

APPROVED

MINUTES

Library Advisory Commission (LAC)

May 10, 2006

Main Library

1213 Newell Road.

7:00 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Sanford Forte, Genevieve Gerard, Sandra Hirsh (Chair), Lenore Jones, Paula Skokowski, Valerie Stinger,

Commissioners Absent: John Stucky

Staff Present: Paula Simpson

CALL TO ORDER – Chair Hirsh called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None.

BUSINESS

1. Solicit public input on draft recommendations for the long range library plan

There is room at the Main Library to put a two-story building. The last bond issue went from \$95 million to \$78 million before it died. It's like we're talking about nothing! The Library is discarding too many books. College Terrace has a perfectly wretched collection. It's outdated and limited. Is this what "popular collections" consists of? Too many mysteries, not enough history, psychology, philosophy, art. Main is the logical place for an expansion, without using too much of the community garden. Main is not a dilapidated building. Greer Park can be used as the community garden. Underground parking will cost \$60,000 per parking space.

People near Mitchell Park don't want the son of Measure D. They want a 35,000 to 40,000 sq ft building, not a 90,000 sq ft building. A café is over the top. What's wrong with keeping Mitchell Park as a branch? Don't want staff moving there. I'm officially registering my opposition.

In general I vote yes for school measures and education measures, but I voted against Measure D. What is the scope of the proposed homework assistance referred to in the plan? No mention of school libraries in the draft. Would not want school libraries empty while paying to build space in City library. Don't want the Library to be a baby-sitting service. I mostly use College Terrace now, and I find it good, the collection is good. All the top shelves are empty, especially in the non-fiction. If we're short of space, why are they empty? I mostly browse for my materials. I would be happy waiting for something that's in an off-site warehouse, for example four books about cookies, so that way the Library wouldn't have to discard any books. What is the scope of the Library's purpose?

I'm a regular user of the Main and Children's Libraries. Over the past year I've realized that people in Palo Alto have become good at saying "no". They say "no" until they cut their nose off to spite their face. I take my kids to Menlo Park, Mountain View, Los Altos because they

have nice libraries. I'd like to see a terrific library here in our community. Endless "no"s lead to nothing.

Kids need a place to hang out, and I'd rather have them hanging out in a Library.

Why the cut-off at the 3rd grade for the Children's Library?

Will reading specialists from the school district be involved in making decisions about the materials in the Children's Library?

This is the son of Measure D, with some twists that make it even less desirable. We can save a lot of space by not moving administrative, technical, children's staff into the Mitchell Park space. We don't have to have an edifice complex. I also have a problem with underground parking. People in a suburban setting don't like underground parking. And there are water table considerations.

I'm concerned about the out-sized size of the proposed (Mitchell Park) building. It's not right to cut off children's services at the 3rd grade, to cut them off perfunctorily. It's a violation of the public trust. You're devaluing the Main Library by changing it to the Newell Branch. This will make the voters mad. It serves no purpose.

The commitment to enhance branch services needs to be stronger. It was so important in the survey.

Why change the name of the Downtown Library to the Forest Branch? Surprised that there is so little support for a performance audit of the Library. You must enhance services at the College Terrace and Downtown Libraries. You're not doing this in your plan. We have to stay focused on getting a bond measure that can be passed by the voters. The proposed plan is divisive. You get Mitchell Park expanded, but what's in it for the north? You should do a modest expansion of Main, to expand collection space for children, teens, and meeting space. It was a bond issue – for \$700,000 – in 1956 that built Main and Mitchell Park. People then saw the need to build on both sides of town.

Mitchell Park is too small and needs to be expanded. All you need is about 8,000 to 9,000 sq ft, and you could get that with a plan that an architect friend has drawn up. If the Library started charging for videos, could account for \$30 million in new revenues over 10 years. Palo Alto is sitting on \$20 million worth of property, including the golf course. Could put the money away in an interest-bearing account and prevent these endless bond issues. There's a tremendous cost savings to be had by implementing the right technology. Need to start weaving technology into the fabric of the Library. Sense is that this plan has not been thought through. Possible use of voice prompts for automated processes. Link Plus will immediately expand the Library's collection by 5 million items. I don't support this plan because it doesn't plan for future technology. Maybe in another 5 to 7 iterations it will. Plan does not address how current use will evolve into future use.

I don't think of Mitchell Park as a neighborhood branch. It's centrally located. It serves a sizeable population – all of south and southwest Palo Alto. If building a new building, you're not building a Library, you're building a parking structure. Cars are a fact of life for communities, and libraries, all across the country. If you think otherwise, get over it. With the Mitchell Park Library, you cannot encroach on the park. This is written into the City's charter. And you can't do a proper expansion on the Library footprint alone. You need to incorporate the adjacent building into the plan. Don't mean to discourage those people who have wonderful creative ideas, but I encourage them to research what's already been done, and review all the many feasibility studies done for Mitchell Park. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have already been spent on studies.

I'm a watchdog. I'm glad the LAC has seen the light and has decided to maintain the branch system. But we're just being given a bone by getting paperbacks that are minimally processed and magazines that aren't cataloged. You're making Downtown less than a Library. Description does not sound like much. Give at least what we have, and preferably what we used to have 5 years ago.

How do you decide what collections should be at each branch?

The extended hours are pie-in-the-sky. You can't really think they're realistic. What are you giving up to have them?

Will there still be a popular collection at Main?

Trying to expand Mitchell Park to the extent you're going for is beating a dead horse. You'll get a better response if you expand both Main and Mitchell Park. If not, we'll lose again.

Increase in service hours as proposed will cost an extra \$1.3 million.

COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jones moved to adjourn.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 8:15 p.m.