

Permanent Building Committee
Library Building Committee
Town of Hopkinton

April 25, 2011

Hopkinton Board of Selectmen
18 Main Street
Hopkinton, MA 01748

Re: **Library Abutters Questions and Comments - PBC Responses**

Dear Board of Selectmen:

In response to the April 11, 2011 letter to you from 5 of the abutters to the Library Project, where they asked several very good questions, we provide the following responses and clarifications for your information. We have also clarified some incorrect statements in their letter regarding the history of the project.

Please note that we have contacted the abutters via phone and email on several occasions, and offered to meet at their convenience to discuss these issues. However, they have refused to meet with us. It is unfortunate that they have declined to participate in this important process and we look forward to the opportunity to meet with them to review their concerns and our answers in person.

Responses to comments in their letter:

- A. The comment that this project was rushed and the design was completed in just a few weeks: **As the board knows the Library Trustees have been working on this project for about 10 years and in earnest over the past 3 years, with regular updates to the BOS at their meetings. We had public input and programming completed and actually pursued several design options for an expansion on the site itself - with the one drawback being the lack of onsite parking. Johnson and Roberts was hired in July 2010 and their initial assignment was to look at 3 town sites – the existing library site, Center School and Claffin Place. Initial designs for all 3 sites were reviewed on July 20, 2010 and further refined. We then further explored the existing building expansion and Center School Options. In review of the options for Center School and anticipating the Town voting to build a new school the Committee pursued a freestanding building at Center School which provided the required parking and also the most cost effective project. However the School Committee determined that their potential timeline did not allow them to offer the site to the Library Project and the public stated that they preferred the current location - consequently we focused on the existing site expansion. So the existing building expansion has actually been under current design consideration since July 2010. And of course the biggest concern for this scheme is lack of parking – however we are working on a shared parking solution.**

Responses to Numbered Questions in their letter:

1. Scale of Project

- a. Does it make sense to increase the library space by over 500% (4,300 sq ft to 26,568 sq ft) if the number of visitors increased only 6% from 2005 - 2010?

In response to public input, we reduced the design of the renovation/expansion to 22,000 square foot building on two floors. The proposed 22,000 square foot building will accommodate Hopkinton's current population of 15,000 residents, as well as its population in 20 years, which is expected to be 20,000 residents.

The existing building is about 5,783 square feet – one of the smallest libraries for a community of this size. The last renovation of the library was 43 years ago, in 1967, when the population was about 5,000 residents. Since then the population has tripled and the need for library services has dramatically increased, yet the library size has remained unchanged.

- b. The scale of the building is much too large for the lots, and will change the character of the residential neighborhood of historic homes around the library.

The height and massing of the building is consistent with the by-laws and does not exceed the existing height of the library roof. The building has been designed to respond to and respect the existing building and the surrounding buildings. It is consistent with a neighborhood that includes a mix of residential homes, businesses, retail, restaurants, office space and large church structures.

- c. What is the ratio of the building footprint to square footage of the lot?

The lot is .58 Acre, and the building footprint is 11,000 square feet.

2. Meeting space

- a. The Library Committee has emphasized that one of the primary purposes of the expanded library is to provide additional meeting space. Is this an important function of a library?

We have never said that the program space is a primary purpose – but it is an integral part of any successful library. Today’s library is a place for people of all ages to gather, share and enjoy community and cultural events and programs. Providing additional space in which to offer more library programs for children, young adults and adults is a major goal. Please talk with area libraries that have adequate program space and you will be amazed at what they can offer their residents in the way of expanded programs. Most library directors we recently talked with comment that their meeting rooms are not quite large enough due to the popularity of their programs.

- b. The library design includes a meeting room for 150 people (documents vary between 110 seats and 150 seats), but includes only 21 dedicated on-site parking spaces. That doesn’t make sense.

The proposed design includes a room for library programs with a capacity for 110 people. A dedicated space for library programs (cultural/artistic/educational) is an integral part of any new library.

The current library functions with only 6 parking spaces, yet still provides activities and programs that draw upwards of 50-60 people. The town is attempting to obtain additional shared parking.

- c. Is it a good use of town resources to fund this additional meeting space when there is existing meeting space in town:
 - i. Schools have significant meeting space and ample parking.
 - ii. Town Hall has meeting space.
 - iii. Fire Dept. has meeting space on the 2nd floor and parking.
 - iv. Police Dept. has meeting space on the 2nd floor.
 - v. Senior Center has meeting space and parking. This space is available many weekdays before 4:00pm, every weekday after 4:00pm, and all day every weekend.

The preliminary design contains a 110-seat program room, whose main purpose is to provide space for library programs. Currently, the library presents programs in the small, main reading room, usually after regular library hours, so patrons who are using the library are not disturbed.

Program space is an integral part of the project program and so needs to be part of the library itself. The rooms and locations you mention are fine for programs or meetings that don’t have any relationship to the library (and are VERY limited in their availability). Therefore, the addition of program space is necessary to allow the library to offer their programs effectively.

3. Parking/Traffic

- a. The MBLC grant requires 66 parking spots for a 26,568 sq. ft. library (1 space per 400 sq. ft of building), plus a minimum of 9 spots for staff and handicap for a total of 75 parking spots. The proposed parking lot has 21 spots (only 28% of the spots required).

The preliminary expansion/renovation plans is 22,000 square feet. Pursuant to the town by-law, parking capacity of 55 spaces is needed. The Town is working to acquire additional spaces for the library via a Shared Parking Agreement, as provided for by the Hopkinton by-laws. The MBLC defers to town by-laws on this issue.

- b. Additional on-street parking for 10 spots may be available (4 on Main Street and 6 on Church Street) bringing the total parking to 31. On-street parking is not dedicated parking (and still only 41% of the spots required).

There are over 200 parking spaces within 500 feet of the library and again the committee is working on additional parking arrangements that will help the library and possibly help the downtown.

- c. How will this on-street parking affect our existing downtown businesses? There is already a shortage of parking spots, and several on-street spots have already been lost in front of The Gourmet and Bill's Pizza.

According to a Town directed 2010 parking study, there is sufficient parking in Downtown Hopkinton, and business are not adversely affected.

In fact, the addition of 21 parking spaces will help to alleviate any perceived parking issue.

- d. Has there been a traffic study to determine the effect on Main and Church Streets? Would Church Street need to become one-way to accommodate on-street parking?

This is something that we had discussed at several of the forums and meetings. However it has not been determined whether to request that Church Street become a one way street – we will continue that dialogue with the Town.

- e. The Center School site design had over 90 parking spots.

The Center School site is not available for library construction. The Town is still discussing future use of the site for a school.

4. Residential neighborhood in Historic District

- a. The existing library is in the Historic District.

Yes, the library is in the Historic District.

- b. The library will be seen from Main Street, Hayden Rowe and the town common.

The library will be visible from Main Street and Church Street.

- c. The library needs an easement from one of the abutters for the parking lot buffer.

In preparing to request the change of zoning, a land survey was completed. The survey found a four-foot discrepancy in the lot line between 9 Church and 11 Church, resulting in a four foot loss of frontage. The discrepancy affects the plan by reducing the width of a 'buffer zone.'

There are several ways to accommodate the discrepancy: 1) the adjacent land owner may choose to grant an easement; 2) the town may apply for a variance for a narrower buffer zone; 3) the parking lot may be reduced by one parking space and be compliant with the zoning by-law.

It should be recognized that the four foot discrepancy on the lot line has no impact on the size of the building whatsoever.

In all other respects, the proposed plans are compliant with the zoning by-laws for Downtown Business district. There is no plan to request relief from height restrictions or setbacks.

- d. Is the current design in keeping with the historic character of the existing structures and the historic district?

The Hopkinton Historical Commission has been consulted on this project and voted to support the conceptual designs submitted with the grant at their January 13, 2011 meeting after attending a presentation of the current design on December 14, 2010.

- e. The architect rendering of the proposed library expansion omitted three residential abutters in the Historic District. This is unprofessional and misleading.

The omission was not intentional –the buildings are obstructed by trees as viewed on GoogleEarth.

- f. The lots are zoned Residential A where a library is a permitted use. It is clear that the request to change the zoning to Downtown Business District is intended solely to make it easier to get relief from the zoning laws (maximum lot coverage of 35% vs. 60%, and setbacks). The library should not get preferential treatment at the expense of the due process rights of abutting private property owners.

The library fronts on Main Street with all of its adjacent neighbors being in the Downtown Business District. In addition, the parcels east, west and north of the library are zoned DTB. Finally, the first 3 properties on the even side of Church Street are zoned DTB, including the parcel across from 9 Church Street. As such the library would only be entitled to the same regulations as all of the adjacent properties in the Downtown Business District.

The library has gone through the proper channels and approval process for requesting the zoning change. The Zoning Advisory Board unanimously recommended that the Planning Board consider the rezoning. On Feb 28, 2011, the Planning Board voted unanimously to sponsor the article to rezone these 2 parcels, and voted 6-3 to recommend that the town accept the zoning change. The proposed rezoning must be approved by a 2/3 vote at Annual Town Meeting.

5. Grant Requirements

- g. Once we accept state money for construction, we are bound to certain requirements of the MBLC.

- a. What are the requirements regarding hours of operation? We have limited the hours in the past due to budget constraints.

There are no requirements regarding hours of operation linked to the grant.

There are requirements regarding hours of operation, however, linked to the library's status as 'Certified' with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. To remain certified, Hopkinton must remain open a certain number of hours. The number of hours is based only on the community's population. Hopkinton is currently compliant with respect to the number of hours it is open (44 hours). This requirement is in effect whether or not we apply for a Library Construction Grant.

- b. What are the staffing requirements for a library of that size?

There are no staffing requirements linked to the receipt of a Library Construction Grant.

In any case, the expanded library can be operated with the existing staff levels. However, it is expected that use of the library will increase, and that incremental increase in staffing will be requested over

time. Any increase in budget (and therefore addition of staff and hours) must be approved by town meeting.

c. How will these grant requirements affect the operating budget?

As explained above, there would be no impact.

6. Books

a. How much area is planned for books? New vs. existing?

The new library will have capacity for up to:

49,720 books in the adult collection (now 16,869).

6,000 volumes for young adult (now 1,537).

27,810 volumes for children (now 16,429)

The increase of collection would be gradual, however, and be adapted to the needs of the community.

b. E books are becoming more popular and the demand for printed books is decreasing.

Public library services include computer services and access to digital media. Just like print material, most copyrighted and research material in digital format is not free. As a service organization, public libraries purchase materials in both print and digital format, and offer it to the public free of charge. Despite the fact that e-readers and I-pads became more popular in 2010, there was still an increase in circulation of books in 2010 compared with 2009.

c. Accessing books from other libraries has been very effective for Hopkinton citizens. Hopkinton borrowed 10,000 books in 2010 from other libraries via its interlibrary loan network.

Borrowing from other libraries is a valued service, particularly in Hopkinton which has outgrown its space for all collections (adult, teen, children). Typically the library must remove another book every time a new book arrives.

In addition, many residents find it frustrating that materials are not readily available in Hopkinton, particularly with respect to new books, as well as research and school projects. Hopkinton borrows such a high number of books because it does not have the space to offer a collection that the community wants and needs.

d. Library patrons can order books from home from any library in the network and pick them up at the Hopkinton branch.

See answer to part c. immediately above.

e. The libraries in the public schools already provide additional resources for the students in town.

School libraries are very valuable – to students. The collection of these libraries is very limited to the particular body of students (i.e. middle or high school or grades k-1, 2-3, or 3-4) and focuses on the curriculum of the students at the particular school. Generally, schools are only open only during the day and browsing the school libraries cannot be done during school hours. It is not clear to us whether the school libraries are open to the public, when/what hours the school libraries are open to the public or if special permission is required to visit.

7. Community Input

a. How many people attended the meetings/forums that are being used as a basis for the community input for this expansion project?

A series of meetings have been held since planning for the library project began. The library staff and a professional library consultant conducted interviews with local officials, library users and residents to identify needs. This group also received over 1,000 surveys completed by residents and Hopkinton school students to identify library needs. This data, along with other extensive information, was used to develop a library program on which the expansion program is based.

The PBC also held numerous public meetings and forums to review the design concepts and get input from residents (see part b immediately below).

b. In the letter from Elaine Lazarus she states that “There have been many opportunities for public officials and Town staff to participate in the process and provide feedback,...”. How much feedback has been collected from the general community?

During the fall of 2010, the PBC held three public forums for residents, two at the Fire Station and one at the Senior Center. One of the three meetings was a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen. About 100 residents attended these sessions. A number of residents also attended Permanent Building Committee meetings to provide input. The PBC has also given regular (at least monthly) presentations and updates at Board of Selectmen meetings, which are broadcast live on HCAM and also have live audiences.

The Trustees and Library Department advertised the forums through a variety of sources and the forums were reported in a variety of media and news, including HCAM, HopNews, the Hopkinton Crier and the Hopkinton Independent.

In addition to regular updates to the Board of Selectmen, the PBC also provided updates on the Library Project to Land Use and Planning Departments, the Planning Board, Zoning Advisory Committee, Capital Improvement Committee, Town Department Heads, Public Safety officers (fire/police/DPW), and Hopkinton Chamber of Commerce. Many of these meetings were reported in the local press.

As indicated by the letter from Elaine Lazarus, the expansion of the library will assist in the economic vitality of the area, and is consistent with the goals of Downtown Revitalization. This view has been echoed by others during the public meetings and community forums.

8. What is the real cost of the library expansion project?

a. The cost estimate for the project is \$10,231,000. According to MBLC 605 CMR the state could contribute up to +/- \$4,520,000 of the cost. The town and the library will each need to contribute +/- \$2,800,000. How much of the \$2,800,000 in private contributions has the library raised? If they fall short, the town will be asked to make up the difference.

Hopkinton has calculated its grant reimbursement amount to be: \$5,195,683.

If the town of Hopkinton accepts the grant, the financial commitment will be approximately 25% of the project’s eligible costs, with private donations funding the remaining 25% of the costs.

To date, approximately \$464,000 in cash and land donations have been invested in the project. There has been no cost to the Town.

- b. Has the library certified to the town's satisfaction that they have raised their 25% of required funding before requesting the town to appropriate funds? (Parks & Recreation needed to secure private funding before the town would appropriate funds for fields.)

For the library expansion project to become viable project, voters must approve the preliminary design at Annual Town Meeting in May, and Hopkinton must receive a Library Construction grant. We will not learn Hopkinton's grant status until July 2011. Fundraising planning has begun, but a full fundraising campaign cannot be fully launched until Town Meeting approves the preliminary design, and Hopkinton receives a Library Construction Grant.

- c. It is our understanding that the library's McGovern trust fund is for books only, and can not be used for the building expansion.

McGovern Trust cannot be used for building expansion. It is able to pay for a variety of materials for the library, including computers, DVDs, books, programs and services, which help to defray costs to the town.

- d. Will the town have to assume any debt for the property at 9 Church Street?

The land portion of 9 Church Street will be donated. The assessed value of the land at 9 Church Street is \$149,800. The total assessed value of all land donated for the project (13 Main and 9 Church Street) is \$334,000.

The building at 9 Church Street will be purchased for \$50,000 (the payoff amount for a loan used to improve the building to make it suitable for tenants). The building has an assessed value of \$173,100, resulting in a gift of about \$123,000 to the town.

- e. What will be the annual operating cost? The information on the library website indicates that we are currently spending approximately \$350,000 (0.6% of municipal budget) per year, when we should be spending 1.3 – 1.6% of the budget on the library. Where will the town come up with the additional \$400,000 – \$600,000 in annual operating costs?

The library budget is typically 0.6% of the Hopkinton's entire budget, and the budget for the new library would remain about that amount. The library department will not be requesting anywhere near the increase that you are suggesting. Generally, the library requests approximately 2.5% increase in its annual budget.

It has been estimated that there will be additional operating costs of approximately \$38,000 for maintenance and utilities for the new building. Even with that increase, the total library budget would be \$388,000, or only 0.62% of the Town's total annual budget.

Please contact us if you have any questions or need us to review or clarify any of the above information. We look forward to discussing these issues with you. We also hope that the abutters will decide to meet with us, so that they can be fully involved in this process going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

Permanent Building Committee/Library Building Committee Members

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