

Revised Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance Committee of the

East Baton Rouge Parish Library Board of Control

March 12, 2007

The first meeting of the Finance Committee of the East Baton Rouge Parish Library Board of Control was held at the River Center Branch Library on Monday, March 12, 2007. Mr. Dan Reed, Chairman of the Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. Members of the Committee present were Ms. Dorothy Stepteau, and Mr. Stephen Moret. Also in attendance were Mrs. Lydia M. Acosta, Library Director; and Mrs. Brenda Lovett, Library Business Manager. Also present were Mr. Bill Palmer, Superintendent of BREC; Mr. Ted Jack and Mr. Reed Richard, both Landscape Architects with BREC; Mr. Steve Jackson, Architect with Cockfield Jackson Architects; Mr. Thomas Adamek, of Stonehenge Capital Company, LLC; four members of the community; and Mr. Scott Dyer of *The Advocate*.

Mr. Reed welcomed those in attendance and explained that during this meeting two topics would be discussed. The Committee will review budget projections for a branch library on Perkins Road located on the property currently owned by JTS Realty Services, LLC, and for a new 80,000 square foot library at Independence Park. The financial projection estimates the opening of the branch on Perkins Road in July, 2009 and the opening of the library in Independence Park in December, 2009.

A schematic drawing of the "Library in the Park" produced by Jon Emerson & Associates, Inc., Landscape Architects for BREC, was displayed. Mr. Bill Palmer, Superintendent of BREC was asked to speak to the Committee about the "Library in the Park" concept. Mr. Palmer began by saying that he and BREC are excited about the opportunity to continue to collaborate with the East Baton Rouge Parish Library. BREC is willing and able to work flexibly with the Library Board of Control on whatever plan it adopts for a new library in Independence Park. In the past BREC has worked on several scenarios for the Goodwood Library with the Library's planner. Mr. Palmer said this new schematic drawing would enable the Goodwood Library to remain open at its present location while the new building is constructed north of the old structure. Once the new building is opened, the old building would be demolished. The site of the former building would become a lawn area for the park. The new library would contain two floors of 40,000 square feet each. Surface parking would be located on both sides of the new building. The cost of the parking lots would be shared by the Library and BREC. The Library would pay for the construction of the new building and the demolition of the old building. Mr. Palmer emphasized that this is a concept drawing and that it can be re-worked to meet the needs of both parties. The key to the success of this project is to find a design team that will work together and blend the needs of both parties into a library and park that meets the needs of the public.

Mrs. Acosta added that she likes the concept of building a new facility and not renovating the current building for two reasons. A new building will give the public a 21<sup>st</sup> century style library and the public will continue to have uninterrupted library service at the present location until the new facility is completed and opened.

Mr. Reed asked about increasing the size of the library building, noting that at one time they discussed a 150,000 square foot library. Mr. Palmer said that the footprint of 40,000 square feet would be the largest size that BREC would agree to accommodate. He said any larger footprint would compromise the concepts they have for the park. However, he said they would not oppose the Library building more floors to increase the total square footage, nor would they oppose the Library building a parking garage behind the building if the need arises. Mrs. Acosta mentioned that Ms. Denelle Wrightson, Architect with PSA-Dewberry who has already worked with the Library on several schematic designs will visit the Library next week to discuss this new 80,000 square foot building concept.

Mr. Palmer talked about the vision that they have for the public. Citizens could come to the Library for programs and information and use the park for recreation all in the same outing. Mrs. Acosta stated that the Library would like to develop its gardening collection in light of BREC's Botanical Gardens in Independence Park. It was noted that the Library building would not need an auditorium because BREC has a theatre in Independence Park that the Library would be able to use. Ms. Stepteau said she likes the plaza concept at the entrance to the library building. She also is in favor of using recycled materials in the new construction. Mrs. Acosta said they are planning to make this a "green" building.

Ms. Stepteau asked about the ill-defined entrances into the park that were cited as problems currently. Mr. Palmer responded that there would only be two vehicular entrances into the park on Independence Boulevard on the east and west sides of the library building. These would be very visible and contain signage to direct the public into the park. There would be four pedestrian entries; two on Goodwood Boulevard behind the Library and two on Independence Boulevard.

Mr. Reed asked Mr. Palmer if BREC had any concerns about this collaboration. Mr. Palmer said that the only constraint they would have is the same one the Library has, and that is to work within the budget that they have for this project. He said that the first meeting to discuss the re-design of Independence Park is scheduled for March 22<sup>nd</sup>. Mr. Reed said that in this plan the Library will use more of the Park property. He asked how that would work for both entities. Mr. Palmer said that the Parish Attorney would handle the legal issues because the City-Parish owns the park. BREC has control of managing it. Mrs. Acosta added that they still need to look at the budget projections and make recommendations to the Library Board for its approval. The public has patiently waited for decisions to be made and it is time to move forward.

Mr. Berry, a member of the community, asked if the schematic for "The Library in the Park" will encompass all of the collections that are presently at the Main Library and will the genealogy collection be moved to this location or remain at the Bluebonnet Regional Branch Library. Mrs. Acosta answered that the collections at the current location would stay as is and be moved into the new building. The location for the genealogy collection remains undecided as does the location for the Library Administration. Mr. Moret added that the Library Board never voted to move any collections away from the Goodwood facility. Mr. Reed added that one of the consequences of Hurricane Katrina is the continuing skyrocketing cost of construction. The Library may need to build sooner than it originally planned to keep the cost of construction down. There has been no decision on where the Main Library will be located. For now Mr.

Reed chooses to call the park site the “central” library. He envisions continuing to use the “pay-as-you-go” practice of the Library Board.

Ms. Stepteau asked who would be on the design team for “The Library in the Park” concept. Mr. Palmer said BREC’s landscape architects and the Library’s architect would work together ensuring the success of the project. Mrs. Acosta explained how the City-Parish picks an architect for a library building based on the building program that the Library submits to the architectural board. Mr. Moret asked if the Library’s design team could include in its plan the ability to expand the building if needed in the future. Mrs. Acosta responded that she likes that concept and would like that incorporated in this new plan. This expansion feature has never been used in any of the Library’s prior construction projects.

Mr. Berry said he feels that the current Goodwood Library should not be torn down. He thinks it could be used for storage or genealogy or meetings. He asked what their opinions were on this suggestion. Mr. Palmer said it would depend on the financial projections. Mrs. Acosta replied that the Library has not budgeted for keeping the current building. The systems running the facility are old and would need to be replaced. Mr. Berry noted that if the old building was utilized, the current parking lot could remain and thereby satisfy the parking space requirement. Mr. Moret asked Mrs. Lovett, Library Business Manager, to work on a rough estimate of the cost to keep the current building. Mr. Reed Richard, Landscape Architect with BREC added that they need to look at the current building and determine whether it would be esthetically pleasing with the rest of the park design. Mr. Berry felt it was more important to have enough space for all the collections.

Mr. Reed turned the Committee’s attention to the new budget projections. The Library Committee is looking at accelerating the dates for construction which includes an increase in employees to staff the facility on Perkins Road. Mrs. Lovett added that the projections are based on no rollback of the millage by the Metropolitan Council in 2008. Mrs. Acosta said she hopes that Mayor Holden will encourage the Metropolitan Council not to rollback the millage.

Mr. Reed said that he is concerned that no additional staff has been projected for the new building in the park. Mrs. Acosta answered that the building would be larger to give patrons more room for movement and activities, but that staffing would not need to increase as the hours of operation will not increase. The Library already employees an audio-visual librarian who can assist with theatre functions. Since the Library plans to use the BREC theatre, BREC has the staff to assist with the use of their equipment. Ms. Stepteau inquired about how the Library would pay for the use of the BREC theatre. Mr. Palmer replied that it is a direct cost that BREC would bill to the Library.

Mrs. Acosta told the Committee that a library for the eastern part of the parish was projected for 2016. However, she plans to meet with District 8 Councilman Mike Walker next week. They will discuss the possibility of a public/private partnership with an interested developer as a way to construct that facility.

Mrs. Acosta asked the Committee what other information they need to make a recommendation to the Library Board. Mr. Moret said he would like the cost per square foot per building and the

other budget assumptions affecting the projections through 2015. Mr. Moret added that the Board needs to proceed quickly with a decision about the Goodwood facility.

Mr. Reed noted that they still have not decided on where the Main Library should be located, but they need to take action now because of the steady rise in construction costs. Ms. Stepteau said she still prefers a main library downtown, but she knows that some citizens do not want it there. She said she is a team player and will not be obstinate about the location if the public does not want it downtown. She likes the collaboration involved in building "The Library in the Park". Mr. Moret said the debate of where to place the Main Library has been a philosophical one. The Board has always said they will not get rid of the Goodwood Library. This is not a stark choice. The Board can still build something that serves the needs of the patrons by collaborating with BREC in Independence Park.

Mr. Berry asked about losing collections in the Goodwood Library in light of the 80,000 square foot size of the projected new building. Mrs. Acosta pointed out that currently the Main Library actually has only 40,000 square feet of public space. So the new facility would double the amount of public space. An auditorium will not be needed because the BREC theatre will be available to the Library. Mr. Moret added that it is important that the Library Board honor the vote in the 2005 Tax Election. He said the Library will not lose collections, just square footage because of the escalating construction costs post-Katrina.

Mr. Tom DuBos, a member of the community, thanked the Finance Committee for the opportunity to see this new schematic plan for "The Library in the Park". He said he is delighted with this idea. He stated that they need to work with the park plan. He added that he has never opposed having a library downtown, but does not think it needs to be an 80,000 square foot building. Mr. Moret replied that he feels there are philanthropic interests available to assist in funding a new downtown branch. A fund raising campaign similar to the one used to build the Shaw Center might be feasible. We need a library downtown that speaks to the community. Ms. Stepteau said she agrees with Mr. DuBos that the Goodwood Library needs to be worked on, but we also need a good library downtown. Ms. Stepteau added that the Library Board has always been a good steward of the public's money and that will continue to be the case. Mrs. Acosta said her goal is that by the April Board meeting, a decision can be made and that the Library can move forward on "The Library in the Park".

Mr. Reed directed the Committee to the topic of New Market Tax Credits. He introduced Mr. Tom Adamek of Stonehenge Capital Company, LLC who explained how the New Market Tax Credits could be used by the Library to supplement the financing of the cost of new construction. Mr. Adamek explained that New Market Tax Credits is a federal tax program that can be used as a finance tool to develop low income areas such as downtown. The government defines the low income areas using census tract statistics. The program operates by giving the investor a 39% tax credit that is taken over a seven year period. The program stipulates that the subsidy to the city must be dispersed within two years of receipt. The Library could avoid the bureaucracy of directly applying for this credit, by working with a corporation like Mr. Adamek's firm who has been granted funds. Mr. Adamek noted that Capital One and Wachovia Investments are two other companies that have been given New Market Tax Credits. Mr. Adamek told the

Committee that downtown Baton Rouge does qualify for the program. Mrs. Acosta asked him to check on whether the Goodwood location would also qualify as a low income area.

Mrs. Gayle Smith, a member of the community asked if downtown was the only area where New Market Tax Credits would apply. Mr. Adamek responded that any low income area would qualify such as the neighborhood where the Carver Branch Library is located. Ms. Stepteanu asked if a business plan would need to be submitted with the application to which Mr. Adamek said yes. Mrs. Lovett asked if an arbitrage rebate is involved. Mr. Adamek did not think this would be a problem, but more research will need to be done on this topic. Mr. Reed asked if the Library could use philanthropic donors along with the New Market Tax Credits. Mr. Adamek said that could be done citing corporations like ExxonMobil as an example of a philanthropic donor. Mr. Reed thanked Mr. Adamek for his time and information.

On the matter of the next Finance Committee meeting, Mrs. Acosta suggested that if at all possible to minimize confusion, the meetings should be held at the same time and location. Therefore, the next Finance Committee meeting will be held on Monday, April 2, 2007 from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. at the River Center Branch Library.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned on a motion by Mr. Moret, seconded by Mr. Reed.

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Dan Reed, Committee Chairman

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Lydia M. Acosta, Director