

Manchester Public Library Board

Special Meeting Minutes

April 19, 2021

Board Members present: Joyce Hood, Grace Cedrone, Miriam Byroade, Karl Hasel, Ashley Odell, Mary Fischer, Heather Doucette

Not Present: Melissa Pattacini, Jessica Scorso

21st Century Library Task Force Task Force Members Present: Stephen Ristau, Thomas Sheinblum. Also present: Stephen Stephanou (Town), Doug McDonough (Library), Norma Nevers (Library).

Meeting began 7:05 pm

Clarification of requirements to take/post minutes on Task Force meetings

- Remember that if more than 2 Library Board members are present and discussing library issues, then a record of minutes required

Old Business Updates for the 21st Century Manchester Public Library Task Force

- Updated project plan sent out to task force members on 4/16/21
 - Will be amended to reflect that the Centerbrook study needs to be reviewed, not the Gisolfi study, for information obtained from prior public focus groups

Project Focus Area Updates

- Staff survey results reviewed
- Staff feedback validate the needs already identified by the task force and library board
- Doug thinks some of the feedback is really about design considerations, universal accessibility with good sightlines / “wide open spaces” but there are other implications (e.g. acoustics) that really are architectural considerations
- Doug and Norma did not complete survey, but added that we should also consider automated systems so that staff could be deployed more effectively; Better electrical is a must; instead of just one “children’s room” there should be enough space to differentiate by age/stage. Storage, storage, storage!! Being on a bus line and walking distance to a new building should also be considered as equity issues.
- Karl mentioned some notable features from the Wallingford Library tour including a large 'bookstore' for used books run by volunteers from which that library earns \$18,000 annually. In the Makerspace area there's a 'phone booth' that people can enter in order to have more privacy on their cell phone calls.
- Features were reviewed that library staff had pointed out as being common in other public libraries. Strengths and weaknesses of the current Mary Cheney building were examined and all staff surveyed thought that they could provide more and better services in a larger building. They also think the public has limited awareness of modern libraries

and there is a strong emotional/sentimental attachment to the current building among some residents.

- Next steps will be to conduct follow-up focus group with staff (Friday before Memorial weekend). Conduct community survey asap with the goal to clarify and prioritize needs.

Community Engagement

- Met with town communications department on 4/12
- Community engagement survey needs to be developed and disseminated asap
- Should be informed by staff survey, but should not wait for May staff meeting to put all the questions together and seek feedback from the community
- Additional thought needs to be given about strategies for dissemination

Comparable Towns Data analysis

- Mary shared data from the CT libraries database
- Manchester data about its building looks “worse” compared to comparable towns, both demographically and geographically proximal (e.g. MPL has lower square footage relative to usage, much older building, lower computer ratio, etc...)
- We do considerable programming despite lack of space and age of building
- High non-English speaking population and relatively young population, speaks to the community needs that a future building needs to meet
- Data and link to State Library database will be forwarded to task force
- Need to think about other data points and ways that this data can be used to make the case for new library

New Business

- Miriam suggested producing 1 or 2 video packages to detail the history of the library while making case that it is time for a new library to meet the 21st century needs of the community. Looking to leverage communication channels similar to what the town parks and rec department did when re-designing the parks

Community engagement sub-committee will meet on April 26, 2021 at 7:00 pm

Next meeting of task force will be on May 10 as part of the regularly scheduled library board meeting.

Meeting adjourned 9:10 pm.