

SAUCON VALLEY LIBRARY TASK FORCE MEETING

Date: Thursday, May 12, 2011
Time: 5:00 PM
Location: Lower Saucon Township

Present: Lower Saucon Township: Lynn Koehler, Tom Maxfield, Cathy Gorman, Jack Cahalan, Kim LaBrake; Mike Karabin arrived at 5:25 PM.
Hellertown Borough: Tina Krasnansky; Joseph Pampanin arrived at 5:05 PM.
Hellertown Area Library: Jessica Goedtel, Alison Finkbeiner, Robin Rotherham, Mike Evangelista

Committees:

Demographic/Statistics:

Alison Finkbeiner
Lynn Koehler
Jessica Goedtel

Building:

Kim LaBrake
Joe Pampanin
Mike Evangelista

Technology:

Gail Nolf
Mike Karabin
Jack Cahalan

Finance:

Reverend Lamar Handwerk
Tom Maxfield
Cathy Gorman
Tina Krasnansky

1. Approval of Minutes from April 14th meeting – Kim asked if there were any comments or corrections? Lynn said at the end of the minutes, she mentioned the Gates Foundation. Jack said he will make that change to the minutes. Motion by Tina for approval of the April 12, 2011 minutes, with correction; second by Mike E. All in favor.
2. Committee Reports –
 - Demographic/Statistics – Ali said she made some photo copies of the Hellertown Area Library (HAL) Annual Report if anyone is interested. She went onto the census website and the only thing they have right now is 2010 race statistics for Lower Saucon and Hellertown. They haven't broken it up by age, disabilities, and male and female population. Lynn said as they continue their dialogue, if you have any questions, let them know.
 - Technology – Jack said they haven't gotten together. They did send out requests for technology information to several libraries, and they haven't gotten a response from the City of Allentown or the Southern Lehigh Library, so they aren't going to probably get any information from them on technology. They have to work with what they received from Bethlehem Area Public Library (BAPL), HAL and Easton. From that, they will work on putting together a wish list for technology. They will have that for the next meeting. Lynn asked if they received any information from the school district. Jack said no they did not; Mike K. was going to follow up on that.
 - Building – Kim said she, Joe, and Mike E. all walked together through the HAL. They have the start of the base plans for the amount of space they have. From that, they started with documenting the spaces that are in the library now and their net usable square feet. They are not counting walls and things like that. They are enumerating each of the spaces and the square footage that is allowed and how many of each there are. They also need a list of proposed needs. This is going to meld as they get more information and as the technology information comes in, types of technology may affect rooms, things like that. The three of them started a list of potential areas, needs that could be put in a library. It's a general list. They weren't really extravagant in what they were looking at. Based on the conversations that have taken place already through these meetings, they identified a computer room; a small conference room; a quiet meeting and reading room; secure children's area; CD or DVD rental area; periodicals stacks in the sense that's the rotating magazines like Newsweek and things like that; a regular reading room; the teenage area;

café counter; outdoor reading area which the Garden Society could create; and then in the lower level they noted chair storage as right now it's stacked up against the wall which could be dangerous. They just started a list and they will add to the list.

Lynn said what about increased spots for parking. Jessica said you have to keep in mind the available parking on the streets. Kim said she has more to show on that. Lynn said when you are doing this list, is it things you would like to have or things the library already has? Kim said the HAL already has some of these things. They have a reading area, but it's not a designated reading area. We were looking at designated spaces. Lynn said you would need some kind of office area. Kim said that is on the list, just not on the proposed list. She did add children's area. Lynn said she thinks there should be another column showing what is mandated by the State in terms of square feet. Kim said they could capture that in the remarks column. Right now this is showing what we have and what we'd like to have. Lynn said it would be nice to have a guideline. Kim said if you look at the basement level, the 2,030 square foot is the chunk they are working with per floor, and there are three floors. You have to look at the costing based on what level it is. Lynn said based on what exists already if we lost meeting room space, is it possible to use what is there now? Kim said they've calculated downstairs and that meeting space is about 1,200 square feet. There's an available 1,200 square feet of open space that could be reconfigured. It comes down when they list the meeting room at 1,200 square feet; a proposed need may be a meeting room at 800 square feet. This is what we have and how do we rearrange it or make the sizes appropriate to gain any space we can.

Lynn said if we decide this is the direction we want to go, this will take about two years that we will be in cramped space until we get the funds together, and the building going. In your opinion, do you think we can have a temporary functioning library? Kim said giving up a meeting space, which she knows there are people who use it or it's just open space, or if it's an income/revenue source, but that lower area could be used for reading stacks. There is swing space and that would have to work with whatever group needs it. She's been there when the Girl Scouts were there already. Those groups will be displaced for that time. Lynn said if there are smaller spaces, they could use that. We'd have to do a temporary divide. Jack said we could also try to see if there is other alternate space available for these meetings. Kim said it looks like the swing space downstairs would be available. There are opportunities. To make those final decisions, we have to make sure what can be accommodated, how, through the phasing. Furniture can be moved as an interim and temporarily to allow for additional books and/or functions. Based on the drawings we have, it looks like it's designed for full stacks.

Tom asked if the HAL would have enough restroom space? It seems really cramped. Robin said it's also very poorly located. She does feel that a female and male restroom would be appropriate. Tom said the square footage seems small. Kim said it is small and it's not a handicap accessible bathroom in today's standards. It depends what you do to the building, whether the alteration that you are being held under code for requires you to expand that or provide additional space. She didn't go through and look at the calculations based on the set occupancy that is there now. Based on the use, she knows when she went to look at the bathroom, it's used a lot. Mike E. said there's also a restroom on the lower floor. Kim said it's not compliant to current standards. It met code when it was built originally. If we do any expansion, those people who were added will have to be accommodated. You will without a doubt have to add a toilet somewhere. Kim said it's not really accessible and the other caveat we have is the janitor's closet is accessed through that bathroom. If there's something going on that you need to get to the janitor's closet and someone is using the restrooms, it doesn't work. There's a door in the restroom to get to the janitor's closet. Tom said the elevator equipment seems relatively small also; and a utility room for servers for computers or the back room kind of things that needs to be serviced. Robin said that definitely would be on her wish list. The servers are now in her office. They are just on a server rack right now. It's not an ideal technology situation at all. Kim said server closet should be added to the list. Someone asked what is in the mechanical room now? Robin said electrical equipment, toilet paper, and the cleaning lady has all her things in there.

Kim said she did an overlay where the building sat on the site, and Cathy sent over the current setbacks. The library sits in the conservation district in Hellertown. There are specific setbacks where you can build on that piece of property. It's a non-conforming lot as its not large enough. It was given to the library. Basically, the blue hatched area is where we can build by the zoning code at this point in time without asking for variances. It's pertinent that you see where we have space to move. We have space to move into the parking lot, which we don't have enough of anyway. There was a definite property line shown on these original plans. They couldn't find a deed description of what it said we had. Cathy had a quick draw out of what she had and a record of basically the frontage of that whole area, which is 450', but that's not what it shows on these plans as a property line. We need to figure out why the property line is there, if it does or doesn't exist. It's very specific that the building is literally on what would be the setback building line. At some point, this line was made permanent by someone if it was just to create an end point for the property so that in the green area, depending what it is, why it is, where it is, there is potential to expand the opposite way and not take some of the parking we have. Lynn said would it make sense to building a parking lot on the other side and eliminating that parking lot. Kim said the two obvious options are in the blue area and get parking on the other side or maintain this small lot, build on this side, and the only reason we say that is the office sits along this wall. For control of a space without adding a lot of extra people, it makes more sense to add your volume of space to this side so that office is centrally located and can patrol the stacks. Those are the two obvious choices. Right now we don't know if we can go that way with building. We would be allowed to go that way with parking as there are different rules on parking, so we could gain parking right away. Once we get all the information and the sizes, that would be our first two options we would want to look at and see how it affects the actual interior of the library. We don't want to build something way over here if we have to add a lot of staff as that adds money to the bottom line. Those are some of the things that will play into the rest of the information we get. That will help us form that square footprint. With zoning, when you have a corner lot, there is some flexibility as to what you want to call your front yard. To this point, that's how it's been called.

Tom said in Lower Saucon Township, we are able to have two front yards, but this one looks like it chose one of the two. Kim said for the parking, there are two kinds of parking requirements. Parking based on the use of the building and also the site parking requirements on how close you go to property lines and how many spaces you need for handicapped versus your total and if you need islands, tree space or green space. There are two qualifications for parking. We'll get those once we realize where we want to go and get more information. Tom asked if the staff was using the parking lot or using the street? Robin said she usually parks behind the library. There is parking allowed on Rohn Road and on Constitution on the opposite side of the road. Kim said right now there are four or five raised garden beds behind the library and they are allowed to be there.

Joe said the only other comment he would make on this is if anyone wants to propose additions to the wish list with reference to the garden, please do. The reason they want as many of the items as you can get in the wish list as it doesn't have to be part of the actual library plan with the funding. We wanted to make sure if we wanted to do something with garden, we wanted to have an outside space and still direct that to be done with volunteer or grant money as opposed to this project. We do want to not build over it, and make sure any future use would look appropriate and blend in with what we do. Kim said if you have any additional things you think of, email them to Jack and he'll get them on the list and they will start adding square footages to them. Lynn asked if there were any issues with the ground itself? Kim said nothing that she has seen from the soil borings. To her, it looks like it's a good site. There's no rushing water or low spots. She wondered if they did any test borings when they did the elevator. Robin said she didn't think so. Kim said typically they are not ordered unless there may be an opportunity. The basement is dry and it's a solid concrete wall. It was very clean and since there's no water and clean without cracks, she would assume you are in a solid bedrock area and you don't have that karst geological formation that allows for limestone and water to travel through and that's where you get sinkholes. Because the yard and the basement looks stable, she would assume at this point, it's in a good area.

Lynn said what about roof repairs? Robin said the roof doesn't leak. The roof is not pitched properly. Kim said if there are roofing issues like redirecting the spouting, if you can put that list together, it may not affect a cost, and it may be something that can be fixed based on what they are doing. If you could create that maintenance list, it would be helpful. Robin said heat rises up also. It is gas heat in the building. Kim said there's a wide open space and it could be easily resolved with reversal fans to put up on the top to push the heat back down. Tom said a lot of it can be modified. If we were going to put additions on it, maybe different types systems would be installed. Lynn asked if they were going to do anything with green energy, solar panels or anything like that? Kim said they can put a line item on there with sustainable design. Typically we know we have to put some sort of heat and cooling in it, and that can be done with the gas or solar or something that strategically we look at. They can work that into the costing as it's a little bit more expensive to go that way. Lynn said there are grants for things like that. Kim said you have to pay for it first before you get a grant as they are all rebates. You have to register that you are doing a project that way, and give them an amount, but then you have to go back and prove how it was done and then you get the rebate. It's a little bit tougher now. The clean money getting it up front is pretty much gone. PPL rebates for lighting. If you have old style ballasts in there now, there are new lighting bulbs that if you switch them out to the newer version, it's like \$30 a light you get back as they say it saves energy. PPL has a really good list of things that they will offer rebates for.

- Finance – Cathy said the only thing they needed to do based on the last meeting was to figure out and contact Harrisburg about state aid. She did contact Ms. Kocher who is the state aid office in Harrisburg. She said state aid for Bethlehem and for Hellertown wouldn't change if anything were to happen. The only thing that Bethlehem would need to do is continue to pay whatever your expenses are which is a \$5 per capita requirement. When you file for state aid, your expenses have to be at least \$5 per capita. That's how your state aid is determined. Lynn said what question are you answering? Cathy said as long as you are spending a certain amount of money, you are not going below that threshold, and then your state aid would be the same. Jack said if Lower Saucon left the BAPL, you are saying they would continue to get the same amount of state aid they are currently getting? Cathy said correct. Jack said also HAL's amount wouldn't increase? Cathy said correct. Kim said if you are spending \$100,000.00 and part of that is being proportioned from another Township and they took their \$30,000.00 and went somewhere else, then you are spending your \$70,000.00 and your aid is based on the per capita. Cathy said there are different types of aid they get and Bethlehem is a district library and that's different and they get more. What Ms. Kocher said with a district library, there's a \$5 per capita threshold of expenses. They could be over and above that already. If you are claiming 9,000 people for LST, the library would have to prove they are spending \$45,000.00 a year to get your state aid. Tom said the question is, if the money that LST currently puts into the BAPL is subtracted, would that put them below the threshold? Cathy said it could. Someone said if you think of it in general terms, they are charging \$17.00 per capita at this point, so that would stay the same or go up, and the state wants you to spend \$5 per capita, and there's a pretty big gap there. Robin said because Hellertown & Lower Saucon are part of the district number, which would not change. Kim said you just have to maintain a certain expense level. Lynn said it's very confusing to her. Jack said they can explore it further and ask more questions. Cathy said if a library comes up with an arrangement or agreement, the State Librarian's office is willing to hear it. They would make modifications; however, on their end of it's very difficult. Lynn said the only way to agree on it, would be to make it more of a district and share resources more and more and more. Cathy said the law is written very much that you can work with it.

3. Assignments for next meeting - Kim said the building committee is going to keep moving. Jack said they are going to work more on the wish list for the technology.
4. Open Public Discussion – Kim asked if there was anyone in the public who wanted to ask questions or voice their opinion?

- Joel Katz was present. He said he has no comments other than the ones he made last week. He said every conversation he is hearing sounds as if the decision has been made to go with the Hellertown Area Library. Jack said the feasibility part of this process is trying to answer the question is it possible to do this or not? Joel said maybe it is possible, but the question is not whether it's possible, it's whether it's desirable. You all sit here and say it is desirable. It is desirable to open the theatre. Tom said we are not there yet. Jack said there is a segment of the Township population that has answered the question is it desirable, and that is the 50% of the patrons from Lower Saucon Township who are using the HAL. Joel said 4,000 Lower Saucon have library cards for the district library. Lynn said they have to have the cards. You need a library card to go to other libraries. If you live in Lower Saucon, you have to have a library card to go to Hellertown. You have to have a card to go to Easton. That's a state mandate. Tom said Joel should know that if he's using the HAL. Lynn said we are only making a recommendation, and then it goes to Council for any decisions. Joel said it may be possible. Lynn said part of this is to save money, and to serve the community. Joel said you are not going to save money. Jessica said their preliminary estimates show that they would be able to give Lower Saucon an immediate cost savings for the Township. That is actually still feasible. The whole point is that they can save money immediately. Joel said the point is no matter what you do, it won't be like the BAPL. Someone said that's your opinion. Somebody might value that different. Jack said they aren't going to try to disguise what the HAL has and say here's what's available, choose. Do you want to stay with BAPL or go with HAL? Tom said it's a trust thing. Joel said BAPL will have more books, will have more staff, and will have more room. Lynn said with the recent budget cuts BAPL had to cut staff. Someone said the BAPL serves many people. It's serving like six cities. Of course it's going to be ten times the size of the HAL. Joel said you have to request a book at HAL. Someone said Bethlehem has to request books for them all the time. Tom said there's all different kinds of problems that the BAPL has like the kids are too noisy, there's no place to park. Those are the complaints we heard from residents. What he's trying to say is we can't pretend the BAPL doesn't have problems. It has its pluses and minuses. Kim said we do hear Joel, and the tasks they have undertaken is fine a way to ask all these questions of the community. Those questions will be asked, so it's not us making a decision. It will be from the community feedback. Until we get to that point the question of desirability is undefined at this point by the committee.

5. Next Meeting Date – Kim said the next meeting date is Thursday, June 9th at 5:00 PM at Lower Saucon Township Town Hall.
6. Motion to Adjourn: Meeting adjourned. The time was 6:09 PM.