

## **SAN JUAN ISLAND LIBRARY DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

In Person at Brickworks

June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Special Meeting

for the Purposes of Envisioning a New Library: A Public Forum

1) **Call to Order:** President Barbara Sharp called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

**Members Present:** Barbara Sharp, Becki Day, Paul Peterson, Boyd Pratt, Karen Vedder

**Staff Present:** Laurie Orton, Kasey Rasmussen

Total attendance: 75.

2) **New Business**

a. **Envisioning a New Library: A Public Forum**

### **Opening Remarks:**

Barbara Sharp welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the board members. She expressed the board's desire for public input as the purpose of the meeting, and that this would be the first of many public meetings regarding the Library Building Project.

Boyd Pratt followed Barbara's introduction with a brief history of the Library and the building project. He gave an overview of the work sessions and public meetings held in 2014 through 2018 and the conclusions drawn in those meetings. Following the meetings, feasibility studies, site analysis, and engineering and construction reviews, the decision was reached to purchase the 660 Spring Street property to be used as the location of a new building. The property was purchased in December 2020.

Karen Vedder followed Boyd's history of the building project with an overview of where the project stands now. She announced that the Library has received a \$2 million grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce and explained how that would be integrated into the project budget. She announced the updated project funding mix, which reduces the amount expected to be raised from a bond and increases the amount expected to be raised via private fundraising. She addressed the concerns the board has heard from the community about the lack of affordable housing on the island, and while she reminded the public that Library funds may only be used for Library purposes, she also reported that the Library has received a proposal for a joint-use housing project at the Spring St. property and is looking forward to receiving and considering further proposals.

Paul Peterson introduced himself to the public as the newest member of the board, and explained why he decided to apply for a position on the board. He invited members of the public to share their questions, comments, thoughts, or concerns, and the meeting was opened for public feedback.

### **Public Comments/Questions/Feedback:**

Comments from the public addressed the following common themes:


- *Misinformation/Social Media*
  - Multiple participants brought up the extensive misinformation put out during the bond campaign, especially on social media. They encouraged building project supporters to be active on social media to call out and respond to misinformation.
- *Information Regarding the Current Building*
  - Multiple participants had questions about what would happen to the current facility and how selling it might factor into the project budget. Participants agreed that that information should be made clear to the public, even if plans are not final.
- *Bond Campaign Issues, Ideas, and Inspirations*
  - Participants shared their concerns about the bond campaign, including the timing (during Covid and after property tax increases), the cost to taxpayers, and insufficient community outreach.
  - Participants also urged that the Library come back with a new plan, not the same old one, and show how it is different from before.
  - A participant encouraged the board to hire a professional marketing or consulting group to run the campaign.
  - Participants emphasized the need to reach more young people and families in the next bond campaign.
  - Many participants remarked on the need for visualizations of what the new facility could look like as part of the project campaign, even if they do not represent the final design. Many felt it was a mistake not to include graphics/visualizations to inspire the public about the possibilities in a new facility.
  - A participant shared the idea of having open houses at the current facility to show the need for more space.
  - Participants shared examples of other libraries that have inspired them and ideas for what could be incorporated into the new building.
  - A participant suggested a quarterly newsletter to keep the public updated and inspired.
- *Support for the Library/Personal Experiences at the Library*

- Many participants shared their own experiences using the Library and expressed how important libraries and our Library was to them and to the larger community.
- Public Project Involvement
  - Multiple participants shared their belief that the public needed to be more involved in the building project and that more community input was needed.
  - Participants discussed the need to create a project committee that includes members of the public along with board members.
  - Participants highlighted the fact that the board does not have the manpower or expertise to execute the whole project without outside help.
- Scope of the Project
  - Participants shared their ideas on scaling back the building project- some mentioned a smaller building with room to expand in the future, another mentioned that the function of the new library is more important than the form, and to avoid unnecessary design improvements.
  - Multiple participants spoke in support of affordable housing, either as a joint-use project at the Spring St. property or as an option for the current property when it is sold.
- Funding
  - Participants brought up questions about the project funding mix and wondered if there was an option to fund the project without needing a bond.
  - Participants emphasized relying on philanthropy and suggested naming parts of the new building after donors.
  - A participant asked about projected project costs and when those projections would be updated.
  - Participants requested detailed explanations of the project funding, the Library's budget, and the levy lid lift the library is due for. They also emphasized the need to explain to the public in clear terms the legalities behind the use of Library funds.


Boyd thanked everyone for taking part in the meeting and for their commitment to the Library, and encouraged the public to continue to send their questions and comments to the board.

**3) Adjournment:** President Barbara Sharp adjourned the meeting at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

DocuSigned by:  
  
5F33B2D49E48486  
Board Secretary

Approved:

DocuSigned by:  
  
88AF79D6B00E4671  
Board President

June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023