

**Meeting Minutes
Randall Library Building Committee
June 22, 2021 7:00pm
Via Zoom**

Members Attending: Tina McAndrew, Kat Copeland, Lisa Lavina, Brian Patuto, Jim Salvie

Also Attending: Denise Dembkoski, Town Administrator, Carol Stoltz (joined at 7pm)

Meeting Called to Order 5:45pm

Tina described the overall order for the interviews: She will introduce herself, the Building Committee and Denise and then ask the lead presenter to introduce their team and go right into their presentation.

Firms presenting: designLab and DRA

Firms were asked to prepare a 20 to 30 minute presentation and plan for 15 to 20 minutes of questions and discussion. They were invited to have key design partners from outside the firm join the call as desired.

6pm – designLab

Tina introduced the building committee, then invited reps from designLab to introduce themselves and begin presentation.

Mary Ann Upton, Partner, Project Manager, Active member of Assoc. for Preservation Technology; Lisa Giersbach, Partner, G2 Collective (landscape architects); Bob Miklos, Founder; Ben Youtz, partner, LEED Specialist, Project Manager

Brief History: designLab formed in 2005, 18 designers. Believe cultural and educational institutions transform their communities. Detailed the depth of their planning experience including Chapter 149 projects and municipal projects. Their cost estimator, Frank Vanzler, has a long experience with library projects, with both designLab and other firms.

Their goal when they take on a project like ours is to modernize, highlight the historic, and adapt to the current needs of the community.

Community: Firm views their responsibility is to history and to the library environment through the lens of the community. It's part of a historical continuum. Need to understand the past to create a living library for the future. Discussed architectural history of the buildings, that Randall remains a landmark in the town and is important to the community.

Site Review: Space is limited by roads on three sides, parking will continue to be an issue, hard to disguise 'back of house' items like dumpsters and book recycling bins. Vegetation obscures the original façade/entrance. Look at adjacent spaces to tie the location together.

Summary: Randall Library is a community hub, and the way people are using libraries changes as communities change. 'Grocery store to kitchen' metaphor used to illustrate change of how people use libraries. They are familiar with the needs and challenges described in the RPF.

Case study: The West Branch Library in Somerville for similarity to our project.

Similar age and limited available footprint. Saw involving the community as critical to planning a library that would be relevant to a community that is quite varied. Planning started before quarantine, but community forums and feedback sessions continued remotely. They believe in using a variety of tools and media to reach out to the community to give all a chance to be heard. Sessions led to developing a group of options that worked to meet ‘some/many/all’ expressed goals, with a clear outline of what each version achieves, the related square footage and pros/cons of each option. With an understanding of community vision, they shaped designs and cost models that incorporated the core work (must dos to meet code, address deficiencies, etc.) and the ‘some/many/all’ goals.

A tight footprint presented challenges for making the site inviting and accessible while using gentle grades not requiring handrails.

We were walked through some ‘back of envelope’ initial drawings of ideas. (These are included in the hard copy proposal that can be accessed at the library).

Presentation ends and floor opened for conversation and questions.

Questions posed by the committee:

- Could you say more about the footprint of the West Branch in comparison to Randall? Very similar in the constraints, though West Branch in a more urban setting.
- How closely did the cost estimate reflect the final cost? Project came in 2% over estimate (\$200K over on \$10M project). Construction took place during quarantine and continued after. Building reopened on July 1 this year.
- Where would this project fit into your current portfolio of projects, and will it be a priority? This project is coming at a great time. Many current projects are headed to construction and the team will be able to focus on this. “We love these kinds of projects, which we see as a puzzle to be solved. We’re enamored of the site and the history of the building.” Project managers stay with the project through the construction. They understand the key role they play in bringing the project to town administrators, community groups and any interested residents, and they embrace the responsibility.
- The library is a small space with lots of diverse ideas of use. How do you gather the information and shape designs? Collaborating with the community is so important. It’s key that we meet with enough people to see themes and priorities emerge across user groups. We start out as listeners and work toward strong consensus.
- Who manages the subcontractors on-site when the project is underway? The project managers remain connected and work directly with site supervisors to keep the project and costs on track.
- Tina was asked to talk about what she likes about how the library works, and what are some challenges. Important to her is providing space for the staff to work when they aren’t staffing the checkout desk. How the community uses a library is changing, not just in Stow, and she wants to see the town have a 21st century library ready for the future. Not necessarily bigger, but better.
- How do you gather input from folks not necessarily using tech for surveys and feedback? Getting people to the site is a great help. Being in the location will prompt their ideas. We have a lot of methods that have proved useful in other projects and should work here as well.

Tina noted the end of time. Bob closed by observing that they love our building and are excited by the opportunity to reimagine it for our community, and hope they're awarded the project.

Meeting session ended at 6:55pm.

Jim Salvie departed for Select Board Meeting

7pm - DRA

Tina introduced the building committee, then invited reps from designLab to introduce themselves and begin presentation.

Ken Best, Principal and preservation historian, Ron Paolillo, Project Manager, John Buhl, principal at Foley Buhl Roberts & Assoc., (structural engineers), Courtney Southwick, Project Manager. Cost estimator not able to attend.

Presentation Order: Team, Process, Past projects, Options (early thoughts), Schedule and estimating, Q&A.

Many years of library projects in their background as a firm. Presented a visual org chart naming all key construction partnerships.

Visual diagram of separate but overlapping actions involved in the collaborative process to pull together a proposal: Investigate – Site visits, historical records, staff Interviews, learn about community preferences; Document – Study available structure reports, drone view of building and footprint, photos of problem areas as well as space in use; Assessment – History (original building construction and construction since), current programming, needs survey; Develop – Sustainability review to discuss strategies, design options, begin cost estimates and evolve as design evolves; Incorporate – Bring ideas together and package for presentation and recommendation of best options.

Case study: Grafton Library. Same team working on this project is proposed for the Randall project. Similar situation, addition renovation (original bldg. circa 1927). Walked through a series of photos to describe the project and its challenges/opportunities. Redesigned for the current uses of the library, including adding a modest teaching kitchen. Façade made to look in keeping with traditional style of original structure, without striving to match it, by using similar materials and accents.

Walked through some other projects that have similarities to ours. First was a major addition to a very small existing structure with limited footprint (not our plan). Spoke of other architect feedback praising not overwhelming the original building. Second, involved demolition and meaningful addition/new construction. Third, acknowledged as a larger project than ours, highlighted as the first LEED certified library in New England. (Solar panels, ground source heat pump) Original bldg. from 1867. Illustrative of their ability to marry new construction in keeping with the style and look of the original building for a less jarring overall impression. Fourth, another large project requiring demolition of an adjacent building and new construction/addition. Fifth, smaller project (1910 original), new addition to existing building on a very tight footprint. Sixth, large addition to a building already added to twice. (Also involved moving another building to another site and demolition of another building).

Initial thoughts about options: Interior: Low level: Making ADA upgrades, improving interior flow, few structural changes. Medium level: renovating or altering over 50% more structurally

complicated but do-able. High level: site change - leave the 1890s building as is and remove the addition, replacing with more energy efficient spaces, new elevator, stairs to access full buildings, create better loadbearing situation. This maintains the current footprint of land.

Footprint expansion: propose land acquisition of the abutter's property to open up east side of the building and accomplish more with renovating and expanding the existing building. Second version of footprint expansion includes creating a walking path from the parking area to Crescent Street with a small park/outdoor activity area. Photos of similar ideas shown.

Sustainability considerations: Porous paving, radiant floors, best use of daylight, rain gardens, all to enhance space and increase efficiency. Grafton project has many of these types of features.

Schedule and Cost Estimating: Will develop comparative budgets for each design sample to aid with decision making. Can also incorporate into planning a discussion of systems and finishes that impact costs.

Finished with a slide of testimonials from previous clients.

Presentation ends. Floor opened for questions and discussion.

Discussion/Q&A

- What challenges do you anticipate encountering where the addition meets the original building? Water incursion is already a known problem, but we'll need to do a detailed survey. An expansion joint would be added if we build a new addition. The paved area right against the original building often creates problems where flashing cannot mitigate water flow.
- How does this project fit into your priorities? The Grafton project is just about complete and took a lot of Ron's time. There is another small project moving to construction documents. We have time and staff available. We are a 30-35 person firm and we can draw on staff for work on the project.
- Do your project managers accompany the subs when they do their site visits? We would all be there together at the beginning. The engineers understand buildings quickly and can help us see the full situation of the building. Our cost estimator will be there, too, to see the building and project overall to better understand the developed construction design when it's time for pricing.
- Have you used this cost estimator in the past? She's done a lot of large work; she is an active partner in discussing the projects and shaping the cost planning. She is very aware of materials costs and can help with decisions about design choices based on affordability of materials. Her skills were in evidence when one of our projects was designed and heading to construction and then the Covid-related materials cost increases became apparent, and we had to rethink some of our ideas while heading to construction.
- If you replace the 1975 addition, do you have sense of the net change in square footage? We haven't taken an in-depth look, and would need to understand the zoning regulations, we might be able to get closer to property lines, take a new look at the patio area. There's a lot of space used for the entry to the building. There are also new efficiencies in materials that can be used to give the space more flexibility. It's worth exploring many options, they're relatively easy to do and can open up thinking about the space.
- It sounds like one of the significant challenges could be the way the 1975 addition was built and laid out, given advancement in materials and techniques.[?] Yes, if it had been designed for library loading, it would be easier to work with, but you have such a barrier

to flexibility right now. Flexible space is key to meeting changing demands on a publicly used space.

- Many of the projects similar to ours that you presented don't mimic but honor the historical building. If the 1975 structure were to be demolished, would that be the case here? We think it's important to listen to what the community is asking for and what they think belongs in the location. Every town is different in how they view their historic buildings. We believe we can work with our clients. Our philosophy carries into the inside of the building, too. We want to compliment the building, but more importantly, meet the needs of the users.

Tina: Thank you for joining us tonight, and your presentation.

Ken: What will the decision process be?

Tina: Our job is to make a recommendation of our top choices to the Town Administrator, who will make the final decision. We hope to have our list to her within the next couple weeks.

Ken: We'd love to work with you and thank you for your time tonight.

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Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Zoom meeting recording:

<https://zoom.us/rec/share/JYWA6OQcePrPQCSJ20RWq2nZA3ZYmvJMxYNtx3kRUFIIQLtJpCQWK1Ja1x4eQNI.fKbxiAPcLqXSH3jM> Passcode: zR0T.Nc7

Minutes submitted by Vice Chair/Clerk Lisa Lavina