



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Date: 07/15/2024
Time: 6:30 p.m.
Locations: Teleconference and
Belle Haven Community Campus
100 Terminal Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025

A. Call To Order

Chair Orton called the meeting to order at 6:46 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Present: Herrick, Orton, Pollack, Westcott, Wise
Absent: Shafer
Staff: Library and Community Services Director Sean Reinhart and Management Analyst Ashley Walker

C. Public Comment

C1. Public comment

None.

D. Study Session

D1. Prepare a report-out to the City Council on the Library Commission work plan 2023-24 (Staff Report LC-2024-021)

The Commission discussed the following additions to the draft presentation:

- Collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Commission
- A closing slide to invite City Council feedback
- Photos and highlights from the Belle Haven Community Campus (BHCC)

E. Regular Business

E1. Approve minutes from the June, 17 2024 meeting (Attachment)

ACTION: Motion and second (Wise/ Pollack), to approve the minutes from the June 17, 2024 meeting, 5-0-1 (Shafer absent).

E2. Belle Haven Community Campus operation updates (Staff Report LC-2024-022)

The Commission received clarification on the types of suggestion box comments that are regularly received and how services at BHCC have been planned and adjusted since opening day.

F. Informational Items

F1. Library and Community Services department updates (Staff Report LC-2024-023)

The Commission received clarification on the data used to create the library heat maps by age group and on the amount of new library cards issued.

F2. Library Commission tentative agenda calendar

ACTION: By acclamation, the Commission edited the date on August's calendar item from 2023 – 2024 to 2024 – 2025, and moved childcare survey and library programming Literacy/English as a Second Language (ESL) to September.

G. Commissioner Reports

G1. Individual Commissioner reports

Chair Orton reported out on notes for the Library Commission 2024-25 plans and goals (Attachment).

ACTION: By acclamation, the Commission directed staff to agendize and discuss Chair Orton's notes during a future Commission work plan item.

Commissioner Pollack reported out on a Bike to the Library event scheduled for Aug. 17 and shared a desire to plan additional bike to library events.

Commissioner Herrick reported out on thoughts related to library science, Library Commission scope, bikes, concept of hyperlocal, "library of the future" and further additions for the Library Commissions plans and goals (Attachment).

H. Adjournment

Chair Orton adjourned the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

Management Analyst Ashley Walker

Suggested Edits to Plan Goals for -2024-2025

~~1. As an advisory body to the City Council and a forum for public information about library issues, encourage and facilitate robust public comment and participation at Commission meetings. Foster a public meeting environment that is inclusive of all members of the diverse Menlo Park community.~~

~~12.~~ Support and ~~advise-monitor program~~the development and ~~operation~~launch of the Menlo Park Community Campus (MPCC), focusing on library programming, service integration, and library policies within the shared space environment in the new facility, as directed by City Council.

~~2.3.~~ Support and advise staff on the advancement of overall library system improvements, including long-range planning for library facility improvements, as directed by City Council.

~~34.~~ Periodically review the library's public-facing policies and recommend updates, as required, with a special focus on policies that may be impacted by shared space operations at the new ~~BH~~MPCC.

~~5. Establish an understanding of and advise on the library needs of the community during emergencies. This may include a review of library policies and services related to adaptations made by the library in response to emergencies.~~

~~46.~~ Monitor any changes in how library users access the library, how library services may be changing, the impact of technology on the provision of library services, and how the Commission might help increase equitable access for community members.

~~57.~~ Periodically receive staff presentations and reports about major library service areas and programs and Commissioner liaison reports about affiliates. Maintain a 12-month schedule of planned Commission agenda items; update and post for public review monthly.

~~8. Support the filling of openings on the Commission and the effective onboarding of new Commissioners.~~

~~69.~~ Review and advise on updates to the department strategic plan and advise on any strategic plan updates made after the opening of the ~~MPBHCCCG~~.

~~710.~~ Annually review departmental budget proposal before presentation to City Council, focusing on any potential impacts to library services. Review and advise on potential synergies with or support from other City departments.

~~8.~~ Review and monitor the scope of library activities and services offered to each community age and interest group that utilizes library services at both the main library campus and BHCC.

Commissioner Herrick comments for inclusion in the Commissioner Reports agenda item of the July 15, 2024 Library Commission meeting

Topic: a brief report stemming from the June 17, 2024 agenda item D1. 2024-25 work plan study session

Why: the excellent and fruitful discussion in the study session produced some comments which we, as a commission, were unable to bring to a logical wrap, in the discussion. Additionally, Commissioner Herrick understood a few items/aspirations were addressed to his and Commissioner Shafer's area of professional training which could use clarification.

Comments:

- 1) **Library science:** an expectation seemed to have been expressed that commissioners Herrick and Shafer are positioned to lead or express significant ideas in a visioning and long-term strategic planning exercise we are contemplating for the coming year. I think this is true, to an extent, but two points need to be emphasized. A) Commissioners with legal and finance backgrounds are very well equipped, probably better than librarians, to lead a visioning and strategic planning process aimed at producing a truly long-term impact on our community. B) Library professionals employed by the City, who serve the needs of this actual community in a public library capacity, will contribute the most valuable ideas for growth and change within the Menlo Park and Peninsula/Bay Area library sector. I think Herrick and Shafer can serve a role in amplifying some of the professionally informed statements of City staff. One example springs to mind. Every community hopes that the public library might bring greater access to digital content, both in quantity and quality in the coming years. Rose Waldman's and Nick Szegda's comments at 1:38:00 to about 1:46:00 in the March 18, 2024 meeting should be highlighted (re:physical "traditional" carrier vs. digital carrier content procurement options for libraries). While there are some ways for libraries to partner with the for-profit sector to bring digital content to community members in affordable ways, they are currently limited. Time and again over the past 3 decades owners of digital content have proven they do not want to work with libraries in the same way in which libraries have had equal access to the purchase of content distributed on physical carriers. Open Educational Resources and similar open content initiatives will ideally grow in the coming decades but we, as librarians, continue to face an uphill battle vis-a-vis the digital realm's success in monetizing just about everything in often non-transparent ways. We, as a Menlo Park library community, are certainly physically situated in prime territory to advocate to the for-profit digital industry about this unfortunate, for libraries and the democracy which they nurture, situation.
- 2) **Library Commission's scope:** What I understand to be the defining feature of library services is that they are delivered via methods of free, equal and transparent access. A community needs money to do that but the key distinctions for library-provided services, as opposed to other community services, are these three foundational concepts. As we

define the Library Commission's sphere of activity and engagement within the entire Library and Community Services Department we might ask whether a service area contributes to one or all of those concepts and/or is the service contributing to the life of the mind and learning. The ways I have personally observed the library and other community services staff members interacting with the City's early childhood education programs, I think, qualifies for our Commission's interest and attention. The programs are not free but the ways in which the City has integrated learning and enrichment services into those programs is admirable and probably a model for how other publicly-funded education services should be striving to integrate and cost-save across total community services. There are probably other community services to which we might apply the library mindset and ethos as we think about libraries as agents in their communities for nurturing healthy democracies.

- 3) **Bikes:** I think I was not alone in wondering why Commissioner Pollack, toward the end of our discussions, brought up biking to the library as an element of focus for our commission. The recent Bike to the Library event and the Commission's expressed desire to think of services more broadly than just "buying and circulating books and DVDs" could bring a "bikes" topic into our long-term thinking. But, over the past weeks, as I mused on whether bikes and libraries are a natural fit, I began to wonder whether we should intentionally explore, in relation to library services, the concept of **Hyperlocal** which was recently introduced by the City in planning for the Belle Haven campus. Are there innovative options, when considering library and education services, we should consider which take hyperlocal activity or behavior into account? I understand, thus far, the City has used a definition of hyperlocal to manage fee collection for recreation and other services. The Library Commission may be wise to consider investigating whether there are any benefits to a hyperlocal approach in delivering library services in Menlo Park. When I went back to watch the clip of the March 18, 2024 discussion this month, referred to above, I was struck that the lead-in to the example which Commissioner Chen Rekhhi gave about digital versus physical carriers actually referenced a barrier to access which involved getting in a car in order to get to the library to get a physical copy of a book. The assumption in the ensuing conversation seemed to be that digital is the solution because digital is "advanced" and, in theory, more accessible if we can thread our society's profit-incentive needle in order to expand library access. But, with education recommendations coming in more and more forcefully in our community against prolonged screen time as a not-so-healthy behavior perhaps we might be wise to expand our investigating and visioning beyond a physical/main library-digital divide to question whether hyperlocal is possible and what that could look like in Menlo Park specifically?