

09/10/2014, 7:00pm

Introduction and Welcome

Steve Podgajny, Executive Director of Portland Public Library, welcomed everyone and introduced other City and Library representatives, as well as Architect Dick Reed, who were present. He thanked the Friends of the PI Library for their support. He said this Forum is a continuation of the conversation from the Community Forum in April 2013, and the recent Pre-Planning meeting with City officials, that have informed our initial plans presented at this Forum. He briefly discussed next steps around funding and that this project would come from a combination of City funds, mentioning the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget, as well as private contributions – "Do it right, do it once." The Library plans to start this renovation in Fall 2015.

Sally Deluca, Portland's Recreation Director, described that the building was built in the 1970s so it is time to put work into it. She acknowledged Island Recreation Staff Denise Macaronas, who could not there for the meeting, whose ideas have been part of the discussion. Sally said the purpose of the evening was to get input on what islanders want? What are our ideas for the community center?

Steve also acknowledged City Councilor Kevin Donoghue, who sent his regrets that he could not attend, but was apprised of the process to date. Steve then introduced architect Dick Reed to present the draft plans.

The Plans

Dick Reed, Peaks resident for 31 years, introduced the plans as including the needs for both the library and the community center, and emphasizing sharing the spaces and making the spaces more efficient. He acknowledged there were good things about the building – efficient space use, central lobby accessing three services, and the entry ramp actually has a full foundation making it possible to do the "Peaks Island Thing" and enclose the porch into "the island living room" which was a key idea from the 2013 Forum. There were also aspects of the building that do not work well – building footprint has no room to expand, masonry-bearing walls hold up the mezzanine so are not flexible, and the stairs to the mezzanine take up central space and are not to current code. The drawings show suggestions of space and furnishings layout, but not final. Also plan to use perimeter walls to hang art. The Library plans to start this renovation in Fall 2015.

Enclose the porch – Enclosing the ramp entry and connecting it to the library would add 51% additional space. The lobby entry would move to Sterling St with a canopy over the entrance for weather protection. The lobby would remain primarily the same size as now, by moving the small Recreation storage room currently in the lobby up to the mezzanine.

Move stairs -- The stairs are currently not to code, so they require updates anyway. Plan is to move the stair to the front of the library, into corner of new space and they will enter the mezzanine close to where they do now. Recreation staff will have a new storage space/office on front end of the mezzanine.

Bathrooms – The two lobby bathrooms do not meet current code for ADA. Plan is to convert them into two single use, ADA-compliant bathrooms, slightly smaller than current size. This is an efficient update because the weight-bearing walls remain intact, and it creates the opportunity for a little bit more storage space for both the community room and the library behind them, where we would hope to add another single-use bathroom as a staff or children's restroom.

Community Room – The large room space would not change, but could be updated with new ceiling, lighting, and finishes.

HVAC systems – The plan intends to add/upgrade efficient air cooling and heating systems.

The Discussion

- **Will there be space for more collections?** This is still an open question that the Library will consider whether more collections or more visibility for collections will be part of the plan.
- **Will the mezzanine be ADA-accessible?** The mezzanine will only be accessible by the stair. Mezzanine will not be accessible but Library will comply with ADA requirement to provide equal opportunity to services.
- **Does the 51% additional space include the mezzanine?** 51% additional space is just for the enclosed porch area. The extended mezzanine includes a 36% increase there.
- **Is the stair code-compliant?** Stair is not code-compliant due to risers, etc. Mezzanine must be no more than 30% of total to be within that code.
- **Could we build additional mezzanine over the Community Center?** To be determined, but we think lofted ceiling could create that possibility.
- **Will the Library and Community Center have compatible furnishings?** That is our desire so we can share. The library uses the Community Center at times now and think that small programs could use the Library's seating area when the Library is closed.
- **What are ideas for Community Center design? What about windows, more daylight?** Intention is to consider all uses and needs of the spaces and choose furnishings for all needs, e.g., moveable partitions, Denise's work area, etc. The roof structure allows possibility of lofted ceiling and skylights or high windows.
- **What about energy efficiency?** It will depend on the budget of the project, with all energy efficiency options will be on the table. With any decisions about improving walls or lofting ceilings we would exceed state minimum requirements. Uninsulated cinder block walls present a challenge. Insulating the floors is not easy to do. We would look at Efficiency Maine for any energy credit programs.
- **How will we make the appearance of the building on the outside be more inviting?** Nice benches and simple landscaping could really enhance. Outdoor electrical outlets? We would address drainage problems at new entrance and the intent is to add more glass and create a sense of openness.
- **What is the plan for the kitchen?** There is a small kitchen on the Community Center side that we would like to improve. Perhaps consider making it more useful since the Community Center is a civil defense location.
- **How is the budget set?** We prepare the initial design and cost estimates and ask the City about the CIP budget. Then, we will come back with our vision and reasonable budget and ask for the community's input. There are no federal or state funds available for such building projects (vs. Massachusetts). There was a suggestion to think as big and long term as we can, but we want to make sure the project is attainable so that we can accomplish it; and not preclude doing more.
- **Could project be phased to delay some expenses?** That would be part of our consideration.
- **Could we offer funding opportunities to buy pieces of the project (e.g., bricks)?** Great idea.
- **Would the fundraising for the library and Community Center be as one project or two separate projects?** We think it is better as one project that is a collaboration.
- **What impact will there be on ongoing operations?** To be determined. We expect the construction to take 5-7 months. To occupy the building during constructions adds cost and inefficiency. We will look for alternative spaces to collaborate (e.g., school).
- **Who has to approve it?** The City Planning Department approves it. We will next work on getting permission to submit for CIP. Then the Library Board must approve it to pursue local funds. Our Board is already aware of the project and supportive.

Thank you for coming

There were over 75 people in attendance. We will make the plans and notes from this meeting available in the Community Center and will work on posting them online.