

The following paragraphs outline concerns by a Town Councilor. In some cases I have summarized the concerns and, in the later cases, I've kept the paragraphs intact. Please review for our discussion. This is an excellent opportunity for us to reach out to a key stakeholder. - Ken

Perceived Need

- The Critical Insights Survey of 2008 reflects the fact that the vast majority of residents three years ago were already very satisfied with the library:
- Are residents are willing to dedicate town financial resources to cover the cost of upgrades or a full replacement?

Timing

- No crisis or deadline that requires the construction of a library now, next year, or even several years from now. To the contrary, the economic environment mitigates against this.
- No one can begin to predict how libraries will be used in the next 5, 10, or 20 years
- Very persuasive arguments can and have been made that library usage, as we know it, has peaked and will decline. Until we have a better idea, it probably makes sense to delay multi--million dollar investments and undertake less costly renovations.

Peer Comparisons

The Phase I report basically says that a town with Cape Elizabeth's demographics has exceptional potential for library usage, but indicates that in reality Cape has relatively low usage relative to peers. It indicates that some people said they didn't use the library as much as they might because of one inadequacy or another. Yet the Critical Insight's survey suggests that a plurality, if not a majority, might not use the library more even with upgrades:

In contrast to this finding, the report draws the conclusion that an improved library would stimulate usage and justify the expenditure. The improvements recommended are heavily weighted towards facilities, and less focused on programs. Yet there is no data justifying these conclusions.

ADA Compliance

Handicap accessibility is an important consideration in all facilities planning in town. And though it alone shouldn't drive our decisions, it can inform long term planning and renovations of existing facilities. We can progress along a path towards improved accessibility well before any new library is constructed. There are aspects of accessibility which are critical and others which are desirable. We can move quickly on the critical ones in the existing facility, which would enable residents to enjoy most, if not all, the benefits of

our library. If a new library ends up being required then obviously it will be fully ADA compliant.

Meeting Space Needs

The desire to create more attractive and functional meeting space for activities, programs, and events was frequently recommended in the reports. Yet, in the Critical Insights survey only 3% of respondents indicated that more meeting space or a community room would increase their usage of the library. And in response to a question about what kind of upgrades they would support, the Critical Insights survey said less than half of respondents selected improved meeting room facilities.

Despite these findings the Phase II consultant report argues that “The public also consistently made the case for more and improved meeting space.”(p.2) Furthermore, one justification for upgrades to the library was that more space would allow more programs which would allow greater “market penetration.” The survey results seem to contradict the consultants conclusions. But the hypothesis can be tested by launching new programs in space that exists in other town owned buildings. These may not provide the ideal space, but it would provide more information about the community’s appetite for more programs without expending millions of dollars.

Need for Greater Operating Efficiency

It may seem obvious that a single floor layout may be a more convenient way to run a library, but it is necessary to see a cost justification for this as an argument for replacement. I’m not convinced it is that significant. For example, if it means the library can be run with one less employee per year (and that is speculation), is this savings significant enough to drive the design? If indeed significant operating efficiencies are unachievable in a single floor design, then it begs the question of why not look at a multi--story approach, which would require a smaller footprint, preserve some of the remaining greenery in the center, offer more variety of rooms sizes and uses, fit in more easily with the surrounding buildings, and require less fuel to heat and cool.