

**CITY OF BOULDER
BOULDER, COLORADO
BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS MEETING
MINUTES**

Name of Board/ Commission: Library Commission	
Date of Meeting: October 16, 2017 at the Main Boulder Public Library, 1001 Arapahoe Ave.	
Contact information preparing summary: Maureen Malone, 303-441-3106	
Commission members present: Joni Teter, Juana Gomez, Joel Koenig, Tim O’Shea Commission members absent: Alicia Gibb	
Library staff present: David Farnan, Director of Library & Arts Jennifer Phares, Deputy Library Director Maureen Malone, Administrative Specialist II Members of the public present: Jorge Boone Martin Boone	
Type of Meeting: Study Session	
Agenda Item 1: Call to order and approval of agenda	[6:05 p.m., 0:00:00 Audio min.]
The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. Koenig moved to approve the agenda, and Gomez seconded. All in favor.	
Public Comment	[6:06 p.m., 0:01:20 Audio min.]
Though public comment was not on the agenda for the study session, commission opted to have a conversation with Jorge Boone and his father, Martin Boone, for further discussion on the email Jorge had sent to City Council regarding transients in the library (see handouts). Jorge recounted the negative experience he had at the main library on Saturday, and suggested that perhaps there are design initiatives that could be taken to eliminate some of the issues. Teter addressed the complexity of balancing inclusivity and safety, and explained that when it comes to the question of safety, commission is trying to separate behavior issues from perception issues. Staff provided information on the computer usage policy and how library rules are enforced. Commission thanked Jorge for bringing his concerns to their attention, noting that this discussion is particularly timely considering tonight’s agenda and the master plan process.	
Agenda Item 2: Commission to discuss crafting a statement in support of the homeless services for the Master Plan	[7:52 p.m., 1:46:44 Audio min.]
Commission discussion, questions, and comments included:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teter commented that she would not feel comfortable endorsing the homeless strategy as a whole; the weakest part of the strategy is where it impacts the library the most; she would like to know how Human Services plans to address the people who don’t enter the system, and what ‘moving them along’ means. Teter added that commission should reiterate their stance that anything the city can do to provide places for people to sleep, bathe and store belongings would be helpful to the library. • Farnan suggested that commission draft a statement that does not require a wholesale endorsement of the strategy, but rather calls out some of the things that commission is in favor of and believes have the potential to address the library’s needs and help the homeless; this can also include a request for the city to provide public restrooms and storage options. Teter added that commission would like to continue to have real dialogue with Human Services about these issues, particularly around how to handle the transient piece. 	
Agenda Item 3: Commission to discuss addressing the public’s perception of the library as a safe and welcoming space in the Master Plan	[6:35 p.m., 0:30:30 Audio min.]
Teter created a diagram separating out behavioral issues vs. perception issues to help guide discussion on this topic (see handouts for typed version of diagram).	

Commission discussion, questions, and comments included:

- Teter asked staff what problem the draft goal to ‘create a plan to address safety and security in all facilities’ is trying to solve. Phares replied that the goal is about security and safety; staff is doing an analysis to determine the peak times security is needed based on incidents and looking for more highly-trained security personnel. This goal is about safety procedures in general, not behavioral issues, and there is not currently a goal specifically to address the perception issue. There is a goal around creating community dialogue and staff have discussed focusing on this particular issue to start those conversations.
- Koenig wondered whether staff has considered doing a focus group consisting of people from the homeless community. Phares replied that a homeless person at one of the community open houses suggested this as a way to get advice on library programs for that community and how to address some of these issues. Another suggestion was to work with Human Services to put on some programs to introduce people to who the homeless are in our community – their faces, names and stories – to help people see them as people.
- Gomez commented that homelessness is not the primary issue; the issue is the behavior that is un-librarylike. Farnan added that you cannot ignore the fact that there is overlap between the behavioral issues and the homeless community; however, half of the homeless population in Boulder County are families with children, and the members of the homeless community that get into behavioral issues are a small minority of the portion that come to the library.
- Phares suggested that there could be a goal to assess the different areas of the library to see if there are opportunities to improve certain design aspects; the booths were designed with the intent that everyone could be seen and see others, but the area is not being used as expected. She added that the proposed restroom renovation should to some degree help mitigate the issue of people bathing in the restrooms.
- Teter stated that the phrasing of the goal around safety and security suggests that there is a problem around safety, but the numbers don’t indicate one. Phares replied that the safety issues being addressed by this goal are more around routine review and update of basic procedures, not to address behavior issues for safety; she proposed that the building safety items could go under the organizational readiness goals since they’re more directed to staff.
- Koenig wondered whether staff could put a time restriction on the booths where people tend to congregate. Farnan replied that he’s not sure that the booths are consistently occupied by any one group; however, to Jorge’s point, congregations of people are an indicator that police look for in the case of certain illegal behaviors. Phares wondered at what point you cross the line into discrimination – how do you differentiate between a person congregating with their friends who may look homeless and a group of students congregating to study or socialize? Teter asked whether the same rules would apply to the tutors who occupy the tables on the second floor all day working with students. To David’s point, Teter stated that there is a difference again here between perception and behaviors – phrasing congregation as a signal of illegal activity associated with problems the library has faced in the past is easy to defend; trying to avoid a perception issue because sometimes people congregate in a place and it makes certain people uncomfortable is much murkier.
- Farnan asked whether the library needs to increase the severity of measures taken when people violate rules, or find someone like a social worker to come in and help people find other avenues. Without having a social worker in place, Gomez wondered how much of an imposition it would be on staff to kick out everyone who is caught bathing in the restroom. Phares replied that it would require significant resources to have someone monitoring the restrooms. O’Shea suggested that it would be helpful for enforcement to have permanent signs posted in the restroom clearly stating the policy against bathing. Gomez added that the signs could ask patrons to report violations to staff.
- O’Shea wondered if staff has a count for reports of bathing and sleeping incidents. Phares replied that staff has the number of suspensions for those types of incidents, but they would need to go through the incident reports for each day and tally the number of incidents involving warnings. O’Shea stated that he would like to have a clear sense of the real issue before changing the enforcement policy.
- Teter wondered what message the library wants to send – on one hand, this is a place where everyone is welcome, but if we start asking patrons to report issues, will that feed into the perception of the “other” and make things worse? Any increased enforcement around policies should be preceded with some community dialogue to explain the intent to reduce a friction point.
- O’Shea recommended that in a space the size of the main library, there should be two security officers.
- Teter commented that increased enforcement of the no bathing rule seems complicated because there would need to be some kind of reporting mechanism that would involve patrons, as well as male and female officers to go into the restrooms; she wondered whether there should be a master plan goal to investigate how to make this work.
- Commission supported stronger enforcement of sleeping incidents, while maintaining a warning system.
- Farnan pointed out that Jorge never used the word “homeless” in his email; he referenced “transients”. In Boulder, the issue with transients is the sense that their transience entitles them to some type of ownership; homeless and transients are two very different issues.

Agenda Item 4: Commission to discuss whether the library should create a plan for providing additional services directly for homeless persons [7:58 p.m., 1:53:05 Audio min.]

Farnan asked commission for their thoughts on having a dedicated space in the library, similar to the teen space, with the intent that it would be primarily for homeless usage. Commission was not in favor of this idea.

Agenda Item 5: Commission to discuss the library's value that everyone is welcome and how it impacts the resources and services the library provides to the community

Agenda Item 6: Commission to discuss if it recommends the library host or facilitate a community dialogue or panel discussion to educate and brainstorm options for problem solving the community about homelessness

[7:41 p.m., 1:36:30 Audio min.]

Commission discussion, questions, and comments included:

- Teter stated that silence would be inappropriate if the library is going to get tougher on enforcement of rules. She suggested that it would be helpful to have a dialogue that lifts up these issues in all their complexity; this is a place where everyone is welcome and that's going to mean friction, particularly around certain populations. She added that it will be important to carefully select a person to help the library facilitate these conversations.
- O'Shea stated that if the issue is perception, stepping up enforcement is an easy way to respond to the wrong problem. He expressed support for a bigger dialogue, possibly on an Ignite Boulder stage, where the survey results in which participants indicated that "[some people] don't belong in the library" are presented and the audience is asked to replace [some people] with teenagers, African Americans, poor people, elderly people, etc., and see how it feels. Phares commented that the intention could be to raise this issue and increase awareness; there could be different approaches to reach different audiences, i.e. a letter to the editor, blog post, or newsletter article.
- Gomez commented that it may help people feel safer and more secure if the dialogue provided a framework of the rules that exist; if patrons are abiding by the rules that are being enforced, then there is no issue.

Agenda Item 7: Update on and discussion of plan for Nov. 28 City Council study session

[8:08 p.m., 2:03:42 Audio min.]

Farnan stated that he intends to send out a draft memo by the end of next week to get individual comments from commission; staff will then incorporate that feedback into the draft prior to the November meeting. Staff groups will also have an opportunity to give some input before the deadline to submit materials for the study session packet.

Agenda Item 8: Adjournment

[8:11 p.m., 2:06:56 Audio min.]

There being no further business to come before the commission at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Commissioner Teter approved these minutes on December 19, 2017; and Maureen Malone attested to it.

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