

**ROCKPORT SELECT BOARD
SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2016
7:00 P.M.
ROCKPORT OPERA HOUSE**

Present: Chair William Chapman, Vice-Chair Kenneth McKinley, Geoffrey Parker and Owen Casas. Brendan Riordan was absent. Also present: Richard C. Bates, Town Manager; Department Head, Ben Blackmon, Library Director, Lynda Clancy, press and several members of the public

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER – William Chapman, Chair called the meeting to order at 7: 07 P.M.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Dwight Johnson – he has lived here for 28 years and is married to Lynn Ingraham. Her parents and grandparents have always lived here. They owned Enos Ingraham’s Store on Pascal Avenue. Maynard really wanted to see the library built at the RES site. It is an adequate site and has plenty of room for parking and adequate room for an appropriate size and design of the presented library. 1 Limerock Street does not have those qualities. There is nothing salvageable with that building including the foundation at the present site.

Emily Lusher – I did a customer satisfaction survey for the library four years ago. You should do your research right and present hard data to the residents. Don’t do the survey yourselves. You need to hire professionals and they will ask the right questions. You need to be comfortable with research and pay attention to it. I have been doing research for thirty-five years. I worked for IBM Corporation and acted as a consultant for them. I will do the necessary research for this project pro bono except for any necessary supplies or postage. A survey would be mailed to every household in town. Do it right, do it professionally and have confidence in it.

Jean Boobar – has lived in the village since the 60’s. She believes that the RES is the right site. It is the gateway and you would not have to reroute the traffic. I consider that site to be in the village. We have had surveys after surveys and I think that you should skip another one.

Brooke Kehoe – I am not interested in a survey. I would like to have some questions answered as I have some deep concerns about the RES site. We have been dealing with this for five years now. Mrs. Boks’ gift specifically specified using that land for a library. What will happen if there isn’t any library there? I have questions about tearing down the old library. What happens legally without a plan or place to go in the future? I heard that Rick Bates drove to PA three years ago.

Rick – that is not true.

Brooke – I understand that it may need to be torn down, but can we salvage it for something? What about the Habitat for Humanity? Mrs. Bok’s gift is near and dear to me. The library has

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rooted me to this historic place and I am an equal regardless of income or last name. I also question 30,000 visitors a year. Where does that number come from? Anytime someone walks by they are counted and that is not indicative to how many visitors have actually been there. Talk to Habitat from Humanity about the building before you demolish it. You need to clarify the ramifications what will happen if you move the library from the property that was deeded to the Town by Mary Louise Curtis Bok in 1943.

Bob Baldwin - I am confused over the parking issue. I did a survey on twelve different days and visited the same six spots in front of the library. There was always two spaces available during those times. We do need to improve that intersection. However, there never was a parking problem.

John Priestley – I am an architect. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with that building. There may be some mold and an overload with the books on the second floor. There is ample room on that lot for a much larger building. If you take the library out of the village, the village will be gone. I know for a fact that there is more than enough space available with Memorial Park, the end of Limerock Street and the present site. I know that it will work. I refuse to believe that it won't. Why are you going backwards? We voted for 1 Limerock Street.

Peter van der Kieft – I have sent an email to the Select Board and they didn't respond to it. I am a supporter of keeping the library in the village. What about 195 Union Street, the former doctors' offices? This is a 1.4-acre site, it is on public sewer and water and there is plenty of parking. The building was built in 1996. The owner is open to having a discussion about selling it. You could use the existing site as a satellite for the elderly and the children. The cost would be considerably less. Use your common sense and good judgement.

William Frohlich – I am puzzled by RES rising from the dead to fight for their cause. I thought that we had put RES to bed or buried it. I am also puzzled by the statement that if Cousin Laura was in town the results would have been different. The fact is you have to live with the results of the current election for president and we can't change it. Keep the integrity of Main Street of this town and the ambience of that little library. Keep it on that site. We don't need 9,300 square feet of space. Stop fighting and hissing over the size of a library. I am boggled by building for the future. The population has been fairly static. I urge you to do something that may sound strange, we have had enough surveys, and I am in disagreement about how big we want the library. 6,000 to 7,000 square feet is big enough. Money is a factor to the residents, count our pennies, the town's pennies.

David Jackson – we have voted multiple times. Are you forgetting a vote in June, if a library should be built on 1 Limerock Street? It failed. 30,000 visitors is not an over estimation.

Ames Curtis – I have risen from the dead and support building the library at the former RES site. It is not exclusively because of parking. It is an easier and cheaper site to build on. You could also have a children's playground there. It would be fairly easy and inexpensive to get a declaratory judgment and then a quitclaim deed for that property. The town could do it because of the amount of time that the library has been at that location, it satisfies the agreement. I don't

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think that a survey or listening tour is necessary. Sides have been established. We need to have a very charming building as the gateway to Rockport.

Bob Hall - regarding building for the future, today our kids go to their computer to do research and not to a book. The library needs to be smaller and more focused.

Betsy Elwin – you have had so many meetings and tours. The problem is there isn't enough input. The people are not willing to accept what information has been gathered. I think that we should listen to what the experts have said and look at what they have already given you as a proposal.

Sally Cook – the vote failed because of the cost and the size and not so much the location. Stephanie Lash brought up the results of the Wisconsin study that has been nationally accepted. The need is two times the size of the present building of 3,500 square feet which would be 6,000-7000 square feet.

Brinkley & Mazie Thorne – they are architects. Running a restaurant in town is a labor of love. The library brings people to the village area that helps to support these businesses. The town only has 3,000 residents. The library is very important to those businesses. The RES site is extremely valuable to a larger scale plan. You should preserve it to see what the best use is of that site. If you put the library there, the site would be underutilized.

Mazie – open the project up to another architect and work with him. He is good and can come up with a good design. Libraries are an important part of a town. You should value it and don't lose it.

Pat Messler – I am hearing two things here. They are personal opinions and more factual and not emotional opinions. The property at RES is flat, has high visibility. I think that we should consider RES as the site. It could be a civic center which is more than just books. We need to plan for 10, 15, 20 or 25 years. You should not shoehorn the library on a ½ acre site that necessitates a two-story building. I would like to challenge Reed and Reed to come up with a one-story library at RES. I think that they are a good company. I am not a huge fan of the look of the building that was presented. Why brick? We have 3,300 citizens, but our library is not used by just our residents, the 30,000 comes from other towns in addition to our own town. It would be irresponsible to build a building that will be too small before we can even move into it.

David Jackson – we need to define the village. Is it two blocks on a curve, crammed into a small space?

Steve Smith – I lived in the village in 1978. The ORC has worked hard to strength the downtown area. There has been an effort to develop and to revitalize that area. The library is an element of downtown. The new school took several years before a plan was accepted. We don't know what the library will be.

Rick – we need a design for a wish list and to hit the sweet spot that the residents will support. We need to come together as a group.

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III. STATEMENTS FROM SELECT BOARD

Bill – we need to be autocratic and to make a clear statement on the location. We should be considerate of the voters. We have talked about RES versus 1 Limerock Street and we need to make a decision. The Library in a town is a strong anchor. The RES site could have a better and more valuable use. Why not consider the temporary site and 195 Union Street? Another decision we need to make is what to do with the existing site. It is taking on the appearance of an abandoned building. I would like to have something before the voters in June.

Ken – we have a tough job before us. We need to be more proactive and bold. What got me the most was that people don't think that we listen. I do listen and read every email sent to me. I have heard that you want a smaller library and that we should reconsider RES if it is going to pass. We should keep Reed and Reed as they have a lot of knowledge about the town. According to past votes, it appears that 45% want the present site, 40% want the RES site and 15% don't want a new library. Some people will change their mind. I personally want what is the best for the town. Maybe we should present two designs, have a meeting upstairs and do a straw vote before putting something on the ballot. I would like to see more positivity and not negativity.

Owen – there seems to be a fair amount of confusion. Tearing down the old library without a plan doesn't make sense. I am very comfortable with having Reed and Associates to continue on. There is a lingering question on the Bok deed. I am concerned what it will do if we take the library out of the village. What is the intent of the RES property? It is obviously best if we build a full library. The sacrifices we are making are real. I do read all of your emails and try to respond to them. There are a lot of questions. I am for keeping it at 1 Limerock with the possibility to expand. Thank you for coming out this snowy evening and taking an interest in our library.

Brendan (a recorded message) – I read your emails, but only responded to some. A decision needs to be made. The location was settled by the Select Board, the Town Manager and the Committee. What is the criteria to choose? They are only options. We need to move forward. We will upset several people with our decision.

Geoff – the elephant in the room is the location. I am looking to bring the community back together. We need to dig down deep to the facts. The question is maybe yes maybe no to build on the RES site. Who do we charge with this work, a new Ad Hoc Committee? We need to make a decision by March and then maybe we can make a June vote. People will have to give way for it to pass. We need to do this with the least amount of grudges and not be worried about the Bok deed. We need a good design with good parking.

IV. AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS – None this meeting.

V. EXISTING LIBRARY BUILDING

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- a. Discussion and vote on the question, should the building on 1 Limerock Street be left standing for now or demolished?

Board discussion. They talked about the deterioration of the library. It is not a high crime area and we should worry about anyone going into that abandoned building.

Geoff – if that happened it would be a poke in the eye.

Ken – I don't see any clear or compelling reason to take the library down. I think that most of us can agree that there is no useful life left in that building. There is no reason to rush ahead.

Owen – I agree that there is no compelling argument to tear the building down.

Bill – I think that we are all in agreement with that statement.

VI. OPENING COMMUNICATION

- a. We have the Town Website, the Library Website, Livestream recordings. What about mass mailing?

Geoff – how do we improve communications? Are we doing a better job? The audience responded that they are doing a better job. We need to make sure that the calendar on the web site is clear. We know what we have to do.

Owen – I am struggling with should we just make a decision on what to do? This has been going on for a long time and like Brendan said we keep dragging this on. I could go either way. I am ready to make a decision on the site.

Ken – communications is important. We have a wonderful turnout here tonight, but we need to cast a wider net. There may be others that maybe passionate on the library, but they cannot attend night meetings. If we do a survey, it shouldn't be many pages. We need something and it needs to be wrapped up by mid-January. We don't make the decisions you folks do. We need to give you the proposals and let you vote on whatever they are.

Rick – regarding communications, not all of our residents are connected to the internet, although a large number of people are. It is a mistake to not utilize an online way to give us their opinion. There are many layers of communication. One layer should be digital. Right now there are twenty-one people watching us livestream. Six or seven of them are chatting with each other.

Owen – how many of you watched us on channel 22? Only one of you! My kids love to watch their dad on TV.

Bill – if we send out mailers, do we send them as direct mailers to every post office box and street address or to the registered voters?

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Geoff – it has been our mistake to keep things at arms-length. We need to change. We need to gather all the reasons the vote failed. We have to come up with a way to address everyone's questions and then we need to make a decision.

Ken – whatever system we use is imperfect. If we don't do the survey or something online, we are making a mistake.

Rick – the survey can answer some of the questions we need answered. The site element is one of the key elements. You know my choice, but it is your choice to make.

Pat Messler – a tremendous amount of the people who vote don't have computers. Are you sending a survey to each household?

Geoff – it is most important to flush out the concerns and to address them. I want everyone to have a chance to have their concerns answered. They need to know that they are listened to.

Owen – these are workshop questions.

Brinkleys – the way you setup the room is important. If it is 45, 40 or 15 people can we feel comfortable that you will make a decision? This room is very close. You keep putting off making a decision. How do you rate parking? You haven't been telling us anything.

Ames Curtis – if you present a concept on both sites, you will get better results. Seeing something makes a big difference. Cost, size and location is the elephant in the room.

Paul Charbonneau – what do you expect from a survey that you don't already know or have heard? What kind of precedence are you setting by having a survey before making a decision? Take the bull by the horn and make a decision!

Brooke Kehoe – when we vote, we get one ballot and one vote. How do you know that I don't fill out ten surveys? Communications is important. Put together a newsletter and I will put it in the neighbors' mailboxes.

VII. LOCATION

- a. Benefits and drawbacks of the 1 Limerock Street location
- b. Benefits and drawbacks of the RES location

Mazie Cox – it is complicated when you ask which site is right. You need to make the decision. If you think that it should be in the village be very careful in the survey how you ask the questions. Again, I would caution you to be careful.

The Board discussed the location and the fact that it has been reviewed several times already.

VIII. SURVEY

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a. Discussion and vote to authorize a survey of the residents

Bill – what are we going to learn that we don't already know?

Ken – we still don't know why the vote failed. Was it the cost or the size of the proposed library? A brief survey to gather information is important. 6,000 to 7,000 square feet came up a lot tonight.

Owen – the people elected us to make these hard decisions for them.

Michael Thompson – as a voter, I didn't know any of the real information about the library. You need to get out the pros and cons that you know. I don't know if a survey will help.

Sally Cook – the June vote had something to do with the site. I thought that the Board had agreed that 1 Limerock Street was the perfect site. There was only one Select Board member holding out for the RES site.

Geoff – are you looking for a vote?

Paul Charbonneau – I would challenge you to make a decision. It is important that someone said they didn't like a brick building, but the architect said that brick is the best choice for maintenance. The person then changed their mind and agreed.

Owen – can we vote on something?

Ken – if we are going to do a survey, we need to do it soon. We should contact Emily Lusher and see if she is available to assist us. Why have the listening tours now? We don't need both the survey and the listening tours.

Bill – some people say no to the survey and others say we should take the time to do one.

Ken – there can be something said for dragging this process out. If we do some people will lose interest in the project.

Geoff – could we put it to the voters without a building design?

The Board discussed this thought and decided the answer was no. We need to have a vote in June or November. It was agreed that they do market research. Emily said that she would conduct the survey pro bono and we would only have to pay for the mailings. She will have to work over the holidays to get it done by mid-January.

Rick – Reed could come up with a new plan if it only involves cost and size. If site is an issue, you are looking at another two years.

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Geoff – we need help to make our decision. We need a group of people to help us with this. We need a new ad hoc committee. We would have to work closer with them this time. It is all back to citizens' relations.

Ken – I am not sure about that. I would stay with the market research.

The Board – concerned with a \$4 million-dollar library. Some residents thought that it was too much money. We should meet with Emily and make the decision whether or not to do a survey.

IX. DIRECTION SETTING

It was agreed that “the elephant in the room is the site.”

X. WHEN DO WE MEET AGAIN?

The Board – starting next week we should have workshops.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Owen Casas moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 p.m. Kenneth McKinley seconded the motion. VOTE: 4 FOR – 0 OPPOSED

Respectfully submitted,

LINDA M. GREENLAW
TOWN CLERK as RECORDING SECRETARY