

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OSSINING PUBLIC LIBRARY
Work Session
Thursday, December 7, 2023, 5:00 PM
2nd Floor Conference Room
Ossining Public Library, 53 Croton Ave., Ossining, NY;
41 Secor Rd., Ossining, NY

Meeting Minutes (draft)

In Attendance:

In-Person: Karen LaRocca-Fels, Molly Robbins, Meghan Huppuch, Alice Joselow, Amanda Curley, Cecilia Quintero, Philip Rice, Shandi Speller, Mallory Marinaro, Kathleen Sowle (Lothrop Associates), Dragana Dragovic (Lothrop Associates)

Virtual: Bryan Strohman (SGH), Althema Goodson

Call to Order

At 5:12 PM President Amanda Curley called the December 7, 2023 Work Session to order.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mission and Vision: The Ossining Public Library enriches, connects, and inspires our community and is the community's center for lifelong learning.

Board Discussion

Buildings and Grounds Committee Update

Retaining Wall Update *provided by Bryan Strohman of SGH*

- MSE wall (mechanically stabilized earth wall) is a retaining wall in which reinforcements run horizontally back into the soil to hold everything together.
- Bryan shared an overview of the history of library's MSE wall since SGH got involved in 2017.
 - Following observed signs of distress (gaps and cracks in wall facing), an assessment done by a different engineer led that engineer to recommend replacing the entire wall.
 - The library asked SGH to provide a peer review of that recommendation in 2021.
 - SGH recommended ongoing monitoring and engaged new surveyor (Langan) to review previous findings and do ongoing monitoring. Until recently, any movements detected were within survey tolerance (equipment measurement can only be accurate to within 1/8-1/4")
 - In June 2023 SGH notified the library that movement greater than survey tolerance had been detected. The measurements indicate that at the southwest corner of the wall there is movement out (towards northwest) and down.

- Once that was observed, SGH performed several tests including evaluating soil conditions, water level conditions, and strength of soil in order to calculate the factor of safety. The factor of safety indicates the wall's capacity to resist further movement.
- Following these tests, SGH found a factor of safety close to 1 which tells us that it's "marginally stable". (The factor of safety is a ratio between the driving forces that would cause the failure vs the resisting forces that would stop the failure. A number close to one indicates that those forces are close to equal.) For the library's circumstance, we should be targeting a factor of safety of 1.5.
- This is why SGH has recommended closing the parking area closest to corner that's demonstrating the most movement - the analysis provided did not take into account the additional weight of cars or plowed snow in that corner of the parking lot.
- SGH has recommended that the library explore methods to mitigate the movement of the wall.
- What is the cause of the movement in this particular corner of the wall?
 - The slope is steepest at this area of wall.
 - Though it is closest to the library building, the weight of the building does not impact the wall stability. The building's weight is directed down into the foundation.
- Amanda Curley asked whether there has been an impact on the other side of the corner we're discussing (the side that is parallel to The Dugout). Bryan answered that the wall is not pushing outward to the left. The cracks that have developed on that side are a result of the outward movement on the northwest side.
- Alice Joselow emphasized the need to communicate well with the public about why we are blocking off that corner of parking lot, particularly in light of the failed retaining wall below the former Elks Lodge. We need to be clear that it's not a catastrophic risk.
 - Karen LaRocca-Fels and Molly Robbins shared that the library is in the process of getting another temporary fence.
 - Mallory Marinaro shared that there's a [statement on the website](#) that the library used the last time closing off a portion of the parking lot was recommended.
 - Ginnie Blake-West will work on enhancing this statement with the guidance of engineer and attorney and the new statement will be placed in a more prominent place on the website.
- Bryan shared that it may be worthwhile to consider the interim option of unloading the wall (removing some of the weight off the wall by taking away some of the parking lot/soil/wall in that corner). This would help the stress on the wall and demonstrate that action is being taken to ensure safety.
 - This would have implications for drainage in that corner that would need to be addressed and we would need to consider zoning requirements (certain number of parking spots for particular properties). Bryan has tried – without success – to obtain this zoning information from Ossining and NYS.

- Karen LaRocca-Fels confirmed that when the wall was built all approvals were done by SED, not by the village or town of Ossining.
- Alice Joselow shared that the solution of deloading the parking lot would likely need to be approved by SED since this is a school district library. That will likely not happen quickly. Bryan asserted that the speed of approval may depend in part on how the concerns are presented.
- Amanda Curley asked how long it would take to correct the problem. If we come up with a temporary solution, how long would it be in place? Bryan answered that it would likely take many months and up to a year or two because some elements are not within our control. For example, permitting and approvals to begin construction have taken Bryan up to six months on other projects.
- Phil Rice shared that in order to figure out how much time it will take, we need to first determine our course of action, how we'll finance it, and who needs to provide permits and approvals.
- Next steps:
 - SGH is currently developing five conceptual options that will soon be sent to the professional cost estimator.
 - SGH will then share those with the Board and present them along with the associated advantages and disadvantages of each option.

Building Plan Update (Lothrop) *provided by Kathleen Sowle of Lothrop Associates*

- Molly Robbins shared that she and Kathleen have been going back and forth with notes and feedback from staff, trustees, and the Building and Grounds committee and Lothrop Associates has been making the necessary tweaks. We're now at the point where everyone's feedback has been incorporated.
- Kathleen Sowle shared that Lothrop Associates is still waiting on the survey results that show the library's property lines in order to be able fold in the outdoor elements of the plans. They are expected to arrive soon.
- Kathleen presented the most recent floor plans for all floors of the library. Trustees commented and asked clarifying questions.
- Kathleen then walked the Board through the rough cost estimate of probable costs based on the current designs.
 - Phil Rice noted that the mezzanine subtotal costs had not been included in the project total.
 - Kathleen commented that the current project total does not include cost escalation and other factors which could add 29-50% to this amount.
 - Alice Joselow commented that we are adding a significant amount of usable space (teen space, meeting rooms, etc.) to the library which will be impactful for the community.
 - Karen LaRocca-Fels requested an updated version of probable costs of the current plans in order to have an estimate of what the library would need to bond for if all elements discussed were included.

Board of Trustees Goals, Measures of Success

Outreach

- Amanda Curley and Meghan Huppuch will be doing a trial run of outreach (aka

- Coffee with Trustees) on December 14. They will report back to the Board.
- Amanda Curley has set up two community outreach meetings with Karen and outside folks for connection building and information gathering. Other trustees are welcome to join!
 - April Chao who's involved in a number of community organizations
 - Westchester Collaborative Theater
 - Meghan Huppuch will send a request to all trustees to build out our list of community organizations and leaders to connect with the library.

Finance Committee

- Amanda Curley shared that Althema Goodson shared it's been challenging for her to call meetings of the Finance Committee due to her schedule. Althema Goodson asked Phil Rice if he's interested in becoming chair of the Finance Committee and he agreed.
- Amanda Curley asked if anyone other trustees are interested in joining. Meghan Huppuch volunteered.
- Phil Rice commented that he will need to meet with Karen to determine what's needed from the committee.
- Amanda requested that the committee report monthly on the budget sheet about under/overspending. Trustees agreed that this would be useful. Phil commented on potentially reformatting it. Karen suggested that this could be discussed with Bob Majernik.

Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee

First Reading: Draft Revised Using of Meeting and Performance Spaces Policy

- Rescheduled for December 18 because further amendments from the attorney have yet to be made.

First Reading: Draft Revised Code of Conduct

- Shandi Speller asked how the library is determining whether an animal is a service animal. Karen answered that she has consulted the library's attorney on this question and learned that a service animal is one that has been "trained to do a particular task for an individual" which does not include emotional support animals. Library staff are allowed to ask what job this animal does for a patron. If it's emotional support, staff can say that the library only allows service animals in the building. If any animal is disruptive, the patron can be asked to leave.

Bylaws – attendance clause

- Amanda Curley presented a chart with each trustee's absences and shared that she was inspired to create it because she wanted to prevent the circumstance of a trustee having missed four or more meetings without realizing.
- Amanda suggested that the Policy and Personnel Committee discuss the bylaws since there is a clause about attendance, but there is no mention of Work Sessions or what may be considered an excused absence.
- Shandi Speller asked why the topic of meeting attendance was being raised again. Amanda shared that she was concerned about the Board acting in

accordance with its bylaws and that some trustees have said they aren't aware of how many meetings they've missed.

- Shandi and Alice asserted and agreed that this conversation be brought to a work session in order for the full Board to discuss and agree on any proposed changes to the bylaws.
- Amanda agreed to that course of action and invited Board members and Karen to submit suggestions for proposed changes to the bylaws to Alice.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Meghan Huppuch, seconded by Alice Joselow. Motion passed 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 8:01 PM.