

New Salem Library Board of Trustees, March 6, 2022

Called to order 3:02 p.m. Adjourned: 4:40 p.m. Present: Tracie Shea (Director), Eli MacCullagh, Mailande DeWitt, and Judy Northup-Bennett (Trustees), Marny Ashburne (public)

## **Review of Project History**

Reimagining Committee came up with the idea, and due to the nature of the work it became the Trustee's responsibility.

In Feb 2020, papers were filed requesting \$9700 from the town for FY21. This plan included

- Move to LED with uplighting
- 2 dimmer zones in the community room
- Move a light switch
- Repair entryway circuits
- Motion sensor lights throughout the library

This plan was reviewed by Steven Canning, who stated the dimming zones would be an issue due to structural restraints, and gave a different suggestion regarding the moving of the switch.

No contractors responded to this plan.

In Nov 2021, a plan was written to give to contractors. This plan included

- Task lighting over the kitchenette
- 2 dimming zones in the community room
  - Leave the light switch in place
  - Add dimming switch by electrical closet
- Install switch by south door
- Install battery motion sensor lights

Two contractors responded to this plan. Both changed the plan in some way.

## **Project Proposals**

Ohlson Electric

- Move and combine several switches
- Run wire to community room fixtures for dimming
  - One test fixture included, no others

Franklin County Technical School (FCTS)

- Remodel existing fixtures for LED dimmable bulbs throughout the library
- Install kitchenette task lighting
- Dimmable switches for 2 zones in the community room
- Change the Exit signs to LED

FCTS had trouble finding good quality dimmable LED bulbs, and is pursuing options for replacing the community room fixtures to meet the plan requests.

Concerns had been raised that FCTS would not be permitted to work on municipal projects due to supervisory restrictions. FCTS is a Chapter 74 program and is granted exception to these restrictions by 603 CMR 4.00

A possible new plan to bring back to the contractors to requote was brought forward by Judy. Discussion included that doing so would be very similar to showing the contractors each other's plans and asking them to requote based on their competitor's ideas. So how would we choose between these plans?

Public comment sent in prior to the meeting was reviewed to help the trustees assess priorities.

Marny, speaking from a public comment perspective, said that her impression was that the purpose of the quote process is to prevent government projects from going to the friends of the individuals serving as supervisors of the project, or to the same providers over and over. As a taxpayer, she wants us to go with the lowest cost plan, and to be responsible stewards for town funds and resources.

Marny, speaking as a representative from the Friends of the Library, said, "Refurbishing existing fixtures with LED dimmable bulbs and switches seems a reasonable option that [the Friends] support."

### **Absentee Public Comment:**

Dear Trustees,

I'm unable to attend the meeting of March 6 but I want to make a comment about the lighting. As a library user, and having served on the Board of the Friends and on the Reimagining our Library (ROL) committee, I have a deep commitment to the role of the library in our community and the fulfillment of the goals of the ROL.

The final step in the completion of the Reimagining project is the lighting upgrade, which was determined to be the purview of the Trustees. The ROL committee hoped to modernize the lighting by replacing the old industrial looking fixtures and fluorescent bulbs, as well as adding dimmers in the community room and relocating some poorly placed switches.

With the advent of high speed internet, library use may change for some. Many people are now able to work at home, but that isn't the case for everyone. Families don't always have a computer for each family member to do homework; not everyone has a printer; not everyone has a quiet and comfortable place to work or study at home.

Libraries are also increasingly a place to gather for classes, readings, meetings, and other group events. That is the primary value of the new community room, which is New Salem's only indoor gathering place.

Although library usage may be changing, it should not mean that we should downgrade our expectations. We have this one opportunity, and the standard for decision making ought to be how to do this the best way possible, not how to do this the least expensive way. A solid plan was put forth by contractors who are local, professional, trusted, and known to be committed to the interests of the town. Not knowing the specifics of the other proposal I can only hope that the choice isn't made strictly on cost.

While many people may not notice or particularly care about the existing fixtures, they will notice a significant aesthetic improvement and appreciate it. People may not have noticed or especially cared about the old white walls, but once they were painted, the change was noticed,

appreciated, and significantly improved the experience of the space. The same can be said about the lighting.

There are many ways to make full use of the space we have, and to do so we want it to be warm, welcoming, and technologically up-to-date and functional. We worked so hard to create this beautiful space—let's make it the best it can be.

Respectfully,  
Lisa Finestone

Hi Judy,

Thanks for your reply. I appreciate all of your hard work and everyone's good intentions to do what is best for our library and the town.

I wonder if the difference in cost between "good enough" and the best aesthetic option is significant enough that the gap can't be breached. Might there be other sources of funding to help make up the difference? For instance, have the Friends of the Library been approached? The New Salem Academy? Just a thought...

Lisa

PS Please enter these comments and the previous ones into the record. Thanks.

Hi Judy,

Thank you for sharing your perspective on the lighting upgrade. Although you maintain that you are keeping an open mind regarding the ways to proceed on the project, it does appear to me that you have already made a decision. Since I feel this way, I have decided to remove myself from the lighting upgrade discussion and decision. However, I do have a few things to address.

I agree that it might be prudent to reexamine the 2020 lighting proposal with the new uses and needs of the library in mind. However, I don't see how changes in the use of the library impact the original lighting upgrade proposal. The Re-imagining Committee's original intent was to replace the 'industrial-looking fixtures' with more aesthetic ones, allow for dimmable lighting zones and replace inconvenient switches. After all the work, time and effort we put into making our library a more welcoming, inviting and efficient space, it seems a shame to 'short-change' it now, especially since we already have the money allocated.

After at least one year of fruitless requests for electrical contractors interested in giving us an estimate, the Trustees asked that I continue contacting electrical contractors to place bids and I did so. When no other electrical contractors would submit an estimate, Larry and Al did a favor for me and the town by submitting a proposal. With regard to the Voc Tech proposal, I would like to point out that you are not comparing 'apples to apples'. The Voc Tech proposal changes the original plan in many ways. If you were to ask Larry and Al to provide an estimate on the 're-modeling of the current light fixtures' as well as the changes that Alec Jillson proposed, (or vice versa) the resulting quotes might be very different.

I certainly am in favor of saving energy for the whole library and hopefully, new LED bulbs in the old fixtures will do that. You do address the need for a more comforting lighting color and I hope that you and the Director decide on a 'warm LED light" rather than the cool LED lights that are harsher.

While I will not be attending the Trustees' lighting upgrade meeting, I request that this letter be included in the record.

Thank you,

Monica Winters