

APPROVED

MINUTES

City Council & Library Advisory Commission (LAC) Study Session
September 29, 2003
Art Center Auditorium
1313 Newell Road
6:00 p.m.

City Council Present: Bern Beecham, Jim Burch, Hillary Freeman, Yoriko Kishimoto, Judy Kleinberg, Nancy Lytle, Jack Morton, Mayor Dena Mossar (Chair), Vic Ojakian
Commissioners Present: Tony Angiletta, Sandra Hirsh, Lenore Jones, John Kagel, Tina Kass, Paula Skokowski
Commissioners Absent: Tom Wyman
Staff Present: Paul Thiltgen, Diane Jennings, Evelyn Cheng

This is a joint meeting with City Council regarding transmittal of LAC's Palo Alto Library Plan Status Report and Recommendations.

- ⚡ Mayor Mossar called the meeting to order and made opening remarks to outline the format and goals of the meeting. Council members were reminded that no formal action would be taken since this was a study session.
- ⚡ After thanking the Council for its support of the Library system in the past, Chair Jones gave a brief presentation on the background and highlights of the Report and what the LAC hoped to achieve at the Study Session. Jones said a clear assumption was that recommendations were based on working within the current budget and if that was incorrect, the LAC would like to know.
- ⚡ Kagel added that there are two aspects to the LAC's recommendations: (1) long-range, mid-range and short-term timeframes and (2) the need to redeploy resources to resource libraries. The LAC requests Council's direction in order to proceed with priorities and cost parameters.
- ⚡ Hirsh reiterated the LAC's struggle to make recommendations and stated it had to look at the big picture and make best use of limited resources.
- ⚡ Kass said there were minimal resources for libraries and asked Council about the possibility of adding resources to the Library program as well as reallocation of City staff as a whole.
- ⚡ In response to Kishimoto's request for statistics about the library, Skokowski pointed out that the best resource for accurate and updated statistics on Library circulation and collections is the Library's website. Staff prepared a comparison data by facility table for the study session.

≠ Angiletta added that the LAC operates on the premise that the Library is a social space, a place for books and prints and a meeting place.

≠ Jones stated more Palo Altans are going to libraries outside of Palo Alto, and that bottom line is, the Library needs help.

≠ Each Council member gave their feedback on the LAC's Report:

YORIKO KISHIMOTO

- Agreed library system is in paralysis.
- Recommendation to close Downtown Library (DO) deemed as a last resort. Would need to be convinced that closing DO would result in a significant improvement in rest of system before approving this direction.
- Agreed with operational changes and optimizing use of space at Main Library. Would like to see more automated checkouts.
- Would like a comprehensive table of library statistics that could be analyzed, e.g. given the high percentage of juvenile circulation at Mitchell Park, should more space be dedicated to services for children and teens?
- Palo Alto needs one great resource library, but should keep the branches.

HILLARY FREEMAN

- Agreed that Library is tremendously neglected.
- Felt that the Plan is a big shift from the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Would like to see
 - (1) a matrix of alternatives reviewed by the LAC – what options were discussed, the reasons for their rejection in an executive overview format
 - (2) a list of priorities and alternatives for saving neighborhood libraries and having one, not two, resource libraries.
- Suggested out-of-box thinking (e.g. libraries open on certain days/hours for teens to do group work when noise level is higher), ways to free up some space under tight economic times to accommodate more people (e.g. work with school district to open libraries at Paly and Gunn for teen hours)
- Since libraries are such a priority, staff should look into shifting city resources to libraries.
- Use of technology as means to keep down the number of staff needed to operate the Libraries

NANCY LYTTLE

- Hoped proposal to reduce the percentage for passage of local library bond measures someday passes at the state level. If it doesn't, not optimistic that the local community has the appetite to pass another bond measure.
- Believed that one outstanding feature of our library system is the neighborhood nature and encouraged the LAC to explore the potential of keeping one big resource Library.
- Reminded everyone that San Jose is building larger libraries without increasing size of staff.
- In favor of having a larger share of the City budget going to libraries.

VIC OJAKIAN

- Disagreed with Lytle. He said Council should be careful about allocating a larger percentage of the City budget to library services.
- Wanted additional data:
 - (1) Put some numbers together, e.g. total cost of operation in relation to population and compare with other cities; staff per service hours per population and compared with other cities; monies spent on collections and materials and compare with other cities
 - (2) In the area of Library Automation, would like to know the status of the project. Budget shows \$3M allocated for this project for the last 5 years. Is this completed? What's the impact? Is it working well? Is fiber optics working and to what degree? If the monies have been spent, why is the system not better than it is now? How well are the self-checkout system working?
- Endorsed a lot of what the LAC recommends, commended the LAC for creative idea.
- Compared to other libraries, the "back office operations" area of library is awful and could be improved, especially if moved to Downtown.
- Council needs to figure out a process to ask the public how to fund a new facility, without creating divisiveness. Look at other funding measures than a construction bond.
- Should proceed with figuring out how to convert the space at Main now occupied by Technical Services and look into other ways to serve seniors now using Downtown (e.g. provide bookmobile or shuttle to another library).

JUDY KLEINBERG

- Believed that the vision for Palo Alto is to provide the best quality library that the community wants. Closure of DO is last resort.
- Encouraged the LAC to take a fresh look and examine further the use of technology as an option. If a capital investment in technology would help, would like to know that.
- Would like to hear from the LAC what it takes, in terms of \$, for Council to make a difference in library service and hours, how Council can help and where LAC would recommend using additional funds.
- Preferred increasing hourly staff rather than benefited, regular, staff.
- What would it mean to have a Volunteer Coordinator?
- What are the costs for implementing the short-term redesign goals?
- Explore potential collaboration with communities, e.g. Bar Association, Chamber of Commerce, to build Library collection
- Encouraged the LAC to find ways to reorganize and reprioritize without closing Neighborhood Libraries.
- Would like to see actual data on service hours, e.g. Hours/days libraries are open, when to juggle hours for most effective usage, amend hours to keep DO open.

JACK MORTON

- Morton disagreed with Kleinberg's suggestion for the LAC to quantify what it takes to expand since the City has no hidden funding anywhere and Library will have to work with the resources they have.
- Get outside of limitations of City budget; look into parcel tax or other funding options.

- Concentrate on positive things and not go for a bond measure again, e.g. Children's Library project with public and community efforts combined.
- To trade off not closing DO, offer fewer resource libraries.

BERN BEECHAM

- Comparisons with other cities don't tell us what we want.
- Encouraged the LAC to implement recommendations to improve inefficiencies in the Library and to continue to consider overall needs of the entire community.
- Did not think the community wants to consolidate libraries.
- Questioned if it was appropriate to consider another bond measure again.

JIM BURCH

- Not convinced with numbers and comparisons with other neighboring libraries.
- Stated that the Friends and the LAC were not in agreement.
- Agreeable to one resource library and a couple of neighborhood libraries.
- Hoped we do go back for another bond measure. Suggested individual bonds for each library.

DENA MOSSAR

- Agreed with colleagues that the community values neighborhood libraries.
- Felt that Council needs to look at various issues.
 - Does Palo Alto need to have what other communities have?
 - Can we have partnerships with other systems?
- Another piece not discussed was land use consideration – increasing population in the downtown area.
- Would like to get statistics of usage, e.g. daytime users, Stanford community or during economic decline.
- Encouraged the LAC to find a solution that will work.

≠ Mayor Mossar applauded the LAC for thoughtful work, even if politically controversial, and urged the LAC to find a solution that will work.

Public comment followed for an hour. About thirty people spoke, all but two against the recommendation to close the Downtown Library to the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.