

- PUBLIC MEETING -

Rockport Select Board

Tuesday, December 12, 2017

7:00 p.m.

Geoffrey C. Parker Community Meeting Room, Rockport Opera House

Streamed at <http://livestream.com/Rockportmaine>

AGENDA

I. Call Meeting to Order

Please either turn off your cell phones and other electronic devices or set them to mute while in this meeting room or the hallways. If you need to take or make a phone call, please step outdoors.

II. Public Comment

So that everyone who wishes to speak will have a chance, public comment will be limited to 2 minutes per person. Those who wish to speak must come to the podium so those watching at home or reviewing the live stream will be able to hear the comments. Please identify yourself at the start of your comment. Please try to be brief, and if you generally agree with a previous comment, please consider stating your agreement without repeating the comment in order to save time. A second public comment from the same person will not be permitted unless all others who wish to comment have had a chance. The total time for public comment will not exceed 40 minutes.

III. Rockport Public Library - What has been decided

- a. Total budget: no more than \$3 million (SB vote at meeting of 11/13/17)
- b. Budget to be funded by 50/50 mix of public/private funds (SB vote at meeting of 11/13/17)
- c. Reed and Associates has withdrawn as project architect (November 2017)
- d. 1 Limerock St. site selected (prior SB vote Spring 2017)

IV. Rockport Public Library - How to move forward

- a. Role of Select Board and Library Committee
- b. Discussion regarding site
- c. Determine procedure to select a new architect for the project
- d. Preliminary thoughts regarding fund raising efforts
- e. Preliminary thoughts on advertising/marketing efforts

V. Rockport Public Library - next steps

- a. Goal for town vote - June 2018? November 2018? later?

- b. Discuss general time line to accomplish goal in “a.”
- c. Schedule next workshop or meeting
- d. Schedule any subsequent meetings or workshops

VI. Adjournment

CHRONOLOGY OF THE FUTURE PLANNING AT THE ROCKPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Long range planning and goal setting are an important part of any healthy organization. The Rockport Public Library has evolved tremendously since 1914 when it was founded with 1000 volumes in a corner of the Opera House. This phase of future planning began in earnest 10 years ago, when then Director Sally Regan noted that our library's success – evidenced by rising attendance and circulation – was starting to tax our space. Meeting the growing, changing needs of our entire community requires open-minded creativity.

This timeline records the many steps and considerations that have brought us to this point. While it is not 100% complete it will give the reader an idea of the process thus far. We have tried to include links to the pertinent documents and other information you might find helpful.

2003:

Library Director identifies achievements, needs in preparation for the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Then Library Director Sally Regan summarizes FY 2001 statistics, noting that Rockport Public Library's performance ranked near the top of the 64 libraries serving communities of 2,500 to 4,999:

3rd in annual circulation (62,535)

2nd in circulation per capita (19.49)

2nd in weekly hours open (53.5)

Annual circulation is the best indicator of a library's activity (better than population). Compared to the 12 Maine libraries with annual circulations of 50,000 to 70,000, Rockport ranks:

4th of 12 in annual circulation; 62,535; average: 60,368

9th of 12 in space in existing building: 3,324 sq. ft.; average: 8,017

11th in FTE's (full time equivalent staffing): 2.63; average 6.

Given the fact that Rockport accomplishes its work with a comparatively small building and small staff, the report identifies long -term needs for increased shelf space, programming space, computer workspace, and parking.

November 2004:

Town of Rockport Comprehensive Plan endorses future planning

Approved by voters in November 2004, the Town's Comprehensive Plan summarizes Library current usage and long-term needs, and charges the Library Committee, Selectmen, and Town Manager with weighing cost and benefits of: expanding the library building and creating more parking at its current historic location in Rockport Village. The present

building is widely admired for its architecture and landscaping. Zoning and traffic issues will need to be addressed.

OR

Constructing a new facility on one of Rockport's major routes. In a larger, more centrally located, conveniently accessible public space, Rockport residents could meet, interact and build the bonds of community.

October 2008:

Preliminary assessment of expansion potential on current and neighboring sites. At the request of Library Director Molly Larson, Town Planner Tom Ford evaluates the existing library site for possible expansion.

He reports his understanding of the site restrictions and describes the "radical approach" of covering Lily Pond Stream. He indicates that it would require review, approval, and permitting from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection. At the Library Committee's request, he also evaluates the potential for expansion on an adjacent residential site, which was then available for sale. The planner indicates that the property would present "substantial development constraints" and would be challenging to utilize.

April 2009:

SWOT study assesses Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats - Library staff and Library Committee members participate in a SWOT assessment to identify the Library's internal strengths and weaknesses, and to identify the external opportunities and threats that might affect it. Though they brainstorm separately, both groups identify the staff and director as strengths and name space and building concerns as a weakness. Both groups see strong community partnerships and collaborations as an opportunity, and view the economic downturn as a threat.

January 2009:

Library Committee engages outside experts. The Library Committee agrees to engage the services of outside experts, inviting a consultant who has experience in helping libraries assess their needs for space and the engineering firm Gartley & Dorsky to assess current space and potential for expansion. The library consultant reports that the library holds approximately 10,000 volumes more than the space can reasonably accommodate. The Committee also agrees to visit libraries that have gone through a similar process in recent years.

September 2010:

RES Committee asks Library Committee to submit proposal in response to a letter from Rockport citizens suggesting a library complex on the Rockport Elementary School site, the RES ad-hoc committee asks the Library Committee to submit a proposal for a new library in that location. The Library Committee determines that it would be premature to submit a proposal before a thorough future planning process, and states “we have not yet determined that a new library building is necessary or desirable.”

October 2010:

Library receives “Discovering the Possibilities” grant Library Director Molly Larson writes and receives a \$15,000 grant from the Davis Family Foundation to study future planning possibilities. The grant outlines three phases: determining current attitudes about the library through targeted focus groups and surveys; assessing the possibility of expansion on the current site; and developing a conceptual plan for a new library on another site.

<u>Architects</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>for</u>	<u>Proposal</u>
<u>RES</u>	<u>Site</u>		<u>Analysis</u>

Space Analysis

November 2010:

Discovering the Possibilities: Phase 1 includes focus groups and surveys

Focus Groups: A total of 30 library users (about 1% of Rockport’s population) participate in focus groups. The groups describe the library as cozy, homey, comfortable, intimate and welcoming and express their preference for the current library even with its space limitations.

Survey: A total of 233 library users (including 160 Rockport residents, or 4.8% of Rockport’s population) complete surveys. Most are regular library users, with 68% visiting at least once a week. More than half identify space for parking, groups, and staff as “limited” or “very limited.”

When offered three options (stay, expand, move), most respondents prefer to expand onsite. If expansion is not possible, 57% prefer to stay as -is; 43% prefer to move.

The full survey can be found [here](#).

February 2011:

Discovering the Possibilities: Phase 2 includes assessment of current site
Gartley & Dorsky completes an evaluation of the current library site, including a topographic survey, setback requirements, lot coverage allowances, and shore land protection restrictions.

The site plan identifies one area of possible expansion: the handicapped parking space and some of the nearby gardens. In a 2013 report summarizing the findings, Gartley & Dorsky recognizes the complicated interplay of Town ordinances and the shore land zoning restrictions required by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

The report also summarizes the possibility that diverting Lily Pond Stream through a culvert might change the zoning status, and notes that such a project would require DEP review, approval, and permitting. Finally, the report notes that a full assessment of the site would also require assessment of structural capacity, HVAC, energy efficiency, and life safety.

April 2011:

Library Director compiles usage statistics. Library Director Molly Larson compiles usage, circulation, and attendance statistics as part of the Davis Family Foundation grant.

Visits to the library doubled between 1993, when the last library addition was completed, and 2010. The number of programs skyrocketed from 65 to 329, interlibrary loan and reference requests showed significant growth, and Internet usage (nonexistent in 1993) spiked. The Director recommends that future planning considerations also include library trends; present and projected demographics of Rockport and surrounding communities we serve; economic conditions; and taxpayer support for existing and future staffing needs.

April 2012:

Select Board receives Statement of Need. As part of the ongoing future planning process, Library Director presents a State of Need to the Select Board.

The report observes that it is increasingly difficult (and nearly impossible in some cases) to serve the community in our current configuration, and identifies key areas of concern: Inadequate interior space for patrons. The library's layout makes it difficult to separate lively programs (mah-jong, story time, etc.) from quiet reading spaces. Children's story times are crowded, and there is a waiting list for the after-school reading program. Young adults and teens have a single small area in the center of the library. There is no private meeting space. Inadequate space for collections. Even with one book weeded for every

book added to the collection, the library utilizes shelf-tops, putting many books out of reach of many users. Interlibrary loan vastly increases the number available materials, yet there is no space to handle incoming and outgoing crates of books. Inadequate space for programs. The library holds most large programs at the Opera House, but cannot provide small, private meeting spaces. Holding programs off-site presents a number of challenges: the facility is not always available and must be booked far in advance; staff must transport equipment and materials; programs do not bring patrons into the library; children must cross an increasingly busy and complex intersection to get to a program; and staffing is inefficient and potentially unsafe, as staff members are alone in multiple sites. Inadequate facilities.

An average of 100 people uses the library each day, and there are often lines (especially during children's programs) for the one, unisex bathroom. Staff space, material storage, and room for technology are limited. Increasing use of computer services requires a dedicated space for servers, equipment maintenance, and testing. There is no source of water other than the bathroom sink. Inadequate parking. Most of the community competes for the few available parking spaces, which are in great demand, especially when another local organization is hosting an event. Some of the available spaces require crossing an increasingly busy and complex intersection, creating a safety issue and logistical challenge, especially for parents of young children. One handicapped parking space (the driveway) does not always serve the needs of visitors. The report recommends: "the community should explore the possibility of a new library at RES or another location, or consider an expansion on the existing site, provided enough parking spaces can be developed to serve the needs of visitors and provided DEP regulations" can be met.

November 2012:

Town Attorney Reviews Library Deed.

Mary Louise Curtis Bok donated the land to the east and west of Limerock Street to Rockport in 1943, specifically for the purpose of a library. A clause in her will specifies that the land would revert to the family if it were no longer used for a library.

Since the Town owns the library building itself, the fate of the site is complicated. After Town attorney William L. Plouffe of Drummond/Woodsum reviews the deed, Library Committee members speak to descendants of Mary Louis Curtis Bok who live locally. They are only a few of the extended family, though, and all would have to be contacted if the town votes to build a new library on a different site.

November 2012:

Discovering the Possibilities: Phase 3 includes conceptual design of new library. Library Director Molly Larson extends a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Architectural Design and Planning Services for a Conceptual Design for a possible new library to be situated on the old Rockport Elementary School East site.

Nine architects submit applications, and an ad-hoc committee consisting of members of the Library Committee, Friends of the Rockport Public Library, town departments, town committees, and Rockport citizens selects four to interview. The group selects Scott Simons Architects of Portland to complete the conceptual design stage.

February – March 2013:

Architects develop conceptual design for possible new library

Library Director Molly Larson and Scott Simons Architects document existing square footage for each of the library's "programs" (or services) and determine the square footage required to meet current needs. The proposal also incorporates circulation and library trends.

A space analysis diagram compares current and proposed spaces. After a series of meetings with the ad-hoc committee, the architects present two schematic designs at a well-attended community meeting. A DVD of the meeting is available at the Library. The architects incorporate community input into a conceptual design for a new library on the RES site. The 14,000-square foot design offers maximum functionality, with a central circulation desk that welcomes entering patrons and offers clear site lines throughout the building to minimize the need for additional staff. There is a large meeting room that can be closed off from the rest of the library for evening meetings access (and rental possibilities), space for socializing, periodicals, and public computing, and expanded, more spacious stacks. There are also distinct, separate areas for teens and children, and a door from the children's area to an outside playground and garden. This is only a possible design; if the town votes to approve a new library, there will be an RFQ for Architectural Services and the selected architect will develop a final design with community input. Construction costs, including the "soft" costs of furnishings and moving expenses, are estimated to be \$3-5 million. A portion would go out to bond, but as much as one-half to two-thirds would be raised through fundraising activities, matching grants, and private donations.

The Town Appraiser offers the rough estimate that a 20-year, \$3 million bond would add 17.5 cents to the mil rate, or: "On a \$200,000 home that means an additional \$35." Operating costs are carefully considered in the design process. The committee recommends building the most energy

-efficient library possible in order to control operating costs and open up numerous grants and fundraising options. The committee recommends a structure that maximizes site lines to minimize the number of staffing requirements, and rejects the idea of a second story to avoid the need for additional staff and the expense and maintenance of an elevator (which would be required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and state statutes).

May 2013:

Library Committee Endorses New Library.

Based on the information obtained from the three phases of the Davis Family Foundation grant, the Library Committee votes to endorse the construction of a new library on the RES site. It is not the Committee's decision; it is simply a recommendation based on years of study.

May 2013:

Friends of the Rockport Public Library express their neutrality

The Friends express their neutrality on the location of the library and state, "We will continue to support the library wherever it is located."

July 2013:

Town Planner clarifies restrictions on current site.

Given the confusion over zoning, setback, and environmental restrictions on the current library site, Town Planner Bill Najpauer reviews all relevant statutes, consults with DEP, and presents a report at a joint workshop with the Select Board and the Library Committee.

July 2013:

Select Board and Library Committee hold joint workshop to establish next steps

Fall 2013

Listening tour with Jane Haskell

Implementation of five Listening Tours to gather input about what Rockport wants and needs from its library is one step in a multi-year, multi-step process. In early fall 2013, the Library Committee decided to assess the pulse of the community by inviting residents to join their neighbors for a facilitated discussion of library services. The Library Committee wanted to learn more about the hopes and dreams Rockport residents and library patrons have for the library.

The discussion was intentionally focused on services that the library should offer going forward rather than its physical location. Five discussion locations were chosen; residents from any part of town were invited to attend any or all of the meetings.

Listening Tours commenced late October 2013 and concluded early December 2013. [Raw data](#) from the five Listening Tours was posted on the Rockport Public Library's website in early January 2014. A public meeting in late January 2014 was held to gather input and develop next steps.

November 2013:

Voters amend the land use ordinance to allow increased lot coverage on the Limerock Street site allowing for a 7,000-square foot building footprint and no, lot-line setback.

March 2014:

The Rockport Public Library Committee announced the creation of a Building Steering Committee. One of this groups most important objectives will be to make recommendations to the Library Committee, based in part of the discovered themes of the listening tour and the library's mission and vision statement.

June 2014:

The Steering Committee makes it report to the Library Committee. The SC ranks many sites in town and lists the pros and cons for all the sites. The SC full report can be found [here](#).

November 2014:

In an attempt to settle the site question the Library Committee request that the SB put the question to the voters.

Article 9 was defeated, 1,065 to 786, with voters turning down a move to "primarily consider the former Rockport Elementary School site" as a location for a proposed new library. Article 9 was recommended by the Select Board, 4 to 1.

Voters in Rockport voted 989 to 867, defeating Article 8, which asked if residents wanted to develop a plan for a new library.

The Select Board unanimously recommended the measure pass, but the majority voted against it.

March 2015:

The Rockport Public Library engaged an independent consultant, Steve Podgajny, the former Director of the Portland Public Library to develop an objective case statement assessing the library's current programs and services and exploring how the library may evolve to meet current and future needs. [The final report](#), delivered in June, identified necessary program spaces and describe the scale and rationale for those spaces.

April 2015:

CES, Inc. of Brewer Maine was hired by the Town of Rockport to provide a complete structural analysis of the library building and [develop a report](#). The scope of their work included a comprehensive building evaluation. This covered current building conditions with regard to current building systems, accessibility and life safety issues. The study also included a limited environmental assessment such as indoor air quality and other areas that could impact the continued use of the building and upgrades/repairs.

November 2015:

Library Committee presents to the Select Board estimated space requirements for future building planning of functional space of 8,750 sq. ft.

December 2015:

Based on the CES building report the library moves out of the 1 Limerock location to, 495 Commercial Street. The move was done in one week's time with the help of over 70 volunteers. The move was from a 3,200-square foot building into a 5,100-square foot building.

December 2015:

With the move to the temporary library site on Route 1, the Town of Rockport has entered the planning stage of building a new library. To that end, the Rockport Select Board has authorized the formation of the Ad Hoc Library Planning Committee, which had its first meeting on December 16, 2015. The charge for the committee is to select and recommend an architect while providing cost estimates for the new library. Additionally, the mission of the committee calls for a library to be built at 1 Limerock Street or on Memorial park or a combination of both sites, both sites that were deeded to the town for

the purpose of a library. The recommended size of the new library is 8,750 square feet of usable space, which was voted on by the Library Committee and submitted to the Select Board. The current temporary space at 385 commercial street is 5,400 square feet and full.

The Ad Hoc committee provided a set of parameters to enable the selected architect firm to submit creative ideas that meet the needs of the community. These parameters will focus on building costs, long-term use, green space, village ambience, safe accessibility, parking, programming, and site planning.

The members of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee are: Eric Denny, Ann Filley, Jan Rosenbaum-committee chair, Joe Sternowski-committee vice chair, Heather Mackey, Erik Frederick and Tracy Murphy, Select Board liaison. Ex-officio, Library Director, Ben Blackmon and Stephanie Kumble, Library Committee liaison. Also includes architect, John Scholz, as professional advisor to the committee.

All the documents from the AHLPC can be found on the [Library's website](#).

July 2016:

The work of the AHLPC was committee was completed and presented to the Select board to be placed on the November ballot. You can view livestream of the meeting [here](#). There was also a town wide informational meeting held in the Rockport Opera House held on 7/20/2016. This meeting was designed to disseminate the work of the Select Board and the AHLPC to the public. It was well attended and provided a wealth of information to the public about the library proposal. It also gave the AHLPC information about what the town thought about the project. Some revisions to the design were made from feedback gathered at the meeting. You can watch the full meeting [here](#).

November 2016:

Rockport voters decided against passing a bond for two million dollars, which would have funded half the money needed to construct a new 4-Million-dollar library building. The other half of the money would have come from private fund raising. With over 83% of the voters participating, the vote failed to pass by nine votes. The proposed design can be seen [here](#).

January – February 2017:

Some people felt that the overwhelming reason the bond failed was the choice of the site. The Select Board decided to go back and re-evaluate the location choice.

The Rockport Select Board had a series of meetings to look at what the next steps should be for the library and to re-evaluate the site at 1 Limerock Street and the site known as the RES. They met with Capital Campaign Committee and the Library Committee. Architects, engineers and contractors. They also met with the assessor for Camden/Rockport and town and city planners.

You can watch the January 17th meeting by going to [here](#) at this meeting the board met with the Capital Campaign Committee and the Library Committee.

You can watch the February 1st meeting by going to [here](#) . At this meeting, they met with architects, engineers and contractors about the upside and downside of each site.

You can watch the February 15th meeting by going to [here](#). At this meeting the Assessor gave a buildout analysis of the RES site and 3 planning professionals gave their opinions of each location. This meeting also featured a presentation from a group of citizens working to buy property and donate it to the town for the use of the Library.

After the hearing all of the comments and information and hours of meetings the Select Board voted 4 to in favor of the 1 Limerock location as the site for a new library.

June 2017:

With the future of the Library still unresolved, the Select Board decided to conduct marketing research to of specifics about the proposal resident's support and oppose to help guide the path forward.

October 2017:

Portland Research Group present their data from a town wide survey looking at why the vote failed to pass. Their conclusions and recommendations are:

Rockport should continue to try to find a viable option for supporting the Rockport Public Library since most people:

Agree the Rockport Public Library is important to the community,

Have access to a Rockport Public Library card,

Visit the Rockport Public Library at least occasionally (average of 33.1 times per year), and

Believe traditional library offerings are important.

In order to move forward with a proposal for the Rockport Public Library, people are going to have to compromise on some elements of a proposal.

Perhaps the most difficult compromise will be settling on the location since the two locations in question, 1 Limerock Street and RES received almost identical positive and negative ratings from 19% respondents. With 16% being neutral and the rest at various levels of commitment to one site or the other.

Parking is also an aspect of any library proposal, that will need to be carefully considered and some people may not get all of the parking they desire.

In addition, some of the desire and/or expectations for expansion will have to be pulled back.

The research indicates that taxpayers are willing to fund at least \$1 million to less than \$2 million of a library project with a total investment of at least \$2 million to less than \$3 million. While the percentage of the cost of the project paid by taxpayers remains at about 50% like the Library Proposal voted on in November 2016, the overall investment level is less, requiring a scaled down project.

The exterior design of the Rockport Public Library building needs to be similar in style to the buildings surrounding it.

The Rockport Public Library plan should include upgrades to library systems and provide library patrons access to the latest technology available

The full report can be found [here](#).

November 2017:

The Rockport Select Board vote to go forward with a 3-million-dollar gross construction cost not including Road design or parking and that the total cost be shared with a 50/50 bond and fundraising effort.

*Manager Comments for the December 12, 2017 meeting of the Rockport Select Board
about the next steps for the Rockport Public library.*

Let me start out by saying that these are my comments and recommendations as your Town Manager over the past 4.5 years, and are made at the request of the Board Chair Ken McKinley and are my frank and honest opinions on the subject. I will not be at the meeting on Tuesday night. I will however, be watching on livestream.

I believe that it is my job to give my professional opinion on topics that the town is facing. To do less is not doing my duty as a town manager. As a board, you are very free to listen to them, ignore them or agree with them and use them as guidance as you make your decisions. My feelings will not be hurt either way.

This is the most divisive and important issue the town faces and in my opinion, there is no way to make everyone happy and it needs the Select Board to take this on and make a clear decision as quickly as possible or risk losing the library altogether. This would be a huge dis-service to the residents of Rockport. We have a GREAT library the produces way above our "weight class" and is well used and loved by so many.

We do not have the luxury of time in this case, if you do not act quickly I believe we miss the window of a June vote and will very likely be looking at doing nothing, for the next 3+ years.

What follows are my thoughts and my professional opinions.

Thought about the process

The discussion about what to do about the space issues at the library, started way back in 2003 and 2004, but really got going in 2009. I have included a complete timeline in your packet for your review.

When you go back through the timeline you will find numerous links to meetings, listening sessions focus groups, steering committees, and building committee meetings and reports. As well as links to many livestream Select Board meetings where the topic of the library was discussed at length.

To say that we have not done everything we could to figure out what residents want, is not an accurate statement, in my opinion. I believe that we have gone above and beyond what is normal in an attempt to listen to all residents. This culminated recently with the professional research, that should have been done about three years ago.

The idea about going back once again (the board did that after the failed vote last year) will not be productive, will produce nothing new, except possibly turning more people against the library, which right now, according to the research is a relatively small number.

Thoughts about Role of the Select Board and the Library Committee

In my opinion, I believe that it is time that the Select Board get out in front of this and take a prominent role in getting a new library built. I recommend that you work very closely with the Library Committee in coming up with a design that will meet the needs of the library patrons and taxpayers. The Library Committee has a critical role in making sure that we make the most out of the funds we have available. I would not recommend that you delegate this task to another committee, without maintaining a prominent position for members of the Select board to be in. I believe that residents are looking for members of the board to take a leadership role in this and if you do, our chances of success are far greater.

I believe you should wait until a bond passes (I am being optimistic) and then create a building committee to take the schematic design to reality.

Thoughts about site

Over the years, I have stated that I believe that the Library can and should stay where it is at 1 Limerock Street.

This is based on my professional opinion based on 40 years of experience and certification from the State of NH, Community Economic Development Program.

It is my advice that you vote to reaffirm the vote of the previous board on February 15th as soon as possible, Preferably at the December 12th meeting, the longer this lingers, the worse it gets.

As way of back up:

Many years ago, I stated that we needed to address “the elephant in the room”. That being the site question.

Until we dealt with site question once and for all, we would not move forward.... There was a huge gasp heard in the room. We are still dealing with the site question today and we cannot move forward, until this is put to bed, once and for all. This is the job of the elected officials.

My rationale for keeping the library in the “village”, where it has been for over 100 years, has little to do with emotion, but everything to do with what is in the best interest in the redevelopment of the village.

As I have said before, the village and the harbor, is the economic engine for the whole town. A high percentage our total valuation and taxes collected are generated by properties around the harbor and on the east side of Route 1. In fact, the recent jump in mil rate was predicated largely due to a loss in value of waterfront properties.

While there are many factors that go into that value, a key one is how vibrant the village is.

Since its heyday, when there was a barbershop, gas station, stores, town hall, fire station and the post office etc., Rockport Village was in decline and has been, for many years. It was following a national trend that started after the Second World War, where we decentralized communities, to keep up with growing sprawl out to the suburbs. While less intense in Maine, it is a huge factor.

Businesses came and went in the village, but the one constant we had, was our little “engine that could”, the Rockport Public Library. The Library that began and grew through 100 years of changes, kept the village going. It is the only reason than many residents, come to the village.

I believe the loss of the library in the village will have a huge impact on the redevelopment of the village. Sure, there are things in the works. We have two vibrant restaurants, a new coffee shop opening soon and a hotel in the planning stages, but we need the library in the village as an anchor for residents to come into the village and enjoy it. It is part of the overall vitality of the village.

A couple of critical questions for me are, **first**, is a municipal use of the RES the highest and best use of that property? In my opinion, no, it is not.

In the future, property on a signalized intersection on Route 1 will be high value, not in what we can sell it for, but in the tax revenue it will generate long term. This is NOT going to happen overnight and it will likely take MANY years, but the development of a vibrant village and beautiful waterfront, will certainly expedite it.

Second, assuming we could settle the Bok deed, what would we do with the property? Does it become, yet another park? Do we sell it for residential development? We need people coming into the village. The library does that for us. I would argue that one of the best uses of that property was (when Mary Bok donated it) and still is as the home of a library.

The biggest question with the site has been, is it big enough to hold the size building we need for a library in Rockport?

Well, if we learned nothing from the exercise we just did, with the development of the last proposal, we learned that there is enough space to house a 12,000+ square foot structure on the lot. There is also a parking and road scenario that would increase parking. If we want to develop more parking, we will likely have to use some of the park that was donated by Mary Curtis Bok for library purposes.

For some people, the bond question, last November, that failed by 9 votes was a referendum on site. I never believed that was true.

The Select board agreed to go back again and look at all of the facts and make some decisions. After many meetings with experts, and hours of public dialogue, the Select Board made a decision about location last February and voted 4/1 to move forward on a plan at the Limerock street site.

The question about cost and size was unanswered and the board decided have a professional researcher develop a survey to help us get data that would help us move forward.

If you remember, I was opposed to including questions about location, as I was concerned it would be seen as, yet another vote on site.

For some, this is what it was, a vote on the site, but the results proved out, what I have been saying for quite some time. That is there are a couple of hundred people at either end of the discussion, that have a very clear position, one way or another (19%) as far as location goes. 16% were clearly neutral. The other 46 percent showed various levels of support for one site or another, but nothing clear.

For a majority of everyone else, site is not the issue, it is cost (size) and their taxes. The results in the end of the “forced choice question” was 50/50 with a very slight preference towards Limerock.

Decisions on the location of municipal facilities are clearly decisions for the board to make. For too many years, the board was unwilling to make the decision, leaving it to become part of the public debate. I believe this has been a mistake.

It is my opinion that nothing in the research is enough to say there is a clear opinion one way or another, to suggest that the Board should overturn the previous vote of the Board.

I believe the faster you take a position on the previous vote, the better. This cannot linger. If you let this sit, I believe that we have a good chance on missing the window to get a bond on the June Ballot.

Procedure to select a new architect

The Library building committee did an extensive recruiting and interview process to select Dick Reed as the architect for the previous proposal.

They selected 6 firms from a field of 12, that expressed interest in the project and each was given a stipend, to develop a concept plan based on the information provided to each.

Through the marvels of technology, those interviews were captured on live stream and are available for viewing at the links provided at the bottom of this section. Of the 6 interviewed, two rose very clearly to the top of the list. Dick Reed, who was selected and Stephen Smith, who was second.

Unfortunately, the meeting where this was decided, was not recorded and the minutes of that meeting are very sparse and only give the final vote that selected Reed.

My recommendation, to the committee at the time, was in support of Smith because of the quality of his presentation, the time and effort he put into it and the fact that he was local and had a good sense of the needs of the community. He had also assembled a team that included Will Gartley, who has a lot of first hand, local knowledge on the site, traffic patterns etc. and understanding of community needs.

As part of the discussion, the chair did a “straw poll” to get committee members thoughts. While clear majority were clearly felt Dick Reed was the better firm, three members of the 9 clearly thought that Steve Smith was the better choice and one member was very much on the fence. In the end (as I remember) all members decided to support the group decision.

In the end the committee chose Dick Reed who is an excellent architect, that has designed a lot of libraries and “speaks libraries”.

Ultimately the decision was a well-reasoned decision one, based on criteria that they developed and thought through and Dick Reed was an excellent choice and I believe he did a great job on the project. I really enjoyed working with him and am sorry to see him step out of the project.

So, what next?

I do not see the need to start over in the search for a new architect. The committee did an impressive selection process, there was a clear first and second choice of architectural firm, based on a very rational process. There was very little discussion of any other firm at the time for consideration, other than Reed and Smith.

I would recommend that you go to the next firm on the list, to pick up this project, that being Steve Smith.

I understand that this might be a bit of a reach for you, as you were not part of the interview process that led to the selection in the first place. I will say that they were all screened very well and the committee you chose to do this for the town did a great job.

I would recommend that if you are uncomfortable with my suggested course of action, that you watch the nearly six hours of interviews listed below, to help you make a decision.

Architect interviews of the 4 firms interested in being reconsidered to design a new library.

Stewart Brecher <https://livestream.com/Rockportmaine/events/4963253>

Winton Scott <https://livestream.com/Rockportmaine/events/4963267>

John Priestly <https://livestream.com/Rockportmaine/events/4963289>

Steven Smith <https://livestream.com/Rockportmaine/events/4963281/videos/116032058>

The committee did an excellent job on this, and to recreate the work they did, would slow down any chance we have of getting this to the voters in June, as you are looking at another 5-10 hours of additional meeting time, that would have to wait until January before starting.

We are basically looking at about 90 days after the first of the year where we have to get things formulated, in order to have things ready for a vote in June. To do this an architect needs to start and begin working with Ben, ASAP.

Thoughts about fundraising efforts

I have very little experience with fundraising and capital campaigns at all. My career has been spent raising funds, by asking taxpayers.

That said, I believe that there are people who want to support and donate to the library project. They are waiting for some final decisions to be made and they will come forward. A smaller library, on the Limerock street location, will certainly be attainable and will likely encourage people to come forward to reach that goal. I heard from several donors that they did not want to donate to a library that was too big and too expensive for the town of Rockport.

Thoughts on goal for town vote

We currently pay about \$35,000 a year in an annual building lease, which would largely be put towards the annual payment of \$108,000 on a 1.5 Million Dollar bond. This lease is not the best use of taxpayer money, but we had no choice. This would be better spent paying off a bond payment.

As stated earlier, I do not believe that placing this on the ballot for November 2018 is advisable. While the impact of a new library on the mil rate is comparably small, voters will be very unlikely to vote favorably on increasing their taxes, after the impact of the two school bonds are felt.

I believe we have one last shot at this and we better make it a good one. We cannot afford to fail this time. I believe if we come back with a vote to bond 1.5 million dollars and we design a smaller library, that fits in the village, we will be successful. If we veer from that path we will fail.

General Timeline for a June Ballot

Absentee ballots for early voting, will need to be sent to the printer by April 27th. There are some changes coming that may mean that we need the bond language even earlier.

The path to get to that point, can be parallel to the design process. The key is we have something to show voters at a public hearing and available for review before absentee ballots are available 30 days before the election. Once you make a decision, Megan can begin working with bond counsel on the bond language that will go on the ballot as soon as you make a decision.

We will not have a lot of time and everything will need to go smoothly, to accomplish it. It is a LOT of work, but is doable, if you make some key decisions.

For this to happen, the site will need to be confirmed immediately.

The architect will need to be brought in by January 1st or 8th at the very latest. This will mean you will need to act quickly in making some decisions. Once you make those decisions, I can begin to start the many balls rolling we need to get rolling. Bottom Line is, Ben needs to start working with an architect as soon as possible.

In closing

I hope that my thoughts might be helpful, as you meet on Tuesday. My presence at the meeting is not likely to add anything that is not covered here.

You have three key questions to answer.

1. Do you want to bring this to the voters in June of 2018?
2. If the answer is yes, are you willing to reaffirm the vote of the previous select board and nail down the site and end the debate on it?
3. Are you willing to go with the firm that was number 2 in the selection process or do you want to do something else?

I will be watching online and will make myself available by phone, if you need me to answer any questions.