

The Chester Library Board of Trustees held a Public Informational Meeting on Saturday, January 11, 2014, at the Chester Meeting House, 4 Liberty Street, Chester, Connecticut. Chairman Terry Schreiber called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM.

Chairman Schreiber introduced the Library Board of Trustees in attendance – Terry Schreiber, Sandy Senior-Dauer, Peggy Carter-Ward, Dennis Tovey, Robert Gorman. Others present included Linda Fox (Library Director), Ken Best (Architect with DRA) and Cary Hull (The Friends of the Library). There were approximately 60 to 70 people in the audience.

Chairman Schreiber indicated this meeting was to introduce the new concept the Library Board has been working on for the last 6 to 8 months. She noted this was just a preliminary step and concept. Things that still need to be done are test borings, various town approvals, funding, etc.

Chairman Schreiber noted there was a sign up sheet at the back of the room for anyone wishing to sign up for library activities and emails.

Chairman Schreiber introduced Dennis Tovey. Mr. Tovey noted he was part of the Expansion Committee a couple years ago and is now a Library Trustee. He indicated there were 3 concepts, two of which have already been presented to the public last year. Various concerns and resistance were expressed at that time, one being the compromising of the exterior of the building which was important. Tovey also noted that handicap accessibility was a requirement and was too far away from parking. The other idea at that time was a patio. The Board then asked Ken Best, architect with DRA, to go back and address some of these concerns. As a result of those discussions, a 3rd concept was developed.

Chairman Schreiber introduced Ken Best from the architectural firm of Drummey Rosane Anderson Inc. (DRA).

Ken Best renderings, the first being the site plan showing the earlier scheme. He indicated this is a small parcel of land triangular in shape. The parcel is so small the current circulation desk doesn't fit within the Zoning setbacks. The other thing that must be done with any kind of expansion is to update the septic system. He noted they finally came up with a design that fits within this triangular shape. The test pits showed sandy soil. Best indicated the current proposal is for an underground addition and further test borings are required.

Mr. Best noted on the west side of the building, the property line is close to the building and doesn't provide room for expansion. They are proposing an addition that is underground under the parking lot.

Mr. Best showed an earlier version where there was an addition on two sides of the building and the only thing left was the front wall.

Mr. Best then showed the second version that had an addition on one side of the building and creating a terrace area across the front requiring relocation of the existing granite stairs closer to the street. One of the concerns was changing the appearance of the front of the building. He further explained with the terrace scheme they were able to expand the lower level to accommodate more stacks and restrooms.

Mr. Best next reviewed the 3rd concept which was the underground scheme. There would be two additions on the first floor which he reviewed in detail. He reviewed the parking lot area noting the proposed addition on the lower level extends under the parking area. He noted there could be a couple of skylights to allow light to get down to the lower level. There could also potentially be a seat running around the outside of the skylights. (the skylights are still being debated.)

Mr. Best reviewed the adult area, the mechanical area, the young adult area, the children's room, etc.

He noted the ceiling needs to be under the parking lot and is lower than the existing ceiling so steps were added to get the floor lower in the addition for more headroom. This eliminates the claustrophobic feel.

Mr. Best noted retaining walls were added on the east side in order to allow for windows and natural light. It will not have an underground feel usually associated with a basement. This would allow for an exit door directly out from the lower level.

Mr. Best showed photos of existing conditions. He noted the building itself is generally in good shape. There is a fair amount of maintenance work that will also be included in the project for the existing building. The fireplace is now behind the circulation desk and will be opened up.

Costs for all 3 schemes were reviewed. Scheme 1 – additions on both sides of the building would be \$2.9 million. Scheme 2 – terrace addition would be \$2.9 million. Scheme 3 – underground would be \$2.8 million. It was noted the State Library has a Grant Program and they issue grants up to one million dollars for projects. There will be another grant round later this year and there the potential the library could be eligible for one million. It was noted there would also be fund raising.

Mr. Best reviewed the elevations for all 3 schemes. He reviewed proposed alternate entrances with the underground scheme as well as the paved terrace area with two skylights and seats. Best further noted the front of the building and the east side would remain the same. On the west side of the building, the underground scheme

would only encroach from the side of the window back. He indicated this scheme would keep much of the building untouched.

Steve Holmes noted the impact on the existing building has minimal impact but he has a couple concerns. How does one get natural light into the lower level? Mr. Best reviewed the grade indicating no retaining wall would be necessary. Holmes also suggested going out on east side on lower level as well creating a terrace above which would allow for natural light to come in on that side under the terrace.

Martin Nadel questioned the number of bathrooms. Asked why there couldn't be unisex bathrooms rather than having 3 bathrooms. Mr. Best noted the Building Code would not allow for that.

Square footage of stacks and seating space was reviewed. Mr. Best noted the plans are similar with regard to square footage, but functionality is improved with this plan. The circulation desk would be visible to outside patrons so staff would know who is in the building. Mr. Best noted the elevator location works out better because in earlier schemes it was tucked away in a back corner. People can find their way around the building a lot easier. The elevator and stairs are right there.

Mr. Best noted having the children in the lower ceiling area is a better use of that space as well. He indicated each of the age groups have their own specific space and there is easy flow between them.

There was discussion regarding the Church property vs. the Library property.

Mr. Best noted the building will be wireless so any table or chair if one has a computer will have access to the internet. He reviewed computer locations throughout the building. Best reminded everyone these plans are still conceptual and things can be changed.

Chairman Schreiber noted the Church owns the parking lot but the Town has had a permanent easement since 1984. If the Town does not use the building for the library for 3 years, the property reverts back to the Church. Schreiber noted the next step is to test borings in the parking lot. She indicated there are some legal matters that need to be worked out between the Town and the Church.

Marie Ann Heft asked if there were stairs to the children's area. Mr. Best noted there was a lift to that area.

Jane Henkind noted she lives below the library and has concerns about her property. She indicated she tries to be a good neighbor and not complain about things but this could become very personal. She was concerned they would run into a lot of granite and also concerned about her well. Ms. Henkind noted the last time

the parking lot was paved, the drainage went down into her garage. She was concerned about them digging in the parking lot and what it would do to her property. She suggested they look into the effect on her house, trees and drainage. Mr. Best noted as the project moves along, the civil engineer will discuss her concerns and issues.

Madeleine Meyer noted the addition looks like an outhouse. She noted a lot of money would be spent on testing and borings. She preferred the terrace scheme.

Mr. Best noted there would be room for more shelving and books. The aisles will also be more accessible. Skip Hubbard asked how many linear feet there was of existing shelving and new shelving. Best indicated he didn't have that figure but would get it. Chairman Schreiber noted this is primarily to make things handicap accessible for all.

Peter Coombs noted for years there has been discussion about whether to keep the building or move to another site. He indicated this scheme would mean there is a new base attached to an old building. It will not look like the old building. It is a difficult problem. His suggestions were as follows. Put the stairs and elevator in the back with a glass enclosure. He noted the new addition encourages people to bypass the old building, resulting in ignoring the old building. He suggested pulling the front steps out and putting in a terrace to make the old entrance the accessible entrance. He also didn't like the program space on the main floor. Ken Best noted the previous terrace scheme had that somewhat same plan except for the mechanicals. Steve Holmes noted he liked keeping the historic entrance.

Bruce Watrous noted not much is happening upstairs. Most people are going to be downstairs. He felt the upstairs was wasted space. He questioned moving the circulation desk downstairs. Linda Fox noted the upstairs would have new books, magazine, periodicals. There would be a lot on the upstairs that people would be coming in for.

Lori Lawrie noted she loved the underground plan. It maintains the integrity of the existing building. She agreed the small addition should look more than the original building. She understood the concerns about moving the circulation desk. She asked about switching the community room and the children's area.

Carol Horvath noted children are in school for most of the day. Currently there is no room to move around the library which the underground plan provides.

Sosse Baker noted she loved the plan and the handicap accessibility near the parking lot. She asked what it would entail to do a feasibility study taking into consideration the neighbors concerns. How much would it cost to do a more extensive schematic design.

Jean Davies noted this was a great job. A lot of headway has been made and she loved the venue. Everyone has given terrific input. She asked what the next steps and next opportunities would be for public involvement.

Dennis Tovey noted the next step would be to go to the Board of Selectmen and request a Building Committee be formed. After that, there would be a request of the BOS/BOF for design funding for 2014/2015. The idea was to get the geotechnical borings done in the spring. The Board of Selectmen said no to the funding for the borings until a community meeting was held. If funds could be allocated for this year, that would be great. Tovey noted the information on grants would come out in April and the application would be due in September. A decision would be forthcoming in November. Tovey further noted the BOS were hesitant to allocate money at this time unless there was community support.

First Selectman Meehan thanked the Friends of the Library and the Library Board for doing this 3rd concept. It was done with donations from The Friends. He noted the next step is for the Library Board to take a vote on this new scheme and then ask the Board of Selectmen for funding to do the test borings which could cost between \$5000 and \$6000. The Selectmen will then take that under advisement and refer it to the Board of Finance. The Library Board should then include as part of next year's budgeting process a request for possible funding for an RFQ for schematic design. This would then become part of the budget vote in May or June for 2014-2015. If approved, an RFQ would then be prepared and a Building Committee established. This would then go to referendum for a vote in late 2015. The Town should not spend the money for full drawings and then get turned down at a referendum.

Ken Best noted he wasn't sure the State Library Grant Program would go beyond this year. This should be verified with the State. He noted the end of August early September is a critical period for the Library.

Ken Best noted he felt the current plans were very close to being schematic plans even though they are being referred to as concept plans. It wouldn't take too much to bring up to schematic plans. First Selectman Meehan asked if they were sufficient for applying for a grant. Mr. Best replied yes with some refinement to the site plan.

The audience gave a show of hands in favor of the plan. Several were in favor with only 3 opposed.

Peter Zanardi noted the Church has not taken a vote on any of this to date. He indicated the Church will not vote on this until the Library comes to the Church Board of Trustees with a total plan. He reiterated the Church has not voted on anything yet. They have not okayed the testing for the borings either.

There was a brief discussion about possibly putting the addition/entrance behind the existing building.

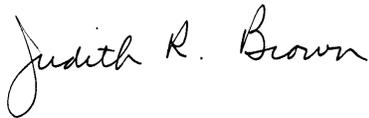
It was noted the grant application should be a priority because if this opportunity is lost, the whole issue becomes moot point.

Linda Fox asked those people who were opposed to the plan to contact the Library Board to let them why they were opposed.

Peter Zanardi asked if the concern was to save the building or give the people good library service. Several people agreed it was both.

Chairman Schreiber thanked everyone for coming and voicing their comments and concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judith R. Brown". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Judith R. Brown, Recording Secretary