Library, as those are the evenings that the Library is open until 9:00 pm. It was also noted that to move the Commission meetings would require City Council approval.
- Menlo Park Library Foundation – Ms. Sloo
 - The next meeting of the Foundation will be on Dec. 1 at 10:00 in the main hall of the Library.
 - As Ms. Sloo will be out of town that day, she asked if another Commissioner might attend in her stead. Ms. Zara volunteered to attend the Dec. Foundation meeting.

4. Staff Communications

- Main Library Renovation news
 - Mr. Szegda reported that Library staff is currently waiting to hear when the exact starting date for the project will be.
 - During the renovation some materials in the Children's Section will be housed in the main Library's downstairs community room. This will have some impact to children's story times at the main library.
- The Jeff Kinney autograph event (author of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* novels) brought over 1700 people to the Library.
- The upcoming Barbara Kingsolver event will be held at the new Menlo Atherton High School Performing Arts center. It is expected that this event will also have high attendance. The Friends and Kepler's are sponsoring this event.

C. BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Future pursuit of additional funding sources for library

- A discussion ensued with these topics and facts mentioned:
 - The Library budget for the '08-'09 fiscal year is \$2.1M and has not increased over the past two budget cycles.
 - The portion of the budget allocated towards materials has not increased in several years. Material costs have kept rising, so the Library's purchasing power has decreased.
 - School enrollments across Menlo Park are projected to increase.
 - A needs evaluation of Library services seems necessary. What services are needed by segments of library patrons? Atherton has recently completed a library usage survey. It was suggested that the Commission look into the possibility of using their survey questions in a survey of Menlo Park library usage.
 - Parcel taxes were discussed.
 - a. There are 11,000 parcels in Menlo Park.
 - b. Parcel taxes are usually approved for specific purposes (e.g. the current MPCSD school remodeling is funded via a parcel tax)
 - c. Parcel taxes require 66% approval to pass.

- The City Utility tax was also discussed as an option as one of the selling points of this tax was that the extra funds would allow for the increase of library services.
 - A motion was made and duly seconded to form a sub-committee of Mr. McDonough, Ms. Sloo and Ms. Wangberg to further investigate expanding funding sources for the library. The motion carried unanimously.
2. Commission Communications with City Council
 - Mr. McDonough shared a draft of a presentation based on discussion in the October Commission meeting.
 - Commissioners felt that reporting to the City Council should be done more often and should feature Library activities as well as issues.
 - A special meeting will be held later this month to further develop the content of the presentation.
 3. Approve minutes – October regular meeting
 - The October regular meetings minutes were approved as corrected.

PUBLIC COMMENT #2 (*Limited to 30 minutes*)

Mr. Henry further shared his knowledge of his neighborhood. The Belle Haven neighborhood is a cluster of groups and the Belle Haven Neighborhood Association has contacts to those groups. Communication is an informal face-to-face process, as many residents do not have easy access to computers and the Internet. The neighborhood association was formed in the late 1950's and has between 30 and 40 active members – attendance at association meetings grows when there are issues of broad interest to neighborhood residents.

He shared that many in Belle Haven feel that their neighborhood is an isolated island within Menlo Park. Many residents feel that when the City has done outreach to the neighborhood that outreach has had a specific agenda (e.g. the Habitat for Humanity proposed housing, Bohannon Gateway project) and hasn't resulted in the community being heard. For example, at recent City sponsored outreach meetings, neighborhood residents asked for bus shelters. Instead of bus shelters, the installation of solar panels on the senior center roof was approved.

With respect to the Belle Haven branch library, Mr. Henry expressed that posted library use policy is written in a way that has made many in the neighborhood feel that they aren't encouraged to use the branch library. [Mr. Szegda noted that the sign in question had been posted by the school administration and has since been removed.]

D. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:40 p.m.

Next regular meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday, December 14, 2009 at the Menlo Park Library main branch.

Respectfully submitted,
Anna Zara, Secretary to the Library Commission