

**AGENDA
FOR SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL
MAIN LIBRARY
BOARD ROOM
7711 GOODWOOD BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LA 70806
DECEMBER 14, 2013
9:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.**

I. ROLL CALL

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. DISCUSSION AND DECISION REGARDING POSSIBLE ALTERNATE SITES FOR SOUTH BRANCH LIBRARY

III. COMMENTS BY THE LIBRARY BOARD OF CONTROL

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BOARD'S PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY, ALL ITEMS ON WHICH ACTION IS TO BE TAKEN ARE OPEN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT, AND COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS MAY BE RECEIVED ON OTHER TOPICS REPORTED AT SUCH TIME AS THE OPPORTUNITY IS ANNOUNCED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OR THE PERSON CONDUCTING THE MEETING.

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the
East Baton Rouge Parish Library Board of Control

December 14, 2013

The special meeting of the East Baton Rouge Parish Library Board of Control was held in the Board Room of the Main Library on Saturday, December 14, 2013. Mr. Travis Woodard, President of the Board, called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. Members of the Board present were Mr. Stanford O. Bardwell, Jr., Mr. Charles P. “Chip” Boyles, Jr., Mr. Jason Jacob, Mr. Logan Leger, and Ms. Kizzy Payton. Absent from the meeting was Board member, Ms. Tanya Freeman. Also in attendance were Mr. Spencer Watts, Library Director, Ms. Patricia Husband, Assistant Library Director of Branch Services, Ms. Mary Stein, Assistant Library Director of Administration, Ms. Liz Zozulin, Executive Assistant to the Library Director. Also present were Ms. Elizabeth Crisp, reporter for *The Advocate*, and Mr. Quincy Hodges, reporter for Nola.com and one member of the public.

Mr. Woodard asked Ms. Zozulin to take the roll which she did.

Old Business

A. Discussion and Decision regarding Possible Alternate Sites for South Branch Library

Mr. Woodard read Item A. Then he stated that he believes there are five approaches to resolving the dilemma of building a south branch library. He listed them as follows:

- Build a new facility similar to the other branch libraries in the Library System.
- Renovate an existing building to meet the need for a south branch library.
- Lease a building while searching for a location for a permanent site.
- Provide library service through alternate models of delivery such as a kiosk.
- Decide to do nothing at this time.

Mr. Woodard added that he would like to discuss these approaches so the Board members can agree on what would be involved in each choice and then determine which are realistic. He noted that doing nothing does not seem like a good option based on the fact that building a south branch library was part of the promise made during the 2005 Library millage tax renewal request. Mr. Woodard said more than one elected official and others have expressed that opinion to him.

Ms. Payton asked if the residents in the service area have also said this. Mr. Woodard replied that people that have opinions on all kinds of issues have expressed this.

Mr. Bardwell then asked if the Library staff feel they need a branch. He said the search for property for a south branch library began when Mr. John Richard was the library director, and has continued with not much success. Mr. Watts replied that our System is not even at the standard for a system and area like ours. He noted that we do not have anything extraordinary as compared to other systems. He added that the System is not overbuilt, and that adding a south branch library will not result in our being overbuilt.

Ms. Payton then said that we need to market that concept to our constituents. Mr. Watts noted that the last millage tax renewal request in 2005 was the same rate as the prior request. We made a promise to meet the needs of the residents in that area. If the promise wasn't sound, they could say so, and not build a branch in that area. But the promise was sound. So they need to keep it. Mr. Bardwell noted that Ms. Stein had a map indicating the planning boundaries for each branch in the system. The Board referred to the map in the room which outlines the service areas of each facility.

Mr. Woodard then asked if anyone on the Board thinks that we do not need to build a branch library for the south Baton Rouge area. Nobody on the Board felt that they should not build a branch.

Mr. Watts mentioned that at the last Board meeting some mentioned that spending \$1.5 million for property was too expensive. He asked if the Board is willing to spend a lot of money for a site on Perkins Road. Ms. Payton replied that the Board might need to spend that much money because they misjudged the cost of land in that area. She added that they would need to re-evaluate the millage rate as costs have risen.

Mr. Bardwell said that the Rouzan site was ideal ten years ago. But now they need to look in the southwest area of the parish. Mr. Jacob asked where the city limits were located in that area in light of the proposal to establish the City of St. George from the unincorporated part of the parish in south Baton Rouge. Mr. Woodard replied that the Library System is for the entire parish of East Baton Rouge. The proposed incorporation of the City of St. George would not affect the Library.

Mr. Leger noted that there is a lot of traffic in the Perkins Road area which could make access to a branch library difficult during certain times of the day.

Mr. Watts then said that south of Perkins Road there is residential development. The Burbank Drive area continues to be suggested for a site for the branch library. But Mr. Watts noted that as a governmental entity the Library might not want to be one of the first to build in an environmentally sensitive area. He added that after many years of mitigation and development that area might be a consideration for a branch.

Mr. Woodard said that one way to solve the cost of property is to buy a smaller lot and then build a multi-story branch. He asked the Board members how they felt about a multi-story facility.

Mr. Leger asked how a multi-story building impacts maintenance. Ms. Stein replied that a multi-story would mean increased staff, room for elevators, and increased restrooms. Mr. Watts added that additional staff is necessary for security reasons. Ms. Husband noted that the amount of public space is lessened because of the space taken by elevators, stairwells and emergency areas. Ms. Payton said they may need to seriously look at multi-stories.

Mr. Jacob asked about the use of Lee High School as a site. Mr. Watts replied that a public library on a school campus is difficult because the mission, the hours, and the security of each are different. He added that Lee High School does not appear to be a viable solution.

Mr. Bardwell said he read about the new 2-story library built in Tangipahoa Parish. We could speak with their staff in order to gain some knowledge from their recent construction project. He did not think that a multi-story facility is rare.

Mr. Woodard then said that the property that comes to mind for a multi-story branch is the 1½ acre site at Perkins Road and Quail Run Drive. Mr. Watts agreed with Mr. Woodard and added that for that site a 3-story building could be necessary. He noted ideally we prefer a 1-story branch with land surrounding the building for parking and to act as buffers. Mr. Leger asked if 1½ acres is enough property for the facility and parking. Mr. Watts replied that the requirement is one parking space per 200 square feet of facility.

Ms. Payton said that the building is just the edifice. The programming and staff are what makes the Library successful. She added that we have wonderful staff members who overcome any building deficiencies. Mr. Watts agreed and added that the important issue is to make a decision on a course of action and begin working toward that goal. Mr. Woodard said he believes that the 1½ acre site is the most suitable one on Perkins Road.

Mr. Woodard then said there are issues with building in the wetlands located in the southern portion of the service area. Mr. Bardwell and Mr. Jacob said they are willing to look at property on Burbank Drive. Ms. Payton said she was very hesitant to consider property there. She also noted that the Library gave up donated land on Burbank because of wetland and flood plain issues. Mr. Bardwell said that there are some sites on the north side of Burbank that are on higher ground. Mr. Leger asked how hard it would be to mitigate wetland areas. Mr. Woodard replied that it is difficult. The Army Corps of Engineers have specific requirements that must be met and the cost can run about \$80,000 per acre.

Mr. Watts then said that property almost immediately adjacent to Burbank Drive and Lee Drive is not part of the Arlington Creek PUD and is not available. He noted that there is some property within this development on Burbank east of Ben Hur Road that has been mitigated. The sellers would be willing to subdivide that site. Mr. Woodard said that the City is considering connecting Highland Road and Burbank Drive possibly at Seyburn Drive. However, there is no firm commitment at this time. The proposed City of St. George would have an impact on this road connection. Mr. Leger asked when this extension might occur to which Mr. Woodard replied by 2030.

Mr. Woodard then asked about the Nicholson Drive area as a possibility. A discussion about this area followed. There is a site on West Lee Drive across from Mike Anderson's Restaurant. The Board agreed that sites on Brightside Lane do not make sense for a branch location. Mr. Woodard noted that college students reside in the area and use the college library. Mr. Watts said that area is too far away from the population that needs public library service. Mr. Bardwell said they should not pursue property south of Burbank Drive.

He then mentioned that there is a site near a cemetery on Highland Road. That site was not seriously considered because of its proximity to the Bluebonnet Regional Branch Library, and because many sensitive issues can occur as one clears a site very close to a cemetery. Mr. Watts noted that he had such an experience in constructing a facility years ago.

Mr. Bardwell then asked about the property on Burbank Drive east of Ben Hur Road. He thought that the 13.08 acre site was a reasonable location and he wondered if the Library could buy a portion of the property. Mr. Woodard noted that they would be surprised at how much land they would need to purchase in order to mitigate the wetlands. Mr. Watts added that this property was purchased by the Price LeBlanc family and that they are not ready to develop the site.

Mr. Woodard then asked where the Walmart was going to be built in this area. Mr. Leger replied that the store will be constructed at the intersection of Bluebonnet Road and Highland Road.

Mr. Watts said the Arlington Creek PUD at Burbank Drive and Lee Drive is for sale at \$12.00 per square foot. He noted they were told that a traffic light would be installed at the intersection of Ben Hur Road and Burbank Drive. Mr. Woodard then said it will be difficult to persuade the DOTD to make a median cut at that location on Burbank Drive.

Mr. Boyles arrived at 10:05 a.m.

Again Mr. Watts stated that this area will be developed. But he asked if the Library Board as a civic organization wanted to be one of the first to build in this environmentally sensitive part of the parish. Mr. Woodard added that the expected standard of care and concern is higher for the Library than a commercial enterprise. He also said this location is not within a walking distance of patrons' homes. So patrons would need to drive to this branch. Mr. Woodard noted that even though the price of land in the Burbank Drive area is half the price of land on Perkins Road, because of these environmental issues, the Board may need to purchase the higher priced land and build vertically.

Mr. Watts told the Board that last week he met with Mr. Tommy Spinosa. Mr. Watts asked Mr. Spinosa if he would consider donating a periphery site in Rouzan in place of the current donation for the branch library. Mr. Watts offered that the Library would build their own infrastructure and parking in such an arrangement. Mr. Spinosa replied that he would think about this suggestion. Mr. Watts said Mr. Spinosa has now made a decision and does not feel that he can offer the Library a peripheral site.

Mr. Boyles then said he spoke with Mr. Spinosa who told him there were other concerns he was involved in at this time. Mr. Spinosa also said that the infrastructure should be completed in the next 90 days. Mr. Boyles added that he still feels the Rouzan donated site would be a good location for the branch library.

Mr. Boyles noted that it will take the Library Board another 90 to 180 days to formulate a back-up plan to replace the Rouzan plan. Mr. Woodard replied that it would be a shame if the Board could not move faster than that. Mr. Boyles added that Mr. Spinosa would be willing to sell some property to the Library, but not swap for the donated land. Mr. Watts then said the Rouzan site is not truly attractive as a walk-able location. He said only about 20% of the patrons would walk there with the other 80% driving. Parking will be an issue there.

Ms. Payton said that Mr. Spinosa tried to speak with her, but she was not available, so he left a voice message. Mr. Bardwell also said that Mr. Spinosa spoke with him. Mr. Bardwell added that Mr. Spinosa said he had been silent about the Library CEA because he was negotiating with a tenant.

Mr. Woodard reminded the Board that the Metropolitan Council has not reappointed Ms. Martha Jane Tassin to the Planning Commission. He said the decisions of the Planning Commission will probably be different in the future.

Mr. Woodard then summarized what they discussed thus far regarding possible sites saying they have generally concluded that sites north of Burbank Drive are acceptable while sites south of Burbank are not.

Mr. Woodard then led a discussion of alternate locations for a branch such as within a strip shopping center. Ms. Payton replied that they need to talk to the citizens in the area about their preferences. She said she went to lunch at Juban's Restaurant on Perkins Road. She said the traffic was so congested that it took her ten minutes to get into the parking lot. Then she wasn't sure she would even find a spot to park because the shopping center was so crowded.

Mr. Woodard asked about leasing a facility for a branch library to which Ms. Payton replied leasing would be throwing out money which could be used instead to construct a building. Mr. Boyles agreed with Ms. Payton about buying land and building a branch. He added that temporarily leasing might be okay if the building is up to the Library's standard for a branch. Mr. Boyles noted the center should not have ice machines in the parking lot, and the parking lot should be in good condition similar to the Trader Joe's parking lot. Mr. Bardwell agreed with Mr. Boyles. He added that the Acadian Perkins Plaza at the corner of Perkins Road and Acadian Thruway was discussed because it appeared that nothing else was available in the area. He reminded the Board that the developer is going to build a lot for an additional 60 vehicles, and that the vacant building there could be made ready in a short period of time.

Mr. Bardwell then said that he heard there is a building for lease in the Kenilworth Shopping Center on Highland Road. Mr. Watts told the Board that one must invest money and time in a storefront branch library. He said he had established a branch in a storefront in the past. It can be successful, but usually, for it to make budgetary sense one should anticipate occupying the

building for at least ten years. Leases today include clauses in which the tenant is responsible for all repairs or replacements of such items as the roof and the HVAC system.

Mr. Watts noted that he and the staff had investigated leasing. Most spaces for lease were small and needed much work to be made suitable for our needs. Ms. Husband then said they found many suites for lease which would not be appropriate for a branch. She added they will need to investigate more deeply to possibly find a suitable lease facility. Mr. Boyles said that the timing is bad for finding a suitable property for lease because many businesses are also looking for space to rent.

Mr. Woodard then said he is inclined to choose to purchase the best piece of land they can find and then build a branch library. Vacant land is becoming scarce in this area. He added that because of the medical facility growth and the proximity of the college with its expansion, raw land won't be available in 10-15 years.

Ms. Payton said that the citizens in this service area have never had a branch, so they have used the Main Library and the Bluebonnet Regional Branch for their needs. She felt that if the public saw that the Board was taking positive steps to build a branch library, that they would be patient with the Board. She also said this is similar to the construction of the new Main Library. The public has been patient with the time schedule for building Main.

Mr. Bardwell then asked about leasing a space for three years while construction is underway. Mr. Leger wondered if looking for land to purchase and leasing a space would be a prudent course of action. Mr. Boyles suggested hiring a professional to help the staff because their workload is too heavy now. Mr. Leger thought they should concentrate on buying land. Mr. Woodard noted they could hire a firm to provide site selection options.

Mr. Jacob asked if they leased rather than mitigating land would it be cheaper. Ms. Stein replied that it would cost \$20.00 per square foot to lease.

Mr. Leger asked how they could find out for certain if the property on Burbank Drive east of Ben Hur Road has been mitigated. Mr. Watts replied that it is possible that this property is not for sale at this time.

Mr. Woodard then noted that they have the possibility of using either a letter of intent or a purchase agreement for property that is for sale. Mr. Boyles noted that with the letter of intent, the Board would pay an amount of money for a period of time to indicate their serious consideration of the property. But the Board would not be obligated to purchase the property. With the purchase agreement the Board would submit a written proposal to purchase the property and the seller would have the option to accept the proposal. Once accepted by both parties, the purchase agreement would obligate both the seller and the buyer. Mr. Woodard then said the Board would want to use a letter of intent. Mr. Watts noted that the City might not allow them to sign a letter of intent. Mr. Woodard then noted that Mr. D'Aubin, the Parish Attorney had told them previously that a purchase agreement can be written very specifically. A purchase agreement would need the approval of the Metropolitan Council. Mr. Boyles said he thought they could use a letter of intent for 90 days if a property has been on the market for a while.

Ms. Payton then asked if the Metropolitan Council would need to approve the Library Board hiring a professional to assist with site selection. Mr. Watts replied if the professional services agreement is under \$17,500 it would not need Council approval. But the agreement would need the approval of the City-Parish Purchasing Department. Mr. Boyles asked if they could do multiple agreements under \$17,500 each to which Mr. Watts replied no. That would be structuring and is not allowed by City-Parish government.

Ms. Payton asked if the staff could explore hiring a site selection professional. Otherwise, the Board is still not taking any action, and the media will say that again no decision has been made by the Board. Mr. Watts said the staff can start to get information on site selection professionals. But they cannot take on any additional work at this time because of the impending move into the new Main Library and the abatement of the old Main Library. Ms. Payton then said they thought they may need to have a special meeting in early January to review the information the staff has gathered so that they can move this project forward.

Mr. Woodard then said the staff should get proposals from site selection professionals, so that the Board can review these and make a decision at the January Board meeting.

Mr. Woodard then asked for comments from the public. Ms. Kathy Wascom, a member of the community, said the Board should consider the demographic for this branch to extend from City Park to Zeeland Place to Hundred Oaks Drive to Kenilworth Drive. She added that Rouzan and the Rouzan parcel are within that area of service. The public wants a branch where they can bring their children for programming. She also said that there is piece of property for sale by Skillman at the intersection of Perkins Road and Lee Drive that the Board should consider.

She said sites on Burbank Drive are not acceptable. That area naturally provides water drainage for the parish and if developed will prevent the water from draining efficiently. Ms. Wascom also noted that engaging in the process of mitigating property through the Corps of Engineers can take as much as a year.

There were no other public comments.

Comments by the Library Board of Control

Mr. Woodard then concluded the meeting by asking the staff to get proposals from site selection professionals for the Board to review in January.

There were no additional comments by the Board.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m. on a motion by Ms. Payton, seconded by Mr. Bardwell.

Travis Woodard, President

Spencer Watts, Library Director