

TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting of May 2, 1989

Mayor Walsh convened the special meeting at 5:00 p.m., with Councilmembers Chignell, Colteaux, Walsh and Zaharoff present.

2. CONDITION OF THE EXISTING LIBRARY BUILDING AND ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION, SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM.

Assistant Public Works Director Braun explained the structural conditions in the library, specifically that the library is an unreinforced masonry building, which is identified as a hazardous form of construction that is known to fail even in a moderate earthquake. The cost of a retrofitting package that would take care of the safety and liability problems was estimated at \$250,000. A temporary solution of tying the walls to the roof could be accomplished for \$100,000. The only other way to resolve the liability problem was to reduce the occupancy, essentially converting the building to storage.

Town Administrator Dickens reported that the staff recommendation was the library building be vacated as soon as an alternate location can be found, and that the library not be closed without another location. The possible approaches included that the Town rent space in town, or that the Town purchase or lease a relocatable structure and locate it on Town property. If latter route is pursued and property needs to be purchased, Dickens noted that the Town did not have the funds for such a purchase and financing would have to be obtained.

Dickens noted that the Historical Commission is in a portion of the building that is much safer than the main library. There may be some work that would have to be done to secure their rooms, but the museum can stay there unless the Commissioners want to move to a different location.

Staff noted that there was an objective supporting preservation of historical buildings in the General Plan. Dickens said staff was looking for direction from the Council on courses of action for short-term plans for the library. He said that staff did not need direction on long-term courses of action at this time unless the Council chose to give it. Concerning the short-term issue, the question was does the Town try to find a temporary location for the library or does the library stay as is until the long-term issue is resolved.

Braun confirmed that the \$100,000 project would take approximately two months to prepare and one month to construct.

Randy Cockburn, Chairman of the Library Advisory Board, said the Board has not had an opportunity to meet on this issue, but some of the Board members met with the Friends of the Library, and were in accord with them.

Virginia Richardson, Friends of the Library, said when the Friends met the previously Thursday, they reaffirmed their goal, which is to provide library service. They recommended that if the library is vacated, that it be moved into a space as close to the present building as possible. She said the Friends felt that the building was not only unsafe but inadequate, and that no money should be spent on temporary repairs until money is spent on a new building, adding that the Friends want to be able to remodel the building.

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Stephanie Kramer, a member of the former Library Planning Committee, asked questions regarding the extent of the \$100,000 remodel project. She said that according to reports she had previously read regarding the library building, there are currently no pilings, that the foundation is basically a concrete pad that is aggregate mix with concrete, without any reinforced steel, and that the walls are also not reinforced. According to a 1975 soils report, the library is sitting on clay and silt and the water level is 28" down. She questioned the advisability of the \$100,000 project of tying the roof to the walls without reinforcing the walls or foundation, and noted that completely rebuilding the structure had been the Friends' recommendation.

Sarah Nome, 77 Alder Avenue, said a water table 28 inches to 5 feet below ground is typical throughout the Town, and that buildings in the Town have withstood a few earthquakes. She suggested the Library may be eligible for receiving the funds available to the Town for recreational purposes under Proposition 70.

Cynthia Barrows, Friends of the Library, said Virginia Richardson spoke for all three library groups. She said they also wanted a timetable on reconstruction, adding that they are concerned that once the library building is closed, it could be closed for a long period of time, thereby losing patronage, and that it may be difficult to get the patronage back.

Susan Carlson, Historical Commission, requested assurance that the Historical Museum can be kept in full operation since it is in a safe location in the building.

Edith Stump, Library Advisory Board, also requested a timetable, adding that it would provide an incentive for them to move on this problem. She expressed concern about repairing a building when it would still be inadequate for library services to the Town, and advised the Council to be careful about spending money on repairs.

Katherine Coddington, Historical Commission Chairman, said that one option was for the building to be declared an historic landmark, thereby creating the possibility for historic grants. There was the option that funds could be obtained enabling the historical portion of the building to be used for the Historic Museum.

Ranald Cockburn, Library Advisory Board, suggested that funds could be obtained through the state library construction bond.

Dan Goltz, 107 Holstein Road, said that if the intention was to keep the building in its present form, the Town should do a seismic study. If the ultimate goal is to expand the building, what is being done is creating a strong cage for the existing building. He said if a future expansion is desired, it would not be prudent to fasten down the building, and he encouraged the Council to develop a library master plan.

Tannette Jaloff, 125 Santa Cruz, advised that Mill Valley had a similar situation in the 1930's and 1940's when their library building was declared inadequate. Rather than taking a "band-aid" approach, the city built a new library that became highly praised. She did not think that a "band-aid" approach would work for the San Anselmo library either.

Sarah Nome, 77 Alder, spoke out for the preservation of historic buildings, adding that she was a believer in

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maintaining what the Town has had in the past, and the library building has great sentimental value to her.

Colteaux said he felt strongly that preserving the Carnegie library building was worth the money, and did not think that preserving the look and feel of the library building was inconsistent with a modern facility. His long-term solution was to preserve the building, do an extensive remodel and expansion and change it into a combination library, historical facility and community meeting rooms. He felt it would be well worth the investment to produce a building that was reminiscent of the old building yet providing a modern facility. He said there will be an increment of money that will be spent that maybe would not be spent if they were not preserving the building appearance. He said housing the Historical Commission in the older portion of the building, with the library in a new part that is designed to be compatible with the old building was the most attractive solution. He supported making a decision about the long-term plans for the library at least in concept so that there is a schedule, and so that the library is not out of the building for a very long period of time. He said he was prepared to make a decision to save the library, expand the library, and use the facility for a library, meeting rooms and historical museum. His direction on the short-term would be to coordinate it with the long-term solution, thereby moving the library out only when it was feasible - when the wall strengthening project is ready to go and is coordinated with the overall remodeling project, and move the library out again when the larger project is ready to go.

Chignell said he was prepared to embrace Colteaux's comments. He noted that past reports on the library have recommended the building either be razed and replaced or substantially remodeled not only because of seismic issues but because of other structural problems and the building's inadequacy in meeting the needs of the community. He noted that the financing is a large issue that has not been addressed. He said a generous donation from the state would be essential for the construction project, particularly if extensive foundation work is needed, and that the Town needs to investigate aggressively the funding source for the extensive remodeling. He expressed concern about people being out of the building for quite awhile, and supported tying the short-term with the long-term decision, and not immediately rushing to move out of the building. He wanted to see staff work on project funding and whether it was viable to redo that structure for what the community needs.

Regarding the status of the library bond measure, Library Director Wingate reported that the guidelines for application will not be ready until September. She said the library could be closed during the one month construction time.

Sharp wanted to see more staff work on potential funding. He said he felt a strong commitment to that building, recognizing it needs substantial remodeling, but was uncomfortable about committing to the project without knowing the funding source.

Zaharoff asked for information on a comprehensive plan, noting that it could be a waste of money to reinforce the building only to discover that it was not structurally possible to enlarge it. She requested cost information on architectural costs, asked for a conceptual plan on whether enlarging the building is going to work and have it structurally safe, and the cost of constructing a new building. Regarding the short-term, she felt the Council had not been presented with that many options that have

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either convenience factors or money factors tied to them. She asked how feasible it would be to rent space from Drake High School, as was previously discussed, specifically whether patronage would be lost, how much would it cost, and is the space adequate. Are there vacant buildings in the downtown area that are available to set up a temporary type library, and if so, what is the cost per square footage. Regarding the idea of purchasing a portable of 1200 or 1500 square feet for \$1, she noted that it would cost between \$50,000 and \$60,000 to make that structurally feasible. Although that is a lot of money, that may make a lot of sense if they are able to retain that portable for other uses and if the temporary location is needed for a couple of years. She said she was reluctant to do the reinforcing project without knowing its affect on the long-term project, and that there were some very specific questions that needed to be answered and answered quickly before the Council can give direction on short-term plans.

Colteaux said the Council needed to know in a conceptual way approximately how much space everyone needs in conjunction with this decision and requested a short report and drawing on this question.

It was the consensus of the Council that more information was needed on the questions raised this evening, and that the sentiment was to save the old building within the confines of extensively remodeling and expanding it. The Council also asked for consideration of a timetable for the project.

Chignell asked staff to look into whether Proposition 70 funds could be used for this project.

Sarah Nome, 77 Alder, suggested that the Tamalpais Theater could be used for a library and parking, or that Drake High School could be used if the high school district closes that campus.

3. Adjournment.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Beth Pollard