

Special Board Meeting.

South Orange Public Library

Minutes of Library Board Meeting, May 3, 2021

- 1) At 7:30pm the special online meeting was called to order by Ms. Marvell. Present were Hildy Karp, Heather Marvell, Tracy Carroll, Jamie Saeed, Marietta Zacker, Donna Grohman, Diego Ribadeneira, Alice Greenberg-Sheedy, local architect Tom Hut, Interim Director Lindita Cani and Shanize Haddock.
- 2) Ms. Marvell updated the Board. Tom Hut has been helping a lot with the architectural side of the project and giving the building committee a real sense of aesthetics. The library got a Community Development Block Grant which will be used for accessibility; one project will be to rehabilitate the front steps of the Connett Building. If the money from the grant is used, whatever work is done with the grant money cannot be disturbed for 10 years or the money would need to be paid back. The current plan for the building project is to totally rehab the steps of the Connett and change it into a ramp for handicap accessibility. Ms. Marvell told the Board that they will need to make a value judgment tonight about whether the ramp is needed. She commented that accessibility had been a big part of the project; however, they will be getting a lot of accessibility with the Community Block Grant. She also noted that a chair lift could be another solution.

Mr. Hut shared his concerns. He commented that there is a sort of duplication in the work being assigned to the Connett Building; restoring it then subsequently (if the Library Construction Bond is granted) demolishing it to add a ramp. It raised the question what will be the main entrance to the library building and how will it be used? He went on to say that the point of this project is to create a full library that encompasses both the Connett Building and the current 1968 building with a link to make both building accessible to one another. In doing this the main entrance to the library is created. There will be 3 accessible entrances into the library which is well over the limit of what would be considered good planning. The major entrance (the link) will be accessible. Mr. Hut commented that by adding the ramp, the Connett Building will lose its major historical characteristic, which is the archway entrance. Most patrons will come through the parking lot to park, and then come through the main entrance to get into the library.

Mr. Hut proposed a sort of mechanical chair lift attached to a railing that would go up a step, if the Board finds that they don't want to give up accessibility on that entrance. It would be less expensive and still maintain the integrity of that entrance. Mr. Hut shared a rendering of what the ramp in front of the Connett Building would look like.

A discussion took place. Ms. Marvell asked if the lift Mr. Hut mentioned would allow users with strollers or only single-use wheelchair users; it would only allow wheelchair users. Ms. Grohman inquired about a situation where leaving through the link was impossible, is there a way for someone in a wheelchair to exit through the Connett Scotland exit; Mr. Hut commented that all exits do not need to be accessible, and that would be a very extreme situation, to which, no solution would be as appropriate as a ramp would be. Another comment during the discussion was that Scotland Rd. is very busy and it is very unlikely that anybody would be getting out of a car on that entrance. Ms. Karp asked about having grading up to the front door, so there would be no stairs and no ramp just a

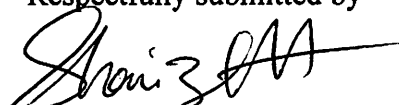
gentle incline with a path. Ms. Cani inquired about a ramp on the side, so the stairs would stay intact. Mr. Hut replied that while both those suggestions may be possible, they would both destroy the steps which are a major historical feature.

Mr. Hut told the Board that they have gone to great efforts to restore the Connett Building as opposed to tearing it down, so they need to make sure they are evaluating solutions appropriately. Mr. Hut will write to H3 to confirm that everything is ADA-compliant, and the Board is in no way compromising accessible exiting. Ms. Zacker commented that the Board is not voting on accessibility or no accessibility, they are rethinking to meet the overall goal.

Mr. Ribadeneira made a motion to exclude the ramp from the building project, with the caveat that excluding it, in no way will invalidate the complete building accessibility, or in any way invalidate the legal exiting of all buildings. Ms. Zacker Seconded, Ms. Karp, Ms. Grohman, and Ms. Greenberg-Sheedy voted in favor. Ms. Marvell opposed. Mrs. Carroll and Ms. Saeed abstained.

The meeting was closed at 8:06pm.

Respectfully submitted by


Shanize Haddock