

TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO

Minutes of the Town Council Meeting of April 20, 1989

Mayor Walsh convened the special meeting at 5:00 p.m. with Councilmembers Chignell, Colteaux, Sharp and Zaharoff present.

2. REVIEW REPORT ON TOWN LIBRARY BUILDING AND CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE COURSES OF ACTION.

Town Administrator Dickens explained that the purpose of this workshop was to discuss the library building and the potential of trying to acquire a piece of property either related to the library building or as a separate matter. Eventually, staff will need direction from the Council on whether the Town should continue to keep the library building open to the public given what is known about its structural condition, and whether the Council wants to pursue acquisition of the property at 22 Magnolia, adjacent to the Magnolia Avenue parking lot.

The Councilmembers raised concern that if they expressed interest in acquiring the property in open session, it would affect the price of the property.

Bob Chapman, real estate agent for the property owner, said it was his desire to see the Town obtain the property.

Town Attorney Roth advised that discussions on whether or not the Council is interested in purchasing the property should be conducted in open session while discussion on negotiations concerning acquiring the property should be conducted in closed session.

It was the feeling of the majority of the Councilmembers to proceed with hearing the report on the library.

Assistant Public Works Director Braun reported that the library building has been identified by structural engineers as an unreinforced masonry building, and that unreinforced masonry buildings are likely to fail in moderate earthquakes. The specific problem is that the floors and the roofs are not tied to the walls and the walls are not tied together with steel reinforcing. State law now requires the Town to inventory all the buildings in town to determine which ones have this hazardous type of construction, and report back to the state. The state also requires the Town to develop a mitigation program for these buildings by January 1, 1990, with options including retrofitting the buildings to make them seismically safe, demolish the building, or reduce the occupancy of the building to that of a warehouse. A complete retrofit of the library building would cost approximately \$250,000. The model ordinance that the Town has in effect for retrofitting the buildings for this type of occupancy requires a complete retrofit to be completed in three years. If the Town chooses to do a lesser retrofit, which is a wall anchor insulation on the building, it would cost approximately \$100,000 and would give the Town an additional three years to get the remaining retrofit completed. He said it was very important to tie the walls to the floors and roofs of these buildings as it tends to lessen the probability of a total collapse of the building in a moderate earthquake.

Dickens advised that the Council keep in mind that the condition of the library building explained by Braun creates an immediate problem for the Town. He noted that the newer wing of the library does not have the hazardous structural problems of the older area. However, the Town's

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response in complying with the state law on this issue is more of a long-range problem, whereas the more urgent problem is that the public is being allowed into the building and it has been determined to be hazardous. If the Town takes action, he recommended it be an interim action pending the long-term decision on retrofitting or replacing that building. The options are to continue to use the building with the probabilities of having an earthquake that causes the building to collapse, creating serious injuries, or vacating it and moving library services elsewhere until the long-term decisions on the library building are made.

Walsh asked if this was the only unreinforced masonry building in Town, how it was identified, and whether funds were available for retrofitting the building. Braun responded that it has been identified by staff, consultants, and the Town consultant who is inventoring the entire community, as being an unreinforced masonry building. Eventually before January 1990, every building in Town that is unreinforced masonry construction, whether publicly or privately owned, will have been identified. The state is requiring the Town to identify the buildings and to adopt a mitigation program, and so far the only moneys that are available from the state are moneys for large residential buildings of this type of construction with low cost loans to assist the owners. currently there are no loans available for commercial office buildings.

Zaharoff asked if the building has been identified as an historical building or whether it would qualify as one, and if so, whether there were any grants available. Library Director Wingate said there was a new awareness of Carnegie Library buildings and communities are being asked to register them, with hopes they can obtain funding to save them, and if not, as a library, as another use. She suggested that the Historical Commission might be in a position of obtaining historical grants if they moved upstairs into the older part of the building.

Colteaux requested clarification on Dickens' recommendation on the interim use. Dickens responded that information has been presented to the Council that the building could collapse during a moderate earthquake and, knowing that, there are the liability and moral questions of whether the Town wants to keep the building open and have employees work there. If the Council is satisfied with maintaining operations in the building, then the Town can proceed with focusing on the state's requirements and what to do about the building in the long-term. On the other hand, if the Councilmembers feel the building should be closed as soon as possible, then different courses of action need to be explored. He advised that the consensus of staff was that given what is known about the building, the Town should start taking steps very soon to at least close the old part of the library from public use.

Roth advised that keeping the library open was a potentially serious situation for the Town.

Sharp asked Wingate how feasible was it to get out of the building quickly and operate somewhere else. Wingate said the service would have to be reduced, noting that there was no comparably sized building nearby into which the Town could afford to move. Whether the library building is used for book storage or construction takes place, service will be curtailed. Sharp asked if any steps had been taken to see what facilities were available. Wingate said she had a list of possibilities that she could present to the Council.

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Zaharoff asked what percentage is the new wing of the total square footage of the library. Wingate said it was approximately a little more than a quarter of the library, but that Braun does not think that they should be even operating out of the upstairs of the new wing. His recommendation was that people only be allowed in the area of the Historical Museum away from the unreinforced masonry area. He said it would be hard to isolate the two structures in the event of an earthquake. Zaharoff asked if there was any quick fix that could be used to isolate the old wing from the new wing.

Colteaux asked what happens physically to the building under the two retrofitting proposals. Braun explained the differences between the scope of the two projects.

Rilla Cheney said the Friends of the Library did not want the library declared an historic site, explaining that the monetary benefits did not outweigh the restrictions it would impose.

Bill Franchini, Historical Commission, said the Historical Commission has put alot of work into its quarters, they were just as important as the library, and did not want to be replaced by the library.

Bill Ollinger, 60 Olive Avenue, said that an incentive for getting historical designation was to get a tax break, which does not apply to public agencies, and there are severe restrictions on structural changes to the building.

Walsh asked Wingate for some of her ideas on this problem. Wingate said that these are not recommendations, they are ideas that had come up in the Library Services Committee:

1. Close the library and having no library service. The money that now comes to San Anselmo would go to the Marin County Library Special District, and the total savings of having no library at all would be approximately \$40,00 per year.
2. Join the County library system. However, they are not interested in this building and have said that the money they would receive would not be enough to provide San Anselmo's current level of service.
3. Temporarily operate from the Historical Museum. It is very small quarters, but is close to the stacks and they could send up runners. It raises the problem of where the Historical Commission goes.
4. Rent space at Devonshire Hall at Drake High School. The Town could get about 900 square feet for approximately \$550 a month. It would, however, take the library out of the center of town.
5. Join with Drake High School and have a library at Drake High School. This solution would probably better for the high school than for the Town.
6. Buy the property at 22 Magnolia Avenue and put a temporary mobile office space there. Rent a 374 square foot portable unit for \$276 a month for three years. However, that is probably even smaller than the Historical Commission's quarters.
7. Purchase a 1200 or a 1600 square foot portable classroom from Drake High School, which they're selling conditionally for \$1. The Town would be required to clear its location, move it, provide a new foundation, bring it up to code and refurbish it. The total cost for the Ross Valley School District to move

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a portable from Drake to White Hill was \$58,000. However, the Town would have a useful building that it could elsewhere when the library is finished with it.

Colteaux said if the Council wanted to enlarge the library and strengthen the existing structure, both the library and the Historical Commission would have to move out. Wingate said she had thought about operating out of a storefront under reduced circumstances while the building project is underway. One possibility would be to join the County circulation system so that San Anselmo would have access to more books during this period. The minimum amount of space needed to put out new books, magazines, encyclopedias, and a check-out area, was 500 to 1000 square feet. If the money was available to purchase a portable classroom, Wingate said she felt the library could be operated using the County circulation system within the existing budget.

Chignell said that all the reports that have been issued in the last couple of years have said basically what Braun is saying, but the exigency has not been there as it is today and the January 1, 1990 date has moved the Council forward in taking action. He wanted to give the Friends of the Library and the Library Services Committee to make a formal recommendation on this issue. He expressed concern about where the funds would be obtained for either a retrofitting project or new structure.

Dickens said the reason he felt it was important to have the meeting tonight was to address the question of how does the Council feel about the liability and about staying in the building until the long-range solutions are decided. The question was should staff start taking steps immediately to close the building down, and, if possible, find some alternatives. If not, then they would concentrate on the longer range issues of the future of the library building.

Colteaux commented that he thought the Council already has a commitment to the look and feel of the present library building and felt the Town should save the building and tie it in with an enlargement and improvement of the library. He supported doing the \$100,000 retrofit, getting the temporary building, make every effort to fund the enlargement and remodel of the library, and making the closure for the tie-down retrofit as limited as possible.

Zaharoff also expressed interest in retaining the library building, and wanted to hear recommendations from the people who have been involved with the library and are familiar with it. She said that if it was determined that the library should either be closed or to proceed with the \$100,000 fix first, what piqued her interest was renting Devonshire Hall because of its relatively inexpensive cost and minimal need for set up compared to a portable. She said she was also concerned that although posting the building as hazardous would not be helpful to the Town from a legal point of view, the Town has a moral obligation to warn people of the condition of the building and leave it up to them to decide whether they are going to go enter it. She wanted to the building to be posted unless the Town Attorney advises to the contrary.

Sharp said he was not comfortable with the liability situation and felt the Town should undertake immediate steps to get people out of the building as soon as feasible. He expressed support for the idea to obtain a portable building rather than spending money on leasing space. He agreed that the Town has a commitment to the library building, in that it is a significant part of the character of the town. He supported keeping the library in