

Meeting date: Saturday, July 15, 2017

Location: Open Space and Mountain Parks Conference Room, 66 S. Cherryvale Rd.

Commission present: Alicia Gibb, Juana Gomez, Joel Koenig, Tim O'Shea, and Joni Teter

Staff present: David Farnan, Library and Arts Director

Jennifer Phares, Deputy Library Director

Meeting start time: 8:28 a.m.

1. **Review master plan data collected to-date**
 - a. **Summary demographic and needs assessment information**
 - b. **Highlights from draft community survey and focus groups report submitted by JVA. Teen, Gunbarrel, and north Boulder focus groups and community and staff survey submitted by Trainer Evaluation.**
 - c. **Summarize input related to the draft Master Plan document structure and draft themes, outcomes, goals, and measures.**

Commissioners recommended that the Master Plan should:

- Include both short-term and long-term plans for capital and finance.
- Mention the partnership with the Latino Chamber of Commerce.
- Speak to the recreational aspect of the library. Reference any economic studies that speak to the collection as a free recreational resource. Emphasize that the collection is a capital item.

They requested that the draft Master Plan goals be presented for review at their upcoming, regular meetings. They discussed reaching out to potential partners, not just human services focused agencies. Contact more of the stakeholders invited to the community thought leaders dialogue. Ask potential corporate partners how they have contributed to libraries in other community. It is important to let potential partners know what the possibilities are for working with the library. The input from the staff survey about increasing workforce and career development may be a launching point for new partnerships. The commission would like to know more specifics about what staff intended for increasing or improving workforce and career development.

Staff asked the commission if they thought they have reached most demographic groups in Boulder through community engagement. Commission asked if more should be done to reach out to non-users. Farnan stated the goal is not necessarily to increase visits to the libraries. Commissioner O'Shea commented that there is anecdotal information from a smaller number of teen patrons, and that hard data is missing from the teen to young adult age group.

Commission recommended that the Master Plan include an explanation that library staff's role has shifted from research-based assistance to improving the user experience by being welcoming, acknowledging everyone, and assisting patrons with acquiring skills. Farnan was surprised by the large number of people who indicated they would vote for a tax increase to support the library in the community survey. He noted that hypothetical investments that respondents were asked to make showed that purchasing more physical media is correlated to age. Commissioner Gomez was surprised by the lower rating of library meeting their needs and the needs of the community by the senior demographic.

Commissioner Teter pointed out misleading information in the community survey report on packet page 46 referencing free parking. The commissioners agreed that parking is a hassle and barrier to using the Main Library.

The commission discussed individual comments in the survey related to the Canyon Gallery space not being used effectively. Farnan shared that the library's goal is to turn the gallery into an interactive program space.

Commissioner Gibb asked how the staff squares the results for conflicting requests e.g. more/less cultural offerings, meeting room space, etc. Farnan referenced the survey question related to how to spend library money saying that respondents' answers were probably not so focused on what the library needs for the community and that we also must consider investing based upon usage.

The commission discussed the disparity in ratings between benefit to the individual vs. a benefit to the community. Latino respondents rated benefit or value high but their actual usage is low. The commissioners discussed that there are social barriers for using the library present for both low income and professionals in this demographic.

Gibb remarked that she was surprised by lack of compassion in the comments related to issues with persons experiencing homelessness. Much of the feedback in staff survey and follow up meetings was that it is not the role of library to provide social services and something the city needs to address.

The commissioners discussed the recommendation for improving the library on page 73 of the community survey report. Making the library a focus point for community dialogue. Farnan remarked that to do this would be complex, there is no guarantee that we will succeed, and we need to figure out how much resources we want to put into it. Teter noted that there may be a practical issue to address since the meeting spaces are heavily used in the evening and that staff feedback indicated that library should be doing more. Farnan noted that the staff's belief that the library is a neutral place means that only neutral events should take place there. Some of the staff responses expressed concern with the library becoming a platform for dialogue, which may be due to the library becoming a venue for controversial discussions. Gibb said that if the library was the content creator for controversial dialogues that it may be problematic, but that if the library was simply the venue for discussion of any topics, it would remain neutral. Teter added that there may be some instances in which the library might want to be a content provider by hosting the discussion of certain issues e.g. the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan. It wouldn't take a position on these issues, but rather provide a place where community members could engage in conversation about the issues.

Farnan noted that marketing came up in every report and that best practice for marketing budget allocation is about 3-10% for nonprofits. The library's current budget for marketing is way below that. He said that it is important to understand what the objective of marketing is. Teter suggested using marketing to create awareness of the range of things the library does or has available for the community. Gomez and Gibb agreed and gave specific examples of issues with awareness (e.g. how/why decisions are made) that they heard at the focus groups they attended.

Gomez asked if the persons experiencing homelessness were included in the survey. Farnan said they had very low representation in the survey and are a very small user group. A few homeless persons were engaged during the Library Lab event. They had similar input to others with a heavy emphasis on inclusivity.

The commission asked for clarification from the staff survey about what they meant by "digital inclusion and workforce development" in the staff survey report.

Approximate end time on recording: 1 hour 23 minutes

- 2. Discuss options and priorities for expanding library services to other areas in the community and for the Canyon Theater and Gallery and maintaining services at Carnegie Library for Local History.**
 - Service expansion options:**
 - a. North Boulder Branch Library**
 - b. Services to Gunbarrel**
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c. Services to other areas

d. Canyon Theater and Gallery staffed rental program

The commission discussed maps showing demographic distribution and density that were in the packet and at <https://demographics.virginia.edu/DotMap/index.html> and <http://www.city-data.com/city/Boulder-Colorado.html>. Farnan provided an overview of his notes on library expansion (**Attachment D** in the packet). He asked if the commission was in favor of the community library model and said he would request a formal vote on their preferred option and the North Boulder Branch Library project at the Aug. 2, 2017 Library Commission meeting. Teter recommended stating the base level of service to maintain in each branch library and how it would be adjusted based upon density. The commission preferred the community library model over the central library and satellites model. The community library model prescribed expanding the North Boulder Corner Library into a full-service branch library and expanding library services to the Gunbarrel area through a “corner library.” They agreed that the “corner library” concept is a way to test the need for library services. Farnan and commission discussed finding partners to help offset some of the staffing requirements or the possibility of other venues providing meeting space, rather than the library. Relocating the George Reynolds Branch Library also needs to be mentioned as a long-range option.

The commission discussed the facilities changes that need to be made to expand the Canyon Theater rental program and the community’s desire to expand the makerspace. Further activation of the Main Library north building has associated capital costs which would need to be articulated in the Master Plan. Staff should conduct a cost analysis to activate the north building based upon Rick Epstein’s preliminary design, working within the current footprint and making the space dynamic.

The commission agreed upon the following main priorities: Main Library public restroom renovation, Main Library north building feasibility study, North Boulder Branch Library, Gunbarrel corner library, and renovation of the Canyon Theater and associated spaces within the Main Library north building. The commission recommends that staff explain the benefits of having library in a neighborhood area in the Master Plan and to request time from the city Planning Department to assist with articulating the library system long-term strategy for facility expansion.

Approximate end time on recording: 3 hours 1 minute

3. Discuss options for financial sustainability: City General Fund, Regional Library Authority, and Library District

Farnan said that financial sustainability is the lead argument of the Master Plan. Teter shared that the Master Plan should articulate how the library currently operates, what it does based upon service standards, the projections for services based upon growth, and the costs associated with the projections. She outlined the possible funding scenarios as:

- Continue as part of the City of Boulder organization with increased contributions from the General Fund;
- Increased property tax through a general improvement district or a regional authority in which the library is still part of the city organization; or
- Negotiate terms to separate from the city organization and become a library district with a larger funding base than the City of Boulder organization.

And, she noted that the current funding isn’t adequate to meet service standards and that the projections should be costed out under each scenario. Farnan said he would prefer to get direction from City Council to further investigate the last two options rather than immediately being made a district which would put the library in a difficult financial spot. Meeting certain service standards may be trigger points for selecting one of the latter two options within the next ten years.

The commission recommended making a case to City Council about how library funding has fallen behind and to understand if the library is a priority. The options for funding (including options for boundaries in the case of the last two options) should be presented to City Council and in the Master Plan with an estimated timeline and triggers. This is a positive story that should also describe how the library staff has reorganized and

reallocated the budget during the past few years to address community needs and now services need to expand to continue to do this.

Approximate end time on recording: 4 hours 3 minutes

4. Discuss library's overall partnership plan (no memo).

- a. Partnering with for-profit agencies**
- b. Expanding nonprofit partners including, but not limited to, partnering with agencies that provide service to persons experiencing homelessness**

Farnan asked the commission to weigh in on the library pursuing partnerships with for-profit agencies and how they think it would be received by the community. An example of partnering with a for-profit agency with an educational focus could be providing them with space at a reduced cost, and in return the agency would offer the equivalent of free programs to the community in the library's off-peak hours or they would staff the building, allowing it to be open to the public much later than it could otherwise.

Teter recommended describing the current partnerships and how they help the library, because the community may not be aware of it and it is unique for the city. She also urged that the role of the Boulder Library Foundation be included in the partnership plan to give the community a full scope of how it supports financial sustainability and has helped to cultivate other partners with the library (e.g. BLDG 61 programs). Farnan said that both the library's formal and informal partnerships will be described in the plan. The commission was in support of the library trying to partner with for-profit agencies that have missions compatible with its own, especially to activate the facilities during off-hours.

Farnan asked the commission to weigh in on pursuing partnerships with agencies that serve homeless persons at the Main Library. Gomez asked if the services would address needs or problem behaviors. Farnan clarified it is to address needs. Commissioner Koenig said in his experience with the long-term homeless is they know the services and where to access them. He doesn't see a need for the library to be a point for services focus on the homeless. O'Shea asked if the library has had conversation with agencies serving the homeless or a representative of/ liaison to the community to better understand their needs. He said that it isn't the library's goal or responsibility, that the city keeps punting on the issue, and that it is a significant issue for the staff and library, as heard in the survey and other feedback, that is going unaddressed. Teter noted that proposal from Bridge House [to provide case management services in the library] would provide more of the same services the homeless know about and are getting elsewhere. Gibb asked if staff members have an idea of what tools would help them in assisting the homeless. Farnan said their challenge is with assisting or dealing with patrons exhibiting behavioral issues related to substance abuse or mental health. Teter asked if having case workers in the library would help staff with these issues. Gibb said that helping people address these issues isn't what a library is set up to do or a library problem, and asked how we get the city to address this and take care of community members with these problems because it is impacting the library.

O'Shea said that it is an issue library patrons have identified as a problem and he is tired of "kicking the can down the road. If there are ways the library can contribute to a solution to this issue, it should. Gibb asked the commission if there is a partner that we want to bring into the library to deal with homeless issues. O'Shea said that addressing substance abuse or mental health issues is broader than homelessness and that he thinks a social worker is necessary so there is something between staff or security intervening and calling 911 to assist people exhibiting problem behavior. Gibb said she envisioned a partner invisible to the public who would get deployed out when a disturbance occurs. Teter restated the question asked of the commission by staff: does the library want to take an active role in providing homeless services by engaging a partner in the library to help address issues of homelessness. Gibb offered that she thinks the commission/library is doing a good job of partnering in a way that it is inviting other agencies to their meetings and telling them what would help the library, and by telling City Council what services the city needs to provide to homeless people (e.g. showers and lockers) and the library isn't the place to do that. She would like to see the library staff and commission continue advocating in this way. She doesn't think the library needs a person or a space dedicated to providing services to homeless people. Teter agreed with Gibb's proposed position and said the Master Plan should address the homelessness issue and lay out the library's perspective that it welcomes and is open to everyone.

O'Shea said when we are talking about issues of homelessness, they need to be pushed back to the city. The library will continue to serve patrons regardless of housing status.

Farnan asked if the library should take on the public perception of homeless in the library. Gibb offered that many survey respondents want the libraries to be inclusive spaces and that this is the issue that the library should address. Teter offered that the Master Plan should include examples of who library patrons are (much like the exhibit in the Main Library currently on display.) O'Shea cited the homeless newspaper, The Voice, as being compelling in that it describes the homeless community through storytelling. Teter suggested that this might be an opportunity for civic dialogue to address the community's fear around the homeless community. Gibb asked the commissioners if this agenda item could be wrapped up by the earlier proposed position. The discussion continued without further acknowledgement of Gibb's proposal.

[**Note:** the discussion transitioned back and forth between this topic and the next agenda item.]

Approximate end time on recording: 4 hours 49 minutes

5. Discuss options for addressing the community and staff perception that the libraries are not safe spaces (no memo).

Teter remarked that the teens we spoke to feel very safe and that it may be since they have their own space. Gibb noted that this contrasted with some of the feedback from parents. They perceived the library as an unsafe place for their children. The commissioners discussed that the perception of the library not being safe may be based upon past experiences of patrons before the renovation and before the library began working with police to step up patrols in the library. Koenig said that one person causing a disturbance is one too many, and that it may be a misperception that the people causing these disturbances are homeless solely based upon their appearance. Gomez asked if there should be more security officers and that it seems like what staff and patrons want is a reduction in the number of incidents. Teter recommended that the Master Plan describe what the library has done to improve safety (e.g. Main Library renovation) and current practices to address behavioral issues.

Teter pointed out that feedback from staff indicated that they are doing everything they can and asking for help to deal with a very difficult problem. Phares added that most behavioral issues with patrons in the Main Library are handled by contract security officers. We don't expect staff members to approach people if they are being very disruptive. Staff can call security or call the police. What staff don't like is to be witness to, or to be around the volatile behavioral issues. Koenig asked what kind of training the staff receives regarding safety. Phares said the city offers training on de-escalation and what to do if you encounter someone who is aggressive. O'Shea said the feedback still calls for a resource between staff or security intervention and police intervention that doesn't currently exist. If the city is going to own the library, then he fully supports the introduction of a social worker because the library is a social space where all are welcome. Farnan asked if this approach was in response to safety issues. O'Shea affirmed that it was. Teter said that if there are enough activities related to safety and community need (e.g. threats of patron suicide) that require intervention to address, then that's where a social worker could come in. O'Shea said he was concerned that the only tool is to push the behavioral problems out of the library. He wonders how it would be different if the staff had a resource to go to and ask if the behaviors they observe should be something that needs attention. Teter asked if it would be helpful to have someone trained to interpret behavior to be in the position of knowing the people coming in to the library. O'Shea asked about the qualifications of the current security officers. Farnan replied that the library employs the lowest-level security officers and proposed taking a whole different approach to security by hiring off-duty or retired police officers and social workers and having them at all locations, but not all the time. He estimated that this could triple the cost but would provide a broader spectrum of response. Covering the additional cost would have to take priority over something else the library does. Public perception and staff feeling safe is a relative concept.

O'Shea asked a series of questions about who responds to issues like overdoses, abandoned children, threats of suicide from patrons, etc. and said there is a gap that he thinks shouldn't fall on the library with the only option now to kick it out to an unknown. Gomez said she doesn't see it as kicking it out but of handing it off to

someone trained in mental health. You call 911 and they're trained to deal with a variety of issues.

Gibb asked if staff recommended any specific solutions. Farnan said some suggested hiring social workers while others said it is an issue for the city to address. Farnan said he thought there was consensus with articulating what the parameters are regarding what the library can provide to serve the homeless, and with a multifaceted approach to safety. His inclination is more vigilance with enforcing the rules and dealing with issues that may be prone to escalation (e.g. telling someone they cannot bathe in the restroom). Teter asked what would help staff/security be more vigilant and feel safer to address these issues. Farnan replied he would like more funding to hire better trained security personnel (i.e. retired police, etc.) and social workers. Over time it would make the staff feel better and might begin to change public perception, but he is not certain it will help homeless people. Teter asked for direction from staff as to the priority of using more resources to address a perception or comfort problem and if it will be effective. Gomez said it may be important to highlight to the city that this problem is unique to the library.

Farnan asked the commissioners what bothers them the most: the public's perception that the library is not a safe place or the staff's feelings. Gibb, Koenig and Teter said the staff's feelings were of greater concern. Teter said the public's perception isn't really affecting library usage or attendance and she doesn't know if we're going to be able to change it.

Approximate end time on recording: 5 hours 19 minutes

6. Review project schedule and discuss October study session, project updates during monthly meetings, and need for additional meetings.

Phares explained that the current project timeline would not allow adequate time for the commission to review and provide feedback on the draft plan. The commission supported extending the project completion date to February 2018, and that a study session be requested with City Council prior to submitting the plan for approval.

Approximate end time on recording: 5 hours 51 minutes

Adjourned: 3:10 p.m.

Commissioner Gibb approved these notes on August 20, 2017; and Maureen Malone attested to it.

An audio recording of the full meeting for which these notes are a summary, is available on the Library Commission web page at <http://boulderlibrary.org/about/commission.html>