

Bethlehem Public Library Long Range Planning Meeting April 9, 2020 8:00am Transcript

Attending Names of attendees:
Geoffrey Kirkpatrick
Catherine Stollar Peters
Chris McGinty
Kevin Coffey
Kristen Roberts
Robert Khalife
Mark Kissinger
Harmeet Narang
Lisa Scoons
Brian Sweeney
Michelle Walsh
Paul Mays & Lisa Hayes, Architects

B. Sweeney: Okay, so shall I call us to order? Welcome everybody. A couple of points of
(9:28) business to begin and then I'll turn things over to Paul and Lisa to walk us
through the document that you sent us. Which we've all had I think we've
all had a chance to look at. The first thing I just want to mention is as most
of you know my term as trustee is ending at the end of this season.
June, I think would be my last meeting is that right?

G. Kirkpatrick: Yes. [nods]

B. Sweeney: And so Harmeet has graciously agreed to step into the chair role for the
long-range plan committee at the end of this month so I think that would
officially happen at our Monday April 20th board meeting. That we could
officially make that change so thank you, Harmeet. I just wanted to make
everybody aware that that would be happening. I'll still be on this
committee but Harmeet will be chairing it.
Second just looking ahead at the long-range plan timeline so after
today's meeting the next thing I have on our timeline Paul and Lisa, is Paul
a half-hour update at the next board meeting which is Monday April 20th
[P. Mays nods and confirms] and then the next board meeting update
would be two months later June 8th, also a Monday.

P. Mays: I have both of those. Presumably they'll be remote until notified
otherwise.

B. Sweeney: Right. And in between that we just need to schedule the May committee
meeting which I think we can do at the end of this meeting but we'll need
to agree on a date to meet in May which on the timeline you gave me has
our agenda item reviewing solutions.

P. Mays: Right. [nods]

B. Sweeney: So that is all I have for logistics and so I'll turn things over to you Paul and to you Lisa.

P. Mays: Okay, well thank you. We will endeavor to try and go through these. You've had a chance to review them so they shouldn't be completely new to you, but to explain some of our thinking behind these items---- In a way we've jumped ahead a little bit. These are not solutions yet; these are not the reviewed solutions but they're sketches that put ideas on paper. Architects like to have things on paper for discussion purposes otherwise we could spend the next few months talking about "what ifs" what if we did this or that.

But so a little bit of a prologue I want to make sure that everybody understands and agrees a few things: First of all we're providing three or four different solutions that have varying levels of intervention here. These sketches, but that's not all of them. We still need--- when it's safer to travel--- to go visit the Borthwick house and talk about the potential use of that building. As all cards on the table, everything can be looked at and all things have value at the beginning. So we're going to examine that again when it's safe to go in terms of protocols for travel and so forth. So it's coming up. You know I assume we can visit that when it's just us and maybe Kevin can let us in or something to that effect but at the moment we're still staying home as much as we can but we'll set that up.

The second thing that I wanted to say---- and I'm already guilty of it----is not to call these sketches solutions. I explained this when a few of us talked the other day none of these is going to be the final scheme we know that we're putting them on paper for the purposes of discussion to talk about how effective any of them might be at addressing the primary considerations and priorities that came out of the public meetings. We're lucky in terms of timing that we got the charettes and the "we heard you" meetings and so forth completed prior to the crisis that has shut down so many other things. We have a few libraries that spent money advertising for those very things and then had to cancel them so we're lucky we had all this and could start looking at some things.

So with your permission, we're gonna walk through these we may go a little quickly to make sure that we leave time at the end but if you would bear with us then we will come back to any of the screens and then talk about what they mean in more detail if you wish. Does everybody have a sketch of the site up on their screen now?

M. Walsh: I do. [nods] Michelle.
(14:23)

R. Khalife: I do.

M. Kissinger: This is Mark. I do.

P. Mays: [laughs] Okay excellent.

The first screen is really just a sketch exercise---- part of what we call constraints and opportunities. In other words, it looks at the site and establishes what are the things that we're working around, that's probably the easiest way to think about it. So if we know we're not tearing down the existing building ----at least in large part maybe small pieces---- we know that's an existing. We know that the parking has been established and although it requires some fixing at the knoll and some other areas that's already a set piece if you will. There are also underground utilities and so forth as well as things like property lines and meets and bounds.

So, having taken all those things into consideration what we're doing is looking at in this case five or six areas of potential addition. Again to be absolutely clear we're not advocating that we build out to the footprint of every one of these 1 through 5a pieces we're just showing where the potential is to construct additional square footage for the building without infringing in a major way upon the existing infrastructure and pieces that are there. So you can see Delaware Ave is at the bottom, Borthwick is on the right. Item number four----

[audible feedback]

I'm sorry? Item number four is actually the location of the Borthwick house and I will say it's it struck me as we were looking at this that's actually narrower than I was picturing in my mind. My gut reaction was that that gave us a little more flexibility than it actually does. The reason for that is that on the north side---if I move my cursor, do you see this moving----There are utility lines that run through here so water and sanitary sewer and so forth. And if at all possible, we'd like to avoid having to interrupt those but in my mind I was thinking we could go out to the sidewalk but you can see we're cutting a good 10 to 15 feet off to avoid those things.

So in general, this is just an overlook at the property what the opportunities are and where we can feasibly expand without interrupting too many other things. The other thing I'd mention is the lawn area up

here which has been graded and it also appears to have stormwater management which would also be difficult to relocate given that we're essentially filling the entire site with building parking and so forth with a few green spaces left in order to allow for infiltration so---- We'll talk about some of the strategies related to specific areas of addition when we look at the sketches as we go but are there any other questions on sheet A?

Pretty self-explanatory?

[pauses]

Okay great. Anything you would like to add Lisa?

L. Hayes:

Nope I think you got it all.

P. Mays:

Okay sheet B is really because parts of sheet A hadn't been updated with the last plaza but they could it shows us a little more detail and in fact the potential for an idea of an item on the Borthwick property.

[audible feedback]

Is somebody talking or? No? it keeps sounding like somebody's trying to jump in and I I don't want to over talk anybody so okay.

One of the things you see here---- again north is to the top of the page---- is the potential on the Borthwick property that a structure might be constructed there that is separate, an annex building to the existing library. It's been our experience that that typically does not work well for things like staff or administrative staff because of the remoteness that's created both physically and philosophically; there can be an 'us versus them' thing that comes out of that. We've seen it at a few of our libraries where they had that existing and in fact one of the priorities becomes getting those people more involved in the building. But the potential is there to create another building that has a separate function that might be things like the maintenance shops the various pieces related to ongoing site upkeep----

L. Hayes:

Outreach-----

P. Mays:

And we could be doing outreach things there as well.

It's even possible that it could be a separate building with a meeting room and restrooms that could be open even when the library is closed in the same way that existing meeting rooms can be open after hours but it's just an idea. It's also possible that instead of a new structure that's actually the Borthwick house if we found that it was suitable for certain functions or reusable in some way. The other things to talk about--- particularly in the northwest corner up here--- are the potential for an addition in this location to do a few things:

One and primarily, is to cut down on the distance of travel from the parking lot through the plaza all the way down to the entry. Right now that's one of the key points we've heard from a lot of the public is how far it is from here even though the plaza is lovely to get to the front doors. Now the distance obviously is still the same from here to here but if this were infilled with an addition, it gives us a chance to make that interior space which gives us square footage but also protects that accessible pathway---- meaning that although the same travel distance a lot of it's indoors and the perception is that it's a shorter distance because you've gotten indoors quickly but we've also taken away a lot of the liability because of the ice and exposure to elements.

The other key feature of something that happens here--- and we'll talk about different ideas of what that might be---- is the potential to connect to the lawn area; that is that an addition here has the opportunity if any of you have visited for example the Seiji Ozawa shed at Tanglewood with big barn doors that open into the lawn---- so you can imagine if there was a meeting room here you could have a concert and it could be open in the evening you know on a summer evening to a concert in the in the lawn area or children's programs that go directly to the outside and an open space. So trying to make more of a connection to the site primarily because the existing building is so inwardly focused. These are opportunities to try and express a connection to the outdoor area. As we know there are other parking things--- the knoll we talked about, where the book drop gets located---- there are lots of things to work out but we just wanted to talk about those general ideas here.

[turns to L. Hayes]

Do you want to add anything to that?

L. Hayes: Moving the bus stop-----

P Mays: Moving the bus stop was another one. If the bus stop moves over a little bit it cleans up a drop-off area and so forth but again, we'll talk about that with individual sketches as we go. Are there any questions on on sheet B?

H. Narang: Yeah, Paul can you hear me okay?

(22:01)

P. Mays: I can.

H. Narang: Yeah so just to get a sense of scale, how far past the current cobblestone patio area are we pushing? I guess that would be in the, in the westerly direction?

P. Mays: [moves cursor]

Here?

H. Narang: Yeah.

Bethlehem Public Library Long Range Planning Meeting April 9, 2020 8:00am Transcript

- P. Mays: That's probably 30 to 40 feet from from the existing paved walkway. Each of these spots is probably 9 or 10 feet wide so---yeah, I'm gonna say 30 or 40 feet to the west. Again, this is a very sketch idea at the moment it's not certainly not set in stone but it would add space here but take away some of the lawn area at this end but leave this, so a good question.
- H. Narang: Okay and that resulting interior space that we're adding is very roughly then what, 50 by 80?
- P. Mays: Well that if that's probably from here to here [moves cursor] that's about 40 so you know let's call the overall this is probably about 100 by by 30 and then another say say 30 by 40 so 120 and 100 by-----
- L. Hayes: Yeah, I haven't figured out the square footage yet.
- P. Mays: Yeah, it's it's probably at a guess 4,000 square feet or so.
- H. Narang: Okay, that's fine.
- P. Mays: Keep in mind this is very sketchy---- this wasn't done you know with a scale and setting----you know this is just looking at it and and literally sketching. We might be able to tell a little more as we look at the individual sketches when we can proportion it against other pieces.
- H. Narang: Okay.
- B. Sweeney: Question about the bus stop moving: Would the bus stop still be off set off of the road to leave a path for cars to get by when a bus is sort idling, is that the idea there or would it be because I can't quite tell if it's...
- L. Hayes: Yeah, we would have to figure that out---
- B. Sweeney: Okay. [nods]
- P. Mays: We would have to figure it out. There's a drop-off here where the curb cuts back to the sidewalk but exactly where this gets located and keeps access here depends in part on what we maintain in the existing building at that location. Part of what we were trying to address was the idea that when you enter this parking lot the first thing you see is sort of the maintenance garage door and the bus---- Yeah it's it's not intuitive where the entry is because it's all the way over here around the corner---so by pushing some things out here into facade that that is closer to the entry. We're trying to make things more obvious and we're trying to clean this area up in the same way but the the final details we'll have to think about.
- B. Sweeney: Okay.
- P. Mays: In---You should have sketch C on your sheet now and what we're---
- L. Hayes: This is existing-----
- P. Mays: This is the existing layout, if you will, so you know nothing surprising here. You all understand how the building works. From the entry we had the L-shaped corridors here that make up the entry lobby, entry into the library proper, we have the meeting room wing with the children's story time, the large meeting room, the boardroom and the studio. And then above this area that's dashed is this mezzanine.

The mezzanine--- I'm sure most of you are aware---- but it's a it was popular in the 60s and 70s to do this kind of structure: Colonie has one, The Southern Adirondack Library System Headquarters building has one; it's essentially a shelving system with integral metal posts columns that hold and support the mezzanine floor above but it's all an integral system which means you can't simply take out a few of those columns for convenience. So you've seen that when you if you've been upstairs in the staff workroom that's up there it's just a forest of columns even though the shelves were taken out, those posts all have to remain.

Now we have an interesting thing we're doing out in Auburn at the Seymour Library that has a similar smaller scale version of this where we've taken out what we're doing now is taking out the shelves and creating little niches or reading spaces but that's in a public area---- this mezzanine, it would take a stretch for us to recommend public occupancy of the upper level because of the site the supervision issues the intuitive usage issues and so forth. So we'd be more likely to try and put staffing or public meeting space up there rather than patrons being up there in collection or niches or reading areas -----but that's one of the things we're looking at is what's the potential if we're really going to modify the layout of the main floor and/or make big changes to the way the library functions, this we might decide that this system is something that is constraining us and is worth the cost to remove and replace with a more traditional system that gives us flexibility where we can change the direction of shelves, we can create more spaces and we don't have the forest of posts.

Sheet 1 is the first idea to sketch and I'm gonna have Lisa walk us through some of the ideas here. Remember, this is the layout that we were working with, here's your existing entry so as we come down here you can see that this is an example of one of those infill pieces at area 5 that was on the original site sketch.

L. Hayes
(28:01)

This first one, one of the constraints that we kept in place was the transformer that ----so we thought let's leave that see what happens if we leave it and you know what what kind of impact that makes on entry or other other functions and so that transformer has to have air flow all the way around it so we couldn't build right up to it so what we did is we have a covered walkway so in theory you could enter under a portico and you're you're covered by ----you know from weather ----but you would still get the airflow around the transformer and you could have windows into whatever this space is so there you have at least an experience and a door that's closer to the parking lot then all the way down here----

So we create a weather vestibule and then you this the red dotted lines show you this is where the existing set of doors are so you---we've added to the lobby space but we've added something a little bit more dynamic. We've placed the large meeting room space right here so that there's windows here that you can see from the parking lot there will be something vibrant going on and there's windows and doors here so that you could gain access to the green space a large amount of storage space and the kitchen that could serve this and also serve potentially a cafe or a lounge and you could act the meeting room spaces could also access this kitchen.

We've done a little bit of renovation over here where we've sort of opened up this kitchen -----maybe it becomes more a craft or storage area for the medium-sized meeting room----- we left the small meeting room here, we left the studio, and we actually turn this into a sort of a medium sized conference room instead of the children's program room because what we did is we added a children's program space directly to the children's over here slightly changing the entrance from Delaware Avenue but we've also created a door connection here so that it's right off this this main lobby space so ----this could be used after-hours for some other function rather than just the children's storytime room.

P. Mays:

Now I'm gonna stop there for just one second---- these are still very early sketches and one of the things we'll be talking about as we go forward with ideas is how they get phased. Phasing---- usually what we try to do is look at the end result and then work backwards----- where are we trying to get so let's make sure we're doing everything that leads in that direction and then what are the pieces we can break off of it rather than working forward to it because then sometimes you create something that has to be changed later.

So if we stop right here where we were, this addition alone as a piece by itself does several things: it cuts the entry length from the parking lot by now cover we have covered canopy out here or portico, it adds a large meeting room -----which you can see is larger than your existing large meeting room----- in fact, this large meeting room makes your existing meeting room a medium sized meeting room. We've kept these two---- This could even stay children's--- for now-- you don't have to do this work but having done that, if this stays Children's you now have a small meeting room, a medium meeting room, and a large meeting room; As well as a lounge space out here additional gallery space and so forth---

And we've done that whole addition to address several things: the the idea that the amount of public gathering space is overbooked and not easy to obtain, the amenities that go with it ----like the kitchenette----and

making the lobby area more welcoming instead of just a corridor widening it into a lounge type thing where people can----- it's a cell phone friendly area perhaps it could have laptop counter it could have coffee service if you wanted----You could do it as a concession or you could do it--- When we visited Wisner Library we saw even the Friends of the Library were selling Keurig cartridges as as a fundraiser for example.

The other thing this addition would do if it was a Phase One let's say, is give us this as a staging area so that as we get into renovations in this area, it can move---- they can move here while we renovate that space and then move back, and then the next thing moves here and then moves back--- so the addition of this space in a Phase One even if we didn't do anything else gives us extra meeting rooms, closes the distance to the parking, and gives us staging for future phases. That was the idea behind it---although again, a formal phasing plan is something we'll look at when we get towards the end and work our way back.

Lisa mentioned the second addition which then brings the entrance a little closer to Delaware Ave making it a more apparent entrance and adds children program storytime right to the children's library. Another thing we would want to look at potentially might be a family restroom off the children's area---- that that would involve some trenching to get the plumbing across to this area but that would be an improvement for the children's room as well.

So those are the first two pieces and then Lisa why don't you walk us through some of the others----

B. Sweeney: Li---Before you do that---

(34:13) P. Mays: Oh, sorry.

B. Sweeney: Can I ask two very quick clarifying questions?

P. Mays: Please.

B. Sweeney: So just to be clear: the the suggestion to change the children's story time to the conference room—that---the dimensions of that room have not changed however right it's the same size or is that also expanded?

L. Hayes: Right, the only thing that we're suggesting is take out the the restroom that's in there just to gain some more space up at the entrance and basically take over some of the storage for this room and then give some of the storage to that room.

B. Sweeney: Great, thank you. And on the other question, I noticed that in the collections area both here and on a previous slide we have nonfiction here over to left and fiction to the right which is the reverse of how things are now is this a suggestion by you about switching those or is that just a misprint or-----

Bethlehem Public Library Long Range Planning Meeting April 9, 2020 8:00am Transcript

- L. Hayes: No it really---- when we get to that area the fiction is usually more dynamic and we would want to have lower shelves so make it feel more like a book store or browsing and just by opening up this whole area taking the columns out, we can you know arrange that in any way possible. I think some of this area would probably still say fiction but I think we want to try to move it in this direction----
- P. Mays: At least the face toward the the fiction area----
- L. Hayes: Right.
- B. Sweeney: Great, thank you.
- P. Mays: But generally a nonfiction collection in terms of its atmosphere lends itself better to rows of stacks than the more retail aesthetic associated with the the fiction collection so we might flip those to give prominence to the fiction collection and and keep the nonfiction a more traditional staid. Excellent question Brian though that that that's that is a good point.
- L. Hayes: So if I if I continue on with the children's ---I haven't-- I think we would look in more depth with children's staff at how to rearrange this area but well what we did do is put some glass along the whole edge of this area for sound. That was that was a big comment in some of the the staff interviews and that way we've we've also then continued on to glassing off this space. [moves cursor]
Right now you have some study rooms but we've made a large separate teen space but also has a glass around that as well and the YA collection would be close, part of it would be inside part of it would be out here just because there's some adults that like to browse that collection----
- P. Mays: Graphic novels and so forth.
- L. Hayes: And so media and new collections would be here, relocate the "things" because this area----
- P. Mays: The Library of Things.
- L. Hayes: Right. This area here right now is your CDs and some music and your "things" and we wanted to gain some space for staff and pull the Circulation Desk from this point out into this space here so we've taken over this space and so we've we've started to put some mobile units here and into this big area. What we're doing over here is saying, yes let's take out that the system that you have in place spend the money to get rid of all the columns in there and have a wide open usable space. We still left the existing elevator where it is but what we did----
- P. Mays: In this sketch---
- L. Hayes: In this sketch, but what we did is we created two new stairways up and expanded that area so that when you jump over to this upper floor you expand it by double. And what that becomes is sort of the staff work room space, IT server because I've moved them from this location because this location is sort of prime real estate for for the study rooms, for the makerspace down in this area.

P. Mays: (38:40) In fact after discussion--- with this other day--- we're actually thinking these two offices would more likely go upstairs which would allow this to open right into this addition which has then study rooms, lots of glass, a lounge area around it and opens right to the original building. So the study rooms that are here essentially move out to the perimeter here and give us more space so that when you come in, you're looking right down at a lot of glass and light. Literally a destination.

The makerspace gets more prominence then. And if some of these offices move upstairs in the space we gained, it's not just the mezzanine area now but it climbs out into this addition which was one of those infill additions so the mezzanine is essentially twice as big as it used to be so that's why we have two exit stairs as well as the elevator out here. But again, our anticipation would be that public is not likely to go upstairs unless invited by staff or for a specific interview or whatever the case may be. But you can see overall a medium-sized addition and three small additions that could be sequenced---- most likely this one first and then these as time goes on.

The big disruption is going to be here taking out the that existing system because obviously that's right in the middle of the library, that that would be the biggest disruption overall. But this does gain several things and still allows ---you can see here---- a future edition which we're not even showing on this sketch but it has the potential to continue to add into the Borthwick property area.

I'm mindful of the time---- it's 8:30 already--- so I'm gonna move us on if that's okay and we'll we'll come back if there are other questions. And let's just look at this one as a slightly more sophisticated version of what we just talked about.

L. Hayes: So what this one does is, I said okay let's just assume we can take the transformer and move it wherever it really needs to be on the site----

P. Mays: Architects do that all the time that's why engineers hate us. [laughs]

L. Hayes: [laughs]

But what it does is it provides you with an entrance pretty close to the parking lot---and it provides you with a much larger space over here, and we've shown it as a large meeting room space and this--in this scheme.

And what it does is it also allows us to add a little bit more room to the staff area here and the same thing we grab that that space that exists now but we've also reconfigured where the entry would be---- so you come in and then there's some glass doors and some some glass sort of a bump out here so that you come in and you're really close to the middle of the space.

We still left this entrance here, but now but your line of sight starts to get a little bit more welcoming as soon as you walk into the building. We've got some glass and doors into this space--- we can still have a gallery while here but then it opens up so that you can see through. And then here we've really highlighted your Library of Things in this area or it could be new and popular materials.

P. Mays: But there's even a bay window if you will out into the lobby so that--
We're again trying to explore that idea of getting the outside in and the inside out so that you're looking through into other spaces. You see light, you see movement, and things happening---

L. Hayes: (42:27) and what we did was we we we basically took out the staff break function and we moved it over here on the same same level, and there's there can be a connection here to to a small staff patio; we we did a restroom, we did a kitchenette; lockers and mailboxes would be there, that we did a kitchen that still could be accessed from from both the big meeting room and all the other meeting room spaces, and we we left some storage in that area. So the other thing we're doing is we're creating some glassy areas into the the—

P. Mays: —What's now your meeting room

L. Hayes: —the existing meeting room space, and what we've done in this one is said, 'why don't we make a physical connection with some glass and some doors and maybe make this the children's program room or storytime room;' it still could be the medium meeting room but now there's there's a better connection here but it still can be used after-hours, you can close off the library. And in this one, we added a little bit—

P. Mays: —Conference

L. Hayes: —a little bit bigger addition but this could be a conference room, it could be it could be an enlarged—we left the studio I think—

P. Mays: —That storage is there—

L. Hayes: —okay—

P. Mays: —but some new version of the studio—

L. Hayes: —some new version of it or—

P. Mays: —that takes account for what actually happens there.

L. Hayes: —or a book sale space so there's a little bit more flexibility and we we still maintain this as a conference room but we we renovated a rest room right off the children's program rooms, or whatever meeting room is going on, you can just use this rest room as well.

P. Mays: And it's in the back. So again let's look at this in phases, this does involve the relocation of the transformer to some other spot on the site, but a small addition here actually adds to the back of house space, this adds the large meeting room, this one's even larger than the last one, and then we have small meeting room—this one primarily designated for children's but it's a medium sized meeting room and a conference room and another

conference room, so same sort of strategy that these things could happen if we're willing to concede that the connection for the children's library to the children's programs is sort of across a hall. It's a more direct connection than is there now but it is still separated by public space, but you can imagine one of the priorities we're trying to emphasize is that you do story hour not just for the literacy and the entertainment value but to have them access the collection before and/or after story hours, so we want families instead of going out and leaving to go into the collection, that's why we usually try to make them as proximate to each other as possible. Let's—again it's coming up on 20 of but let's look at the other two additions and the mezzanine. This also anticipates the removal of the mezzanine. I just wanted to point out that from circulation we can see this door, this door, we can see down into this addition and Circ and Help Desk also have cross support.

L. Hayes: The the other thing this location does is you can see all the way down—

P. Mays: —Yep.

L. Hayes: —to who's coming in, it's like—

P. Mays: —from Delaware.

L. Hayes: —from Delaware as well.

P. Mays: Directly from the circulation desk, yep.

L. Hayes: In this scheme we we made in the new addition over here we made a new elevator so that we could clear out this area for those lines of sight so that's—

P. Mays: —Now from—I apologize—

L. Hayes: Yeah.

P. Mays: —from this door you can see straight back through all the way all the way through the building because that elevator has been moved, and then you can also see all the way down into the same sort of idea we have talked about here, with lots of windows and lots of borrowed light glass on the inside of these study rooms and so forth, so we're really opening up the space even more. And again, remember these are just sketches so say the idea of moving the elevator might be able—even if we liked more things here, maybe there's a way to move the elevator here the same way we did here, so that we can we can sort of pick and choose in some cases the the improvements we're trying to make and combine them into what works best. But why don't you walk through the other pieces?

L. Hayes: So in this scheme we did we did offices around the perimeter and we made a larger space in the middle. One of the comments was, you know, some kids use these for homework but at times you want a larger space for SAT so they can gather in this space all in in one at one time rather than going over to a medium meeting room. So we've sort of taken advantage of that and then in some instances we had a desire for smaller rooms and bigger rooms but they could be divided or you know opened up or closed depending on, you know—

Bethlehem Public Library Long Range Planning Meeting April 9, 2020 8:00am Transcript

P. Mays: [unintelligible]

L. Hayes: —how big a group you you had. And then mostly same thing on the upper expanded level—

P. Mays: —IT, offices.

L. Hayes: —IT, offices, some shared workspace, some single offices so that can all be, you know, figured out, it—but it we were just showing a couple different layouts of what can happen up there. In in these schemes are are are sort of going in order of sort of a minimal renovation to a much larger—

P. Mays: —Yeah.

L. Hayes: —renovation. So—

P. Mays: —We're upping the scale each time. Yep.

48:05

L. Hayes: — so each one of these has the potential for a future addition where you get—in the first two schemes you get a lot of what you were asking for, and then—

P. Mays: —Well, what the public's asking for—

L. Hayes: —Right.

P. Mays: —let's be clear about that, right?

L. Hayes: Right. The public. So when we—

P. Mays: [unintelligible]

L. Hayes: —when we jump to this to this third one we thought, 'okay let's shake things up a little bit.' If we do a real a large meeting room on the Borthwick site, it—you're gonna have to have an entrance to the library over there, and you're still gonna have the same amount of staff so you're gonna need to sort of consolidate that line of sight so that you get this other set of entrances...

P. Mays: As well as the existing.

L. Hayes: ...as well as the existing. So what we decided to do is is maybe take the kids and move them over into this addition and what that does is it provides for this large enough space to do a program room, story hour room, with glass right adjacent to it; you could still access it from the lobby if you if you wanted to have other groups use it at other at other times, but then there's—what it does is there's a lot of glass here, there's a line of sight between the children's and the Circ desk and then the line of sight to Reference so that everybody can still see all the entrances of where everybody's coming into the building.

P. Mays: We we didn't speak specifically the other day about this so Geoff and and and Chris and Kathy we don't anticipate in these schemes that it would be an increase of staff in any of them from our perspective, but we need to talk in more detail about that. What we've tried to do is maintain the same number of workstations but provide cross coverage as we've talked about in strategies in other libraries. One of the things this one does by moving children's over here, which is a strategy that that some

libraries employ, Colonie for example has sort of a separate children's wing, but it does mean that checkout has to happen at this desk. In other words you would have to check out here because otherwise people are going potentially out before they go through to the main Circ desk. So children's staff would have to do checkout and/or self check at the children's desk. The other thing this connection provided was a children's connection to that lawn area so rather than a meeting room opening into that, it's now the children's area that opens into that. But it still gives us not just the children's library and their program space but one, two, three meeting spaces again and the very large meeting room up here. So this entry comes from Delaware and you can see we have room to even do a little bit of a Plaza out here, although it would be similar to the plaza you have now in the back because it's long. But having said that, your—we do have the opportunity to put a sign and trees and benches and really emphasize the entrance to the library from Delaware Ave in a more prominent way than it is now and it brings us up to this central lobby here or from the parking here, so we have a large meeting room and restrooms, this can be open after hours and these pieces can be open after hours because the children's room can be locked off. [unintelligible] yep.

L. Hayes: Yep. So what we've done now is we've we sort of left nonfiction sort of where it is but this whole area now can be fic the fiction collection and rearranged, have some some reading room spaces, we we still want to maintain access to the to the children's garden. We've created a much larger teen space in in this scenario and then we've also created a series of study tutor rooms off of this area, off of this area, off of this area, so they're sort of spread out throughout the library.

P. Mays: Which might be appropriate for adults looking for quiet reading areas or reserving a a space. In other words, study/tutor rooms are not just for school-aged children there there are lots of reasons to reserve small rooms like that and now we've given opportunities around the building sort of for that to happen. Can we go to the upstairs—

L. Hayes: Yeah

P. Mays: —it's about a quarter of.

L. Hayes: So when you go to the upstairs, that area of the mezzanine can be another pretty pretty large meeting room or it could be divided into say a classroom or seminar, we'd we'd do some room dividers, so when you come upstairs from the elevator or from this stair you're in a much larger lobby, and then most of this here would be for staff but there's two restrooms for public up up here, one restroom and staff break room up here. We're moving IT, maybe building storage, but it's mostly gonna be staff above the meeting room space.

P. Mays: Now one thing a decision that would have to be made fairly early on is whether this classroom seminar space is is something we want to do.

Obviously we added meeting space here. This would be another opportunity, however it would also save money to simply take that structure out; remember this is the mezzanine structure here and leave that open as a two storey space from below, not infill this—that would save some money—and it would also mean that the public would have no reason to be upstairs at all. Now it is just staff up here, whereas if these are public meeting spaces, if we decide we really need them, we do have to make sure we maintain a threshold here with that staff are beyond that door and the public is kept out into this area. So that that might be one of those budgetary things we think about and the reason I say the decision would have to be made sort of early in that scheme is, this is not a space you're gonna want to retrofit into that hole later. So once the mezzanine comes out to do this you're gonna want to decide then, is this gonna happen above it, or is it not? You know, we can keep pricing it or looking at options up until that point but that that's one area that that that could go either way. So I said I wanted to leave about 15 minutes; it's 8:46 by my clock. Does anybody have any comments? We're not looking for anybody to make a decision, let's do three, I mean that that's not what we're saying, but are there ideas or concepts, are there questions recognizing that we still want to look at the Borthwick house; and the other thing that we're going to do just so that we have covered all the bases is look at not doing any additions; what would we do to just rearrange things in the existing building? But as you can imagine that involves some real sacrifices because you you can't add something without taking something else away if we're gonna work with a net zero gain. So there are things we could do to improve the library certainly within the footprint and that'll be one of the things we provide in the master plan, but it won't be doing some of the things we've been talking about like adding meeting room space primarily, unless we're sacrificing something else. So I've I'll bring us all the way back to the first sheet and if anybody has any thoughts or comments please please share them, but we're gonna continue to develop these based on on what you're thinking. I I guess I'd also say if you have comments over the next week maybe get them to Geoff and Brian and they can forward them to us, yeah that's a lot to absorb in a—you've had it for a couple days but you don't have to have everything right now, if something occurs to you we're happy to keep looking at things.

B. Sweeney: One thing that does occur to me is that the third and largest model does separate the children's area from the children's reading plaza—

56:23 L. Hayes: Right.

B. Sweeney: —by quite a distance.

L. Hayes: Correct.

B. Sweeney: So I would wonder if we would want to move the gar—the plaza or repurpose that space and or—

- P. Mays: and yeah no that's your your talking about this—
- L. Hayes: Right
- P. Mays: —area here you're right which has traditionally been that now—and that's a question we come across sometimes: was that a Memorial thing or named for somebody and how open are they to potentially recapturing it in a different location?
- G. Kirkpatrick: Yes it was and and maybe they would be but—
- P. Mays: Okay
- G. Kirkpatrick: we don't know we haven't we haven't broached that obviously.
- P. Mays: right and don't until we've decided it's something we really want to do; that's not a can of worms you want to open if you don't. But but you know we have done that in other places where where a family has contributed to something and and we say we we're going to create a either an equal or better thing over here with your permission; in other cases people are set on that that's where it is and in that case you're right Brian, it's it's remote from from where the children's area actually is. It is accessible I presume from Delaware Ave though, right? Is Isn't Delaware along—
- G. Kirkpatrick: It is
- P. Mays: [unintelligible]
- G. Kirkpatrick: Yep. It is
- P. Mays: Yeah
- L. Hayes: Yeah
- P. Mays: so it's out in here. So I mean it would still be very visible, whereas if we put it back here by the children's room it might be more usable for the children's library that we created but it wouldn't be as visible from Delaware Ave, so there are merits to keeping something here and still doing something out here or both, but you're right that's a consideration.
- M. Walsh: Also I was wondering: I don't see a lot of potential here for natural light with all the meeting rooms being closed off on the on the the outside bounds of of your sketches. Is it—am I missing it?
- P. Mays: Just about every addition where—
- L. Hayes: Yeah
- P. Mays: —where there would be windows sort of all along here and then glass on these inner walls as well, so they would—there would be a lot of light. Some have more than than others, so for example, here's a glass wall directly into this lounge area whereas in this version it's borrowed light from the outer windows—
- L. Hayes: [unintelligible]
- P. Mays: —to the inner windows. There is glass at the ends there. The other thing is that with the additions we can also talk about, you know, how you have the the feature above the center now with the the clear story, the high glass space that that's an option out here potentially out here or even out here but but certainly at this end putting putting glass above the lobby above above this space is an opportunity up high as well. But we—you're

right, we've been talking about trying to maximize glass but even within existing spaces potentially adding glass around some of the perimeter spaces that don't have it now.

M. Walsh: Alright. The only other thing I was wondering was I thought I had heard the staff mention a need for extra storage—

P. Mays: Mm-hm

M. Walsh: —and I didn't I didn't see any designated extra storage; it looks like you have garage and storage, had had you added anything any extra storage?

L. Hayes: in in each one of the spaces we've increased the footprint of that—of most of the staff areas, and we haven't specifically laid anything out yet, but there's a—there's enough room I think in each of the schemes where I actually have designated in this one there's there's a whole building storage up here, in—but if if this area here wanted to be storage and all the workstations are out here we can definitely do that. There's enough space but we just haven't designated it specifically for that.

P. Mays: As the general rule we try to build in storage in the areas where they're actually needed rather centralize storage rooms.

L. Hayes: Right.

P. Mays: Centralized storage is good for things like building maintenance and overall infrastructure, but for staff work areas and particularly program areas, our preference is usually to you you took the tour with us Michelle I think right?

M. Walsh: Yes

P. Mays: —and and saw in those activity rooms and those meeting rooms we had built in pantry cabinetry for example around the perimeters—

M. Walsh: [acknowledgment]

P. Mays: Paul: it's so the floor just right there at hand so we're not showing the furniture layout in those areas but they would very likely include lots of individual storage like that. But as Lisa was just saying we could also then designate some larger central storage areas in addition to the ones we show. Storage is, except for ... storage is a priority for everybody.

M. Walsh: Yeah, thank you.

P. Hayes: You remember that?

M. Walsh: Yes.

H. Narang: All for the the large meeting rooms, I guess just in your experience, have you found an effective way to subdivide those rooms so that you can have two medium rooms when you need to and and convert it back to one when you need one? And I've seen some systems that don't work, have you seen systems that do work?

P. Mays: The short answer is no and and and I'll tell you—yeah there are—the technology has gotten better in terms of those dividable—those partitions that come across, the the moving wall partitions, but I'm sure you've been at seminars or banquets or weddings in a in a conference center and the

room next door starts applauding or cheer—it's fine if it's two similar functions but if you have, you know, goat yoga in one and then you have a children's sing-along in the other, there is no way that those partitions acoustically separate each other, even the even the higher-quality expensive ones. The other—and I'm not saying it's impossible, we do do them sometimes when it's absolutely a necessity—but the other thing to think about is sometimes depending on how you do reservations, reserving half of that room is the same as reserving the whole room, because if you if you give away half of it, now it can only—only another another group the same size can take the other half. You've taken away a large meeting room for half the function. So we try to avoid them in general; it also has some logistical issues because you need to be able to exit both of them and have access to restrooms from both of them when it's divided even when the rest of the building's closed. So we have done it, I'm not saying it's impossible, but I would say we we tend to try to avoid it because we don't think they're very successful. We've been in a lot of libraries where they say, 'yeah we've got these foldable partitions, we haven't used it in 10 years'—

H. Narang: Yeah.

P. Mays: —that's been our experience. I can be I can be convinced otherwise if if somebody said, 'no, here's why we absolutely need to do it,' but it wouldn't be my first approach, I would say.

H. Narang: Yeah, understood.

L. Scoons: I just had a couple questions about shelving and office space and I wondered if we had...I'm not sure that we have an idea I'm sure—maybe probably Geoff does and the rest of the team. How many how many shelving units we have currently, how many we would like to move towards, and then also on the same in the same vein office space, some of these seem to have a lot more office space laid out than others, and I wondered—because I'll be honest, I don't know how much more need—I mean, are we short on office space? Do we need more? Less? I don't know so, just a couple of questions.

G. Kirkpatrick: The short answer is we're short on office space.

L. Scoons: Okay.

P. Mays: Paul: Overall yeah. Some are some are too big and some—but more are too small so from a net I I would agree with that 100% that you're short on office space now. Collection we we've started an inventory of all the shelving. We look at shelving by lineal footage rather than square footage because we're just trying to determine the capacity, and as you can imagine, you know, a James Michener novel is that thick and Dr. Seuss is this thick, so to us it—the collection size in terms of number of units doesn't matter, it's the lineal footage of shelving that matters for each collection. So these are just sketches as we were saying but as we develop these more we will have a comparison for each section, so it would say

“adult fiction,” “adult nonfiction”—these are the existing lineal footages, these are the lineal footages provided in this scheme and we would do the same for children's areas, for the Library of Things, for media, music and so forth.

H. Narang: Paul would that would that before and after comparison also include office space and meeting space?
1:05

P. Mays: Yes. Again when—we've been working from home, which is why these are literally sketches but very often what we have on the in the corner of the drawing is a little spreadsheet column that that lists each space, says what it is existing or maybe it doesn't exist at all right now, and then what it is future and then has a net whether it was a an increase decrease or or a wash. So again that that's all part of how we'll explain it going forward. We just wanted to take advantage of our time at home to be working on something that can actually move this forward, so we've done that part, but we're, yeah, we're gonna have to be in the office to to use a little more sophisticated stuff to calculate those, but but it's definitely part of these as we go forward, yes.

L. Scoons: And I would think we would want to do the same thing with the the study tutor space cuz that's obviously something we've heard a lot about, as well as some of the computer space, I don't know, I haven't had a chance to really compare—

P. Mays: [acknowledgement]

L. Scoons: —or whether it's all more, less—

P. Mays: Okay.

L. Scoons: —just reoriented, it's hard for me to tell just in—

P. Mays: Sure.

L. Scoons: —looking at these.

P. Mays: It's certainly something, yeah, when it comes to the point of garnering public support, whether for a fund raising campaign or a referendum or whatever it may be, those are absolutely things that we would show. I didn't think of it for this morning's meeting and and you know we had to keep it short anyway, but next time if you'd like or in the interim I can send it to you. We did for Guilderland, for example, literally number of meeting rooms in the existing, and number that we have now, number of, you know, number of seats in meeting rooms, number of hardwired computers, the collection sizes for each one as well. So you're you're absolutely right, it's just something we haven't gotten to at this level of sketch detail.

B. Sweeney: If I can jump in with one one more question also about the final, the one that is up now, the final the the third model.

P. Mays: Okay.

B. Sweeney: I just in looking at it I really like how all three designs take line of sight so seriously, I really commend you for that and I think it's really just wonderful, you know, the security of patrons, particularly younger

patrons, is very important to us for many reasons. The only thing I notice on the third model is that in the children's library the children's desk seems to have limited sight lines into the children's area itself including towards an exit and so I just wondered—maybe that's just the way it's sketched and maybe it's, you know, but I wonder if you could comment on that.

L. Hayes: You're you're absolutely right I was gonna bring it right around the corner like the circulation desk and I'm like, 'no, I'm just gonna leave it like this for now,' so—

P. Mays: [unintelligible]

L. Hayes: —yeah, it's—

P. Mays: And and I would say in children's libraries in general—

L. Hayes: Yeah

P. Mays: The exit doors are alarmed and we use something called a delayed action—

L. Hayes: Egress

P. Mays: Egress, so you push the bar but it takes fifteen seconds for the door to open. So the alarm goes off and the door doesn't immediately open and that's partly for ambitious children but it but it's actually primarily for things like non-custodial parents or other people sort of slipping out a door with children. So yeah, it it's it's a security issue all the time. Sight line is the first line of security from our perspective, so you're absolutely right we want to play with where that desk is, but beyond that there are physical things that we would put on exit doors particularly from children's areas, yep.

R. Khalife: You know the one thing we need to keep in mind: COVID-19 may change the way we interact with each other, ways we don't know yet how it is, so
1:10 this looks very crowded to me at this point. This is like pre-COVID-19 kind of framework. We don't know going forward what's gonna happen.

P. Mays: No we don't know, that's true, I've actually been participating in several statewide and more local conversations about what this means for the future of library services. Tim Burke and I had a long conversation just the other day as a matter of fact and if—if I—I'm not downplaying you're concerned, I brought up the same exact issue that this could change in some ways the whole philosophy of what we accept as gathering space, as as community. On the other hand, you do see people desperate to get back into a, you know, a public situa—you know, people—the evidence when I drive by somebody's driveway and they're standing six feet apart in a driveway in lawn chairs, you know, just so that they have some human contact. So I still think some of the things we talk about are valid, creating smaller reading niches rather than large open spaces where you're right next to somebody at a table that you don't know. We prefer the, you know, two tops and four top tables to the six and eight top tables. I would say there's still gonna be need for public meetings, you know, anybody

who's dealt with the frustration of conferences like this, I I think—I don't think those things are going away completely, but we absolutely Robert need to keep an open mind about it, I—this obviously is unprecedented and it's changing the way a lot of people think about a lot of things. I'll be surprised if if we we become a completely introverted stay-at-home community as a whole though. So you're right, we'll—some of the things we'll have to wait and see what happens. The key to this is keeping it as flexible as possible so we can shift it if it if it turns out that we're not using things the way we used to. So things like that mezzanine area with all those posts, that's 1960s thinking, we're getting rid of that to create an open space that can be rearranged for collection or small gathering areas or larger gathering areas, whatever it may be. So keeping flexibility I think is the key to trying to answer the questions we don't know the answers to yet. I'm glad you brought it up, it's on everybody's mind, you're absolutely right.

R. Khalife: It could be as simple as the staff needs more space.

P. Mays: More space to separate staff from each other, yes, more back-of-house space so staff can do work where they're not exposed to the public. That's actually something we've been dealing with at Saratoga Springs Public Library because of—and and I think I talked to you before about incident where somebody came in off the street—it used to be that staff wanted as much freedom to move from behind the Circ desk out onto the floor as possible, either to help patrons or to tackle somebody who's running out the door with something they didn't check out, but now we're actually trying to put a little more of a barrier at least a gate to slow people down because somebody walked in off the street and walked behind the desk and started assaulting a a staff member. So you're right we're constantly changing the way we have to think about the way service is provided, but as long as we keep the building as open and free as possible we have more freedom to do those things easily.

R. Khalife: Okay thank you.

P. Mays: It's a little after 9, we're happy to entertain any other questions or thoughts if if you want to gather your thoughts after today for a few days and then drop us a note, that might be the most efficient way so nobody feels rushed. You don't have to write long narratives, just write some bullet points down and we can try and accommodate them as we develop these a little further.

B. Sweeney: That sounds good, thank you Paul.

P. Mays: We'd like to keep moving forward on it; it's something, you know, it actually works—the timing for you guys was golden in terms of us being able to work on this remotely rather than having to be in the office all the time for it, so if—with your permission we'd like to keep pushing it and and developing it and, you know—schedules for everything are out the window at the moment. Construction has stopped on most projects. It's

Bethlehem Public Library Long Range Planning Meeting April 9, 2020 8:00am Transcript

hard to say what's happening. Public meetings are hard to have. But in your case, I think we can keep things going so we're we're happy to do that.

B. Sweeney: In the interest of time should we defer our scheduling of the main
1:15 meeting until—to do it over email or should we want to firm that up right now?

P. Mays: Why don't we wait a week if that's okay with you. Send us your comments by next week and then we could—it's been ok to schedule things by email, no?

B. Sweeney: Mm-hm

P. Mays: Or or has that been a problem?

B. Sweeney: It's fine for me.

P. Mays: If you all don't mind doing that, let's let's do that.

B. Sweeney: Sure.

P. Mays: As it happens, you know, by being home more often, it means less travel which actually means more flexibility in the calendar than I usually have. So Lisa's working hard on this and it'll give us time to do more—yeah, let's figure it out next week if that's okay.

B. Sweeney: Sounds good. All right, thank you everyone, I think that's the end of the meeting. Thanks so much Paul and Lisa for these great designs and giving us so much to think about.

P. Mays: Sketches!

P. Mays and L. Sketches!

Hayes:

B. Sweeney: Sketches!

P. Mays: Excellent. Thank you all, you're a great committee to work with and I appreciate all the input too. It's it's it's great, every every person sort of adds something to these conversations and they're all things for us to keep in mind, so very much appreciated that everybody's attending these regularly. It's fantastic.

B. Sweeney: Thank you both of you.

G. Kirkpatrick: Thank you.

P. Mays: Okay. Take care of folks, everybody stay safe.

Everyone: Bye