

Weeks Public Library Trustees Meeting October 4, 2011

A special meeting to discuss architectural plans for on-site expansion of the Greenland Library officially began at 7:02. In attendance were Director Denise Grimse; Selectman John Vitale, Architect Cass Thurston; and Trustees Donalee Brothers, Mark Fodero, Dale Rockefeller, and Adele Wick. The meeting concluded at 8:50 with Vitale departing a little earlier.

Fodero began the discussion, asking Thurston for a review of the expansion plans he developed in 2005 (when of those present only Wick was on the board and Grimse had yet to join the library). Fodero was hopeful the Library could use the structure Thurston had created and build on it, funding a “ceremonial trust” and bonding the remaining expenses. First, though, Fodero said, the Library needed an idea of the plans, which would then be put out to bid. “Are they ready?” he asked Thurston.

Thurston replied that the plans need more details and specification revisions particularly but not exclusively because of changes in code requirements in the six years since he submitted the documents and drawings. However, he continued, a good contractor could submit a bid, but the Library would need to budget at least 10% more for contingencies. The age of the original building, which all present seek to preserve, means surprises are likely, and the site itself is awkward not only because of its size but also because of its contours and the rock that may be now hidden beneath the surface and would make construction more difficult and more expensive.

Thurston continued with an observation that, given the recession, the cost for his plan may be 20% less today than six years earlier (from \$1.6 mn to \$1.28 if my math is correct). Nonetheless, he noted, that because the existing building is old, everyone likes it, and it was well built, to match the materials (brick walls, for example) on the addition is not cheap.

“How far away, then, are we from a ‘final plan’?” asked Fodero. Vitale brought up not only the new codes but also the new technologies. Thurston said that providing internet access and the like was not that big a deal, costing in the tens of thousands, not more than that. He also noted that the original plan numbers do not include “soft costs” like furniture, nor do they include landscaping.

All agreed that communication with the town is hugely important. The Library needs backing from the town to get backing from the community. Everything, Thurstin advised, should be on the table. “There are limitations; it is not an easy site.”

In a sense, he continued, his plan involves two free-standing buildings. There would be some, but not a lot of restoration. Windows, however, could be changed. Light would be direct and indirect, new floors would be concrete with wood veneer, and sliding units are part of the plan.

Grimse remarked that the new children’s space is smaller than the current space, which is cramped. Thurston noted that eight columns now kill some space, and Rockefeller noted that some storage and machinery spaces that eat up some of the current space would be absent.

Thurston made the “wings” smaller so as not to take away from the visual power of the current building. But he was agreeable to the small but significant change that proposed extending the back walls about four feet – at the expense of some trees. Everyone present seemed to like this idea. It’s not a difficult change – “extending the beams, that’s all,” said Thurston. “It’s not increasing span, it’s just adding more material.” As Fodero emphasized, the Big Question is

whether or not the new building would be big enough. This change may make the answer “yes”.

Other modifications involved making the Meeting Room larger and separately accessible so that it could be used for functions while the rest of the library was closed. Interior doors can easily be locked.

Also easy is providing sinks in the children and meeting rooms.

Thurston also had a lot to say about how to control water in the basement spaces. Could the height of the ceiling be raised? Only by digging down farther, and the probability of doing so depends on things we can't see right now. Where's the bedrock? Could we drop the basement?

Grimse also questioned the plan's situating of handicapped entrance/exit. Thurston had placed it on the right rear because of land inclines. Grimse mentioned parking issues and how staff has used the ramp when carrying items, as have mothers with children in buggies. Thurston said the “grade” is key. All agreed, and all seemed open to moving the handicapped door to the left of the building.

Parking is usually an issue. If the School will share its parking lot, the town would need a lighted pathway connecting the lot and the library, and rights of way would need to be addressed.

Although the addition would be built with good insulation and LED lighting with some geothermal elements, maintenance costs would still go up. Grimse noted that staffing would as well – four staff would have to be present at all times, and, on weekends, the Library currently has only two.

Construction time would be six months, during all of which the library would have to be closed. A budget for storage would also need to be developed.

Other soft costs should include hiring a project manager and an architect to oversee the project. If we go with a “guaranteed maximum bid”, all books are open. This bid may include a 5% profit for the builder.

Respectfully submitted,
Adele Wick, Acting Secretary