

Randall Library Building Committee
June 23, 2021 7:00pm Via Zoom

Members Attending: Tina McAndrew, Kat Copeland, Lisa Lavina, Peter McManus, Brian Patuto, Jim Salvie,
Also Attending: Denise Dembkoski, Town Administrator

Meeting Called to Order 6 pm

6pm Johnson Roberts Associates, Inc.

Tina introduced the Committee members, asks firm to introduce themselves and begin presentation.

Stewart Roberts: (Philip O'Brien, partner, also present)

We're focused on architecture for communities since 1997. We're a 12-person firm in Somerville. Described leadership and focus. Specialize in community buildings in many forms. Public libraries are the bulk of their projects. Believe they have more experience than most. Half their work has focused on preservation and restoration for a variety of clients in New England. Highlighted their LEED-accredited projects. Philip is a LEED accredited professional. Sustainability is important and is a focus from the beginning of a project.

Our job is to support you how ever we can to make the project a reality. Community engagement is a key part of that, and we can work with you to create any kind of engagement you feel is important (including fundraising).

Presented org chart of consultant team. Same team as 2012 would be on the project. Will revisit the site to bring fresh ideas.

Provided an analysis of their cost control. In sum, on average 4% below the estimate, and less than one percent on change orders. (Industry standard is 5%)

Approach to cost estimating: We get into great detail even when the drawings are in development, to be sure the scope of what they're pricing is in line with what we're planning. Cost escalations are planned in. Also do a full project budget in addition to construction budget. We have a great track record for our project budgets. Once you have an appropriation, it's hard to go back for more funding. We understand that and take our estimations seriously.

Relevant experience:

Concord Free Public Library. Been working with them for years. Though bigger than Randall project, there is similarity in the historic component linked with a modern component. This is the 3rd project in Concord. Space being added to connect two buildings in addition to renovation. An earlier project, the Fowler Branch, is closer to in size to Randall, and with a 1970s addition, but no footprint limitations. Renovation and addition. Preservation work along with remodel 1970s addition and knit on some additional space. Photos of new spaces.

(Phil) Littleton – Ruben Hoar Library – new construction. Current library is in a school building. Goal is to create a campus feeling by adding this to the site with shared parking. Nearly complete. Described layout and site. Very large in comparison to us.

Hopkinton Library – similar challenge -attaching old to new, but also a large sq ft project. Restored spaces reused creatively.

Most relevant: shows slides of our project from 2012. Similar materials in scale with the original building. Looked at options: renovations with modest additions, multiple versions of removing current addition and adding new, settled on a scheme to remove addition and do a new addition to fully use the site to add some parking, with an entrance at grade. New upper level in scheme allowed for tying the spaces together, with most adult areas on the upper floor. Plan was well received but there were multiple projects in town competing for the same funds.

Moving forward: It's been long enough that we'd need to start over with fresh eyes. Review all existing conditions and come up with new approaches. Goal is to create most cost-efficient library for Stow. Biggest opportunity if figuring out how to use the second floor more effectively. Space is cut off from lower-level activity. Parking has been an issue, important to get handicap parking on site, and possibly additional parking. Existing building is key to Stow and is on the town seal. Water leakage probably remains an issue. It's inherent to the way the building was designed with the plaza and is the cause of structural deterioration. Other water issues to address, too. It's key to improve all in order to improve library services.

Project schedule presented: review existing conditions and space needs, get right into testing ideas. Meet every 2 weeks to keep momentum going. Hold public forums, at least 2 to get input while creating initial designs and then later at the end to present full design and cost planning to the community.

Summarized their goals: Library that works for the community, is appropriate for the town of Stow and respects the heritage, and is fiscally and environmentally responsible.

Presentation concludes.

Questions and discussion:

- When approaching a project like ours, what options are there for LEED consideration? We can do some with energy conservation. The greenest thing is to re-use a building. New additions can meet many standards in both the envelope and mechanicals. We've been successful with just renovations related to the interiors in an existing shell.
- Given the scale of your projects, where would Stow be in your priorities, and how much attention can you give it? You would be the only library design we'd have on board. This would not be the smallest one we've recently worked on. Projects like yours fit right in our wheelhouse.
- Do you have any different approaches for getting better buy in on the project this time around? I felt we had good support for the design, but poor timing for funding, given the other projects lined up. The library is important to the town, and I think people would get behind it again.
- Will you be presenting a new design, starting with a clean slate? We've done a number of projects where we've had one go in and they get a grant 5 years later and need a revision of the design. A number of years have gone by, so we need to look at it again and see what new ideas we have, and what we've learned since then. Also, library services have grown and changed since then.
- Given that the first design determined that the 1975 addition needed to be demolished how can you conclude differently now? This wasn't a decision we came to alone, we made it with the Building Committee. I think we need to acknowledge there are some serious problems with the addition and those issues will need to be resolved. They questions is how economically they can be resolved.

- You've spoken of your familiarity of the space, most of the team listed are the same. Yes, and he confirmed 2 new players.
- Can you explain how you do cost revisions during the design process, or is the costing completed at the end? We'll do some ballpark estimating during the process, but most of the estimating happens near the end, as the detail is developed.
- Can you review the ability to install stacks upstairs part? Was it a decision not to put them there, or decision made by structural deficiency? What do you recall from last time? The addition wasn't designed very robustly and so it would be tricky to shore it up to hold stacks on the second floor.
- Question was actually referring to the historic building. Reinforcing the historic part would involve getting into the finishes on the first floor. Library book stacking was not a thing when the original building was designed. Getting the required load capability in that area will be complicated.
- What do you see out there as current library services? Trends for the last few years is libraries are places where people want to get together. But then Covid came along and there is new thinking about that. Could impact ventilation, UV filtering systems, more robust systems, getting away from group toilet rooms, and spreading out furniture a bit. The overall issue that recently we've been trying to bring people together and now we have to figure out how to do that safely. Flexible spaces will be really important going forward. Book collections are smaller, but still a significant part of the building.
- Which of your samples of work is most like our situation? The Hopkinton library is probably the closest. Very tight space, very limited by historic district. Three levels are tucked in to look like two, with a lower level that doesn't feel like a basement space. Floors in the church were rotted. We installed a raised floor to accommodate electrical and other systems. We got very creative and that building has a lot going on.
- How many of the problems did you find in the design phase and how many were in the construction phase? That's a good question. Historic restorations/renovations typically have a bigger contingency in the planning. Typical buildings have 5% contingency, for historic buildings we build in 10-12%. We did run into some things after we put the shovel in the ground.
- Did that project come in on target? Yes. That was a project where some time went by and we had an opportunity to review and come up with some ways to keep more of the church than planned. A chance for some creative re-tooling.
- I'm confused about one question, did one of your designs have stacks upstairs? Yes, but they were light use stacks in the addition.
- What do you think are some meaningful changes that have happened in the intervening years that would change how you think about designing the building this time around, alleviating problems with techniques that didn't exist then? Energy conservation is better, but they come with their own challenges. Building science is changing in how we think about new constructions. Some we've done lately are all electric, no fossil fuel. Smaller duct work allows for a building that can be more compact.
- The CPC funded restoration in the historic space. Do you anticipate running into any contradictions in what you might want to do? The energy issues in historic building - have to be careful about insulating historic buildings to not create rot situations. A lot of the focus has to be with windows. Triple glazing can be a solution. The historic character

be wants to be retained in most situations. Rarely worth it to spend the money to strip the interior to insulate and restore the interior.

Tina: any other questions?

Thank you both for joining us tonight.

It's a great project, we'd love to take another crack at it. Thank you.

7pm Oudens Ello

Tina introduced the Committee members, asks firm to introduce themselves and begin presentation.

Conrad Ello: Introduced the team, shown on a slide. Matt Oudens and Chris Genter are also on the call. Others on the team would be called upon to help with defining the scope of the project for early cost estimation.

Described the firm overall. Practice started in 2007.

Project experience: Matt and Conrad worked at Machado Silvetti prior to forming their own company. At MS, they worked on a number of cultural projects, especially the Honan Allston branch of the BPL, similar scale to Randall, and renovation of the Bowdoin College Museum of Art. Similar building technical issues related to age. Displayed images of multiple projects across New England. Many are municipal projects, including 15 libraries, many of which achieved LEED certification. Many also involve historical context like Randall.

Case samples: (Matt presented) Eastham Library: major addition to a very small original building. A net zero energy building that received LEED gold certification. Scituate Town Library. Expansion and reinvigoration of 1970's era building. Increased natural light and connected the spaces to bring full space together. Flexible long term use planned by making structural choices to handle book loading in all spaces. Martha's Vineyard Museum. Transform the former Marine Hospital building to a museum. Lot of neglect and decay to manage. Multi-year project to rehab the site and 2 buildings.

Cost planning and project management: (Chris Genter) AM Fogarty is the partner for cost estimation. Worked with them for 10 years on library projects. Presented comparison of bid to actual. OE will present a set of concept drawings and narrative to them to give context of scope and they will develop the cost estimate. Estimate includes materials and labor for direct cost of construction work. Will include contingency and markup that will determine the total construction cost. They will also calculate a total project cost which includes project management, furniture and fixture equipment, and other directly related costs to complete the project. They try to capture any and all costs to have the closest final number planned at the outset.

Site: (Chris G) Very tight site with little opportunity to consider expansion as part of the design. Showed some initial ideas about how they think about the possible options. Important to think about many options to understand the possible benefits of a more ambitious project relative to a more modest project. It helps to identify the right approach that the town will support and fund.

Presentation concludes.

Questions and discussion:

- The projects you've shown are lovely examples of your work, but they are all much larger than this project. What interests/excites you about this opportunity? What we didn't show are some of our smaller projects. What excites us are the constraints of the

site and the building challenges. How to create a 21st century building with what's already in place. Described a lighthouse museum project. We're problem solvers first and foremost and like to apply those skills. We realize the role these civic buildings play in small towns and we take them very seriously. We like designing for a public audience.

- You were talking about the choice between renovating what's in place or demolishing and building new and determine the cost relative to whether it meets your programmatic needs. Could you expand on that last part? Part of the project is to work with the library to determine what the ideal programming might be. Renovation can always improve current situations, but there will still be limits based on the constraints of the existing structure. Sometimes using the existing footprint will not allow you to achieve your goals for the building function for now and the next 20-30 years of library use. Understanding what the town will support and fund is an important part of those calculations before the design process gets too far along.
- What experience do you have with pushing proposals forward in a town, to help get them to saying yes to a building project? For almost all of our projects there is a project promotion aspect. One of our jobs is to develop deliverables that are compelling and get people excited. The renderings and thoughtful planning go together to provide a package that's well prepared and hard to poke holes in. We often participate in settings that are important in that town to talk about and promote the project.
- What about forums with town members in advance of the big part of the design? We encourage that, and it's up to the committee how much outreach and surveys you want to conduct. It's better that the committee organize and ask those questions so there is resident to resident conversation.
- What do you envision as the amount of time you would spend working on this? Is this a priority in your portfolio? We do have time and we wouldn't have submitted a proposal if we weren't interested. You have established the fee so there will be a limited number of hours we can put in, but we almost always go over those hours, especially in the early phase. It's important early on that we understand the project goals and scope so we can be realistic and efficient with our time.
- Your timetable for the work schedule has cost estimation coming in fairly close to the end. In a project like this where you imagine there will be a few different options, will the costs be developed along with the designs. What is your methodology from the early to later stages of the design process? This is a limited effort, and this plan was laid out in advance of understanding your plan. As we've thought about the interview, we thought maybe there might be some order of magnitude pricing that needs to happen. This might help guide us to the right path early. We would try to slot in some pricing in early task 3. We're working on a similar type of concept project and are using the order of magnitude pricing on that, and this might be a similar project.
- Can you give some ideas about sustainability options? It's different to think about the historic building and the addition. New construction offers the greatest number of possibilities, and the historic space has the most limited potential. We start our approach by thinking about the building envelope because if that is well done, you can just add on as you outfit the interior. We can think of all electric because it pairs well with solar, but it's a priority of ours and we incorporate it into our strategy.
- Can you describe the team of contractors you work with and of the projects you showed us, which did they work on? We've worked with our team of designers on all the projects

we shared and have selected some partners to join us on this project because of the age of the building. We have long histories with most of these companies, dating back to our Machado Silvetti days. At times we need the help of historic preservationists when we need assistance with process and working with other agencies. (gov't and historic)

- I've seen the Eastham library and it's beautiful. Do you have experience with things that are less fabulous and are you ready to do a little less fabulous project? We like the opportunity a project provides in challenging our skills and interests. We had a clean slate in Eastham and had a lot of opportunities. We've also worked on projects with many constraints and our creativity can be transformational for a client. That can happen with a modest or flashy project. You may be discounting the original Randall building in this. There is some fabulousness in that building and this project. The current entrance gives no sense of the beautiful rooms that are in the library. There should be creative solutions that will feature the beautiful parts of your library.

Tina: that wraps up the questions, thank you for coming.

Thank you all, nice to meet you virtually.

8pm Abacus

Tina introduced the Committee members, asks firm to introduce themselves and begin presentation.

David Eisen, Partner, introduces the team. David Pollock, Partner. Both will be on project from start to finish. Also with us, Julia Patten, project Designer, and members may already know Judy Selwin, of Preservation Tech Associates. She was involved in the Randall Library redesign project in 2012.

This is a terrific project, great site, great original building, not so great addition. This is a great opportunity to get it right. We have a broad range of consultants who we've worked with on a number of projects and can bring their expertise to the project.

We are a small firm. You get the principals actively involved. This would be an important project for us. We have great experience, and we understand these buildings. We understand designing for contemporary needs. We can step back and see the library in terms of the community surrounding it. We're careful about the details. If someone designed the building and it's leaking, they got the details wrong.

Case samples: We want to show projects with commonalities to the Randall Library.

Beals Library – same size, about same period, built on a sloping site. We lowered the grade, replicated historic details and added a contemporary entry

Community Center, Concord - Another building with an entry below grade. Lowered the grade and created an uplifted entry. The Randall entrance feels like it will bang your head when you walk in, this approach could create a more welcoming entry.

Framingham Library - Exterior only, created a design to revive the bunker like entry/façade. We added a gradual grade entry, a reading garden and walkway cover overhead to bring the whole site together.

We believe there's no need to build new when you can be creative with the existing space.

Franklin School – Incredible attic space. Lifted the roof put in new dormers, added a loft inside and added meaningful new space. Not exactly the approach for Randall, but you see what creative thinking can do for existing space.

Taft Library – Converted a concrete block church into a reinvented space that works well as a library. Filled with light and feels inviting. Not historic, but adaptive re-use in a cost-effective way.

Edwards School – realigned the building to allow more light and create a protected outdoor space.

Old Library at Harvard – Project had a boarded up original entrance, with an accessible entry in the rear. Reopened, added a floating ramp and opened up to light with period-similar windows.

Highlighted new construction projects, too, to show what a new addition could look like.

We know you need places for all types of groups using the space. Showed examples of flexible spaces that welcome many groups at different times of day/use.

Judy Selwyn introduces her role in this project – Experience with Historic preservation. Worked with the architects who built the 1975 addition but was not on the project. The original building has wonderful features that were subsumed by the very ‘determined to be modern’ addition. Slides highlighting historic projects with buildings of the era of Randall, with a variety of challenges. Slides looking closely at ageing-related issues at Randall.

Julia Patten takes us through some feasibility studies that have been completed for projects across the state. They also illustrate skills with digital design to create visuals that will show our ideas as we develop them. These easily translate to materials we can use to create community excitement and support. Community engagement: we can do it all, large groups, small groups. We’ve developed strategies for working with community groups to hear their ideas about an ideal library using techniques that assure all voices are heard. We can even lead them in a virtual setting, as well as doing online polls. We gather and work with you to understand what the community feels is important for the project.

David: on to Cost. Presented a list highlighting their approach. Identify funding sources and limitations, community and client priorities and decisions in tandem with understanding the funding available, minimal and maximal design options, be flexible and efficient, evaluate costs and pros/cons relative to priorities.

Cost estimator comes to see the building and understand the building issues, they clarify all the components to accurately price the materials, use specific drawings to see assembly, work with design partners to understand all site work for pricing.

How do we get the town to sign on? We set you up for that: understand the town’s context, meet a broad range of constituents, frame proposals as addressing needs, encourage participation and provide support for participating, we want our work to meet the needs of your decision process. Have tools to use to evaluate cost during the process.

Presented some preliminary ideas with illustrations. (can be seen in hard copy proposal available at the library)

Presentation concludes.

Questions and discussion

- Do you use landscape architects? Yes, we typically do, but the RFQ calls for in-house designers.
- How often have you worked with the sub consultants? We have not worked with Judy, but all the others have partnered with us for 15-20 projects.

- Can you talk about the history of accuracy by the cost estimator? Current project at Harvard came in 20% under budget, by cutting many of the design ideas. We've been on a good run with projects we've bid on. All have gone to contract with budgets that were good. In a feasibility study, there's a lot of room for error so we lay out options that will meet your budget. The costing is mostly square foot pricing with some information describing constraints. It will include options so you can get what you want in the building while understanding the cost tradeoffs.
- [Can you explain] The cost control process and the decision-making matrix. Most of this matrix focuses on features, and the most expensive approach has the most features. Isn't that one usually be favored by the town? Often, yes, but not always the case. In a recent project, it turned out that teardown and new construction would be less expensive than the necessary renovation.
- Isn't it up to the municipality to set the guardrails? Absolutely. We will work with our clients to understand the general budget as we begin our process. We lay it all out so you can way the options that most meet the needs of your community.
- Could you talk about the Beals project? Specifically, what was there and what's new and how you were limited by the footprint? A long process in the community, took a long time to evolve. Basically, they needed an accessible entrance, with the challenge that any expansion of the footprint would lead to the need for installing a larger fire suppression system and the money wasn't there for that. We ended up designing it to fit in the corner of the building at the ground level and bringing visitors up to the main floor via an elevator or staircase. Now that there's an entrance on the lower level we're working with them to add a children's area at that level. We brought light and a useable entry within the budget they had to make it possible.
- If the projects you presented, which do you think is most akin to the Randall Library project? Virtually all of them, just in different ways
- What situations have you been in when you encountered problems that were not apparent until the work got underway? Mendon had groundwater problems that we anticipated, but were bigger than thought. Undersized steel columns. The Buckley school, where the two constructions were knitted together, at a certain point the engineers had to come in to solve a masonry pier problem with a carbon fiber wrap. We think the challenge at Randall will be more about waterproofing. We've been creative about reutilizing raw volumes of space to be efficient and unique, and we look at it from the outside to make it attractive and pleasing in the location. All of them have moments of surprises when walls are opened up and we just try to predict them as early as possible. We work with many engineers, but prefer working with our code consultant for problem solving expertise.

Tina: any other questions? No. Thank you all for joining us tonight

David: I'll be emailing a pdf of the presentation

Thank you, have a good night.

Meeting adjourned at 9pm.

Zoom meeting recording

https://zoom.us/rec/share/_9qsy1OC21wf_vV9a2t5P7Y1m6nC5X45NTwtllz20pUZwUQ-K5ByrRTLEvvTgfl.tLQxHiwatga2daWE Passcode: Zr4B?4r*

Minutes submitted by Vice Chair/Clerk Lisa Lavina