C.E. Brehm Memorial Public Library District
Library Expansion Advisory Panel
Minutes, 19 April, 2022, Meeting

Meeting called to order at: 1:01 PM

Those present: Robert Brown; Amanda Crider, Board Of Trustees; Esther Curry, Assistant Library Director; Brian Harland; Tony Iriti; Greg Lamberson, Chair; Bill Pixley, Library Director; Natalie Wellen; Linda Woodrome, Board Of Trustees; and Sharon Yearwood, Board Of Trustees.
Absent: Lori Given
Guests and audience: Amanda Voorhees, Project Manager at Dewberry, an architectural and engineering firm, was acknowledged and introduced herself and her firm.

Previous minutes: Chair Greg Lamberson brought up the minutes of the previous meeting on 05 April, 2022, for review. The members of the panel had no comments or revisions. Linda Woodrome made motion to approve the minutes; Sharon Yearwood seconded. Motion passed 10-0.

Old business: None.

New business: Chair Lamberson reviewed discussion at the Library District's Board Of Trustees Meeting held last Tuesday, 12 April. Our committee has been renamed "Library Expansion Advisory Panel" (LEAP).

Lamberson explained that subsequent to our last meeting Dewberry representative Amanda Voorhees agreed to attend this meeting to answer questions and gather information necessary to form Dewberry's proposal to our Board Of Trustees for a library building program and possible existing facility assessment.
Sharon Yearwood opened this discussion by asking Dewberry's Amanda Voorhees what information we needed to provide.
Amanda Voorhees said the first step is to decide what services are required and reviewed how Dewberry has worked with other library clients. Usually the process starts with a Building Program which is a specific document formed over time primarily by holding workshops with identified groups. Typically this starts with a library staff workshop to identify what's working and what's not in the library space. A similar workshop with the Board is also held. Community engagement workshops of various kinds can also be held. These workshops can range from identified targeted groups such as community leaders, patrons, etc., to large, open community forums, any of which would be led by Dewberry.
The Building Program is thereby shaped, encompassing what's working and not working at our library, long term goals, etc. This informs the Board and this group as to overall goals, guiding principles, and aspirations. Through this process the Building Program starts to become a very specific document. Aspects of our library are considered such as problems/needs within the library space, collection sizes for weeding and growth, historical circulation numbers, projections/ideas for growth, etc. This helps quantify needs and identify metrics to use in assessing the costs for identified requirements and aspirations for the library's future.
This Building Program document results in specific square footage recommendations to address identified needs and goals to inform a decision on library expansion.

The second, separate piece is a Building Assessment to assess the current facility and plant (systems), which is also an information gathering process.

The third, separate piece is a Concept Study taking the Building Program and Building Assessment into account to identify potential facility expansion. This can include consideration of the VFW or other properties. This step then leads to implementation of the library's future vision via concrete plans.

Bill Pixley pointed out that, other than the Genealogy Department, a research department which doesn't get weeded, all other departments have been aggressively weeding due to lack of space. This weeding has been more aggressive than advisable for this reason. This is especially true of the Children's Department. This has included pulling materials for older children to combine with teenager material to form a 'tween' collection, which there is no space for at all.

Lamberson asked if the level of community engagement desired in the Building Program phase needs to be answered now. Voorhees indicated that it should be. The level and amount of information gathering from the public is a key piece of the Building Program document.

Voorhees went on to describe workshop options. These can be virtual but are generally in person. They include information on what libraries are doing today. Libraries are community centers, have maker spaces, and all the different things libraries bring to the community outside of their traditional role. The workshops also include interactive elements allowing people vote on spaces, teen gaming spaces, large/small program spaces, group meeting spaces, small group study spaces, technology collaboration areas, maker spaces, etc. There can be online general or targeted polling, surveys, etc. This includes aspirational community ideas not specific to your library. Also there are open forums to give feedback on where the library should go in the future.

Similar voting and polling of the staff, the Board, and this panel are included to help identify priorities. When or how much community engagement occurs varies by individual libraries.

Amanda Crider favored the idea of getting the community involved. There has been uncertainty and lack of progress in the past, but engaging the community on what they'd like their library's future to be is the way forward. This project will outlive all of us and help to define Mt. Vernon's future. The community's ownership of this process is paramount and will also directly support fundraising. We should allow the community to drive the library's future. Other panel members agreed.

Lamberson asked Voorhees if she sensed she could gather everything needed from our panel today to formulate Dewberry's formal proposal to our Board. Voorhees indicated she could. She will send us a draft for review. This Building Proposal piece will help identify areas of need and square footage shortages in areas.

Sharon Yearwood discussed community open forums vs. workshops. She mentioned the nearby community college [Rend Lake College] which the library is working with on computer space this year. Also she mentioned our library houses the State Of Illinois Daughters Of The American Revolution Genealogy Collection in addition to our other substantial genealogy holdings. These include some of our unique library patron groups. So how does Dewberry choose who to bring in for community input?

Voorhees responded by saying every library is different and such variation in how the community is involved is up to us. The more input the better generally. A wide variety of methods to gather groups for input can be accommodated from targeted invites to general open advertisement. Dewberry often tries to structure things such that many groups could be accommodated in different settings on a particular day. Perhaps the day may start with the staff then later in the day another gathering can include invited community leaders, then perhaps an open forum for the community. This is an example of how different workshop days can be structured and different constituencies can be accommodated. How many or few of these days are arranged is up to us.

Crider asked whether these workshops are led by Dewberry staff. Voorhees responded indicating she personally leads these workshops in most cases. Our library representatives are present in order to answer specific questions unique to us, but these sessions are led and conducted by Dewberry. The aim is to focus on the future of the library so local library staff or board participation isn't a primary component.

Linda Woodrome responded that this process is what is needed and Dewberry should work up a proposal right away. The community involvement process and details can be worked out in more detail as we proceed. We really want to move this project along.

Lamberson asked for a proposal time frame. Voorhees indicated a proposal draft could be prepared in a week. Lamberson mentioned that the Board Of Trustees has its next meeting on 10 May and that ideally the Board could have a formal cost proposal before them at that meeting.

Woodrome pointed out we could discuss our process in that regard without keeping Voorhees longer today. Voorhees indicated that time frame from her side would be no problem.

Yearwood asked Voorhees if she/Dewberry could present the proposal and talk about it to our Board Of Trustees at their 10 May, 2002, meeting via Zoom at 7 PM. Voorhees said she could attend via Zoom at that time. Yearwood further stated members of this Panel should be invited to attend that same Board Of Trustees meeting on the 10th.

Voorhees then asked whether the Building Assessment piece should also be a part of the proposal. Lamberson indicated he thought we wanted both of those pieces. Crider questioned whether we would be ready to look at those questions; was this due to understanding the feasibility of building on to the existing building? Pixley indicated both this question and questions about the viability of HVAC and other systems drove the desire to conduct the Building Assessment now. Woodrome concurred viability of the current facility and feasibility of building on to the existing building were driving questions that should be answered, indicating two proposals are desired (Building Program and Building Assessment). Voorhees responded she would recommend splitting up these two proposals and leaving a Building Assessment out for now. The Building Assessment is considered a subsequent phase and would be less effective were it to be conducted concurrently with the Building Program phase. Woodrome, Yearwood and others concurred Dewberry should submit only a Building Program proposal at this time.

Amanda Voorhees then departed the meeting, and the panel continued discussion.

Pixley asked whether we should include a signed copy of the minutes to our meetings. Yearwood and Woodrome indicated that would be fine if desired. Pixley indicated he would include the minutes in his Board packet of materials for ease of access.

Woodrome asked Tony Iriti and Brian Harland what their opinions were on involving the community. Tony Iriti pointed out this can be a double-edged sword. It is needed for community input especially considering the need to fundraise.

Brian Harland indicated the committee needs to be adequately prepared for any questions including budgetary questions. Everyone who pays taxes is going to want to have a say in how their money is spent. This process is also important to address the fundamental question of what the library space needs to be for community members to utilize it.

Robert Brown emphasized we need to understand what our needs are versus optional desires. What are our top priorities? Our requirements? Prioritizing in this way will make us more effective in achieving our goals.

Harland continued, saying it's nice to have everything but that we need to understand what is realistic and what specifically will achieve our goals so that we remain good stewards of public funds.

Woodrome and Yearwood said the patrons of the library will have good, realistic ideas because of their experiences using the library. Out in the wider community ideas may be more farfetched.

Harland indicated at least one wider community event is desirable to allow everyone input and participation. As a resident of Woodlawn, Harland pointed out visiting the library involves a 25 minute drive for him and his family. With other daily commitments this makes visiting the library regularly impractical. But having input into what the library becomes in the community is important nonetheless.

Crider mentioned it's important to weigh patrons' needs more heavily than those of community members who don't use the library.

Yearwood asked Harland, as a member of the outlying community, what would get him to come to the library more. Harland responded the library would need to be an inclusive experience for his whole family. There need to be activities and areas to address the needs of all his family members so they could all be accommodated during a visit. This doesn't necessarily mean event programming. Programs require you to be at an event at a specific time. The library needs to be inviting and something for the whole family; a true destination. Accommodating existing patrons and potential patrons who haven't frequented the library to date is walking a tightrope, but a necessary one.

Yearwood indicated she would like to see community leaders invited and included in workshops in addition to patrons and the community generally. There are people out there the library can reach who don't know what a great resource the library is.

Harland further indicated visiting the Rend Lake College library recently. It has a coffee shop, lots of work spaces, computers. This space is far more inviting than the library experience of 10 years ago. If the library was this sort of space it would generate more activity and invite new patrons. Yearwood indicated she thought this was what our library should be in the future.

Iriti asked what the demographic of our current patrons is. Yearwood, Esther Curry, and Pixley indicated it's made up of two groups primarily: Older patrons and young people with kids with some additional participation from other demographics during events such as game nights and special programs. Many members commented on the success of and good response to the existing library programming. Harland asked what additional demographics we would like to reach.

Yearwood related what an impact COVID had on the library which the library is still recovering from.

Woodrome pointed out the library needs a larger space for programming.

Iriti asked about how much schools encourage kids to come to the library as used to be more common.

Yearwood said the county schools do better at promoting the library than city schools.

Brown pointed out there needs to be community involvement so that everybody feels invited to come, not just leaders or patrons.

Natalie Wellen pointed out there are grant opportunities available when we decide what we want to do but that she thought we were moving in the right direction.

Lamberson then asked do we want to meet again upon seeing Dewberry's proposal and prior to the Board Of Trustees meeting. Crider suggested we meet as a panel prior to presentation to the Board so we can have a thoughtful response to the Board Of Trustees during the formal presentation.

Next meeting: After further discussion our next meeting was set at **10:30AM Tuesday, 03 May, 2022**, at which time we will discuss Dewberry's pending proposal among the panel. Amanda Voorhees will not be asked to attend or present anything.

Adjournment: Thereafter Sharon Yearwood moved to adjourn. Robert Brown seconded. Motion passed 10-0.

Meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.