

MINUTES

BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS CITY OF LOS ANGELES

September 13, 2012

A Regular meeting of the Board of Library Commissioners was held at the Mar Vista Branch Library, 2920 Overland Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90064, convening at 11:00 a.m. on the above-written date.

PRESENT: PRESIDENT MARSHA HIRANO-NAKANISHI
 VICE PRESIDENT PAULA MADISON
 COMMISSIONER RITA WALTERS
 COMMISSIONER TYREE WIEDER

EXCUSED

ABSENT: COMMISSIONER EDUARDO TINOCO

ALSO PRESENT: John F. Szabo, City Librarian; Kris Morita, Asst. General Manager; members of the Friends of the Mar Vista Library; Members of the Mar Vista Community Council; Roy Stone, President, Librarians' Guild; Dov Lesel, Assistant City Attorney; Ken Brecher, President, Library Foundation of Los Angeles; and staff.

WELCOME NEW CITY LIBRARIAN

President Hirano-Nakanishi and members of the Board welcomed new City Librarian John Szabo and wished him much success in his position. He comes from the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System where he served as Director since 2005.

Mr. Szabo stated that it was a pleasure and privilege getting to know library staff, the Library Foundation of Los Angeles' personnel, and the Friends' groups for the past few weeks; and meeting the members of the Friends of the Mar Vista Library this morning. He said it is obvious that the residents of Los Angeles love and are great supporters of the Los Angeles Public Library.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – 7/26/12 Regular Meeting

MOVED by Commissioner Wieder, seconded by Vice President Madison, and unanimously carried that the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held July 26, 2012, be approved as submitted.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL – 7/26/12 Special Meeting

MOVED by Commissioner Wieder, seconded by Vice President Madison and unanimously carried that the Minutes of the Special Meeting held July 26, 2012, be approved as submitted.

REMARKS BY THE WESTERN AREA MANAGER
AND THE MAR VISTA BRANCH SENIOR LIBRARIAN

Western Area Manager

Jene Brown, Interim Western Area Manager, reported that the Western area is very active and serves a diverse clientele. She said that both wired and wireless Internet access is in high demand. She stated that traditional programs are offered at all 12 branches within the Western Area. Library staff strengthen community connections by participating in events such as the Leimert Park Village Book Fair, Park Mesa Heights Community Council's Unity Festival, LEA/LA Book Fair, Make Music LA, and other outreach efforts during the upcoming school year. Lastly, she mentioned that since September is Library Card Sign Up Month, Library staff is encouraging parents and student to get one of the most important and essential school supplies of all, which is a Library Card.

Senior Branch Librarian

Kenneth Blum, Senior Librarian, welcomed the Board to the Mar Vista Branch. He stated that the branch is heavily used by patrons of all ages, and during the afternoon the Branch is filled with school-age children. He introduced staff members: Verdel Flores (Adult Librarian); Robyne Keyes, Tanya Cain, Gilly Rodriguez (Clerk Typists), and Carolina Munoz (Messenger Clerks).

In addition, Mr. Blum expressed that the Mar Vista Branch is very fortunate to have a wonderful Friends group who are dedicated and supportive individuals. Some of the members attending include Jeryll Taylor, Jean Lytton, Stephanie Wexler, Beth Brust, Elena Mendez, and Gretchen Woelfle.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON MATTERS
WITHIN THE BOARD'S JURISDICTION: None.

CITY LIBRARIAN'S REPORTS

Recommended Acceptance of Gift

MOVED by Commissioner Walters, seconded by Vice President Madison, and unanimously carried that the following resolution be adopted:

LIBRARY RESOLUTION NO. 2012-39

RESOLVED, that the Friends' gift consisting of 100 Ergocraft chairs, valued at \$7,053.53, for the multi-purpose room at the San Pedro Regional Branch Library be accepted; and

Library Resolution
No. 2012-39

FURTHER RESOLVED, that a letter of appreciation be sent to the Friends of San Pedro Library expressing the grateful appreciation of the Board of Library Commissioners and staff for their generous donation.

**RECOMMENDED APPROVAL OF CONTRACT
FOR THE AFTER-HOURS USE OF THE
WOODLAND HILLS BRANCH PARKING LOT**

City Librarian John F. Szabo recommended approval of the proposed Agreement between the Library Department and Makhani, Inc. for the after-hours use of the Woodland Hills Branch Library parking lot. He said that since 2006 the Library has had previous contracts for the use of this parking facility by with Makhani, Inc., owner of the Villa Piacere restaurant across the street from the Woodland Hills Branch.

Mr. Szabo informed that the Library mailed out 69 solicitations to businesses within 500 feet of the branch to solicit contracts but Makhani, Inc. was the only respondent. He said the one-year contract would bring a monthly revenue \$1,245.00 for the branch library, and it includes two, one-year renewal options.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Questions were raised by the Commissioners regarding the use of the revenue, and whether provisions were included in the contract in case of overlap of parking use by Makhani, Inc. when the Library expands its service hours in the near future, and if there has there been any complaints from the community.

City Librarian Szabo replied that the monthly revenue is deposited into a trust fund account designated to the Woodland Hills Branch Library and that revenue is used for the maintenance of the parking lot and facility maintenance and may also be used for materials for this branch.

Assistant City Attorney Dov Lesel indicated that in regard to Library hours responded that the contract could be modified and there is a provision for termination if the Library hours were to be changed.

In reply to community concerns, Kyle Millager, Business Manager, said that no complaints had been received from the community.

Thereafter, it was **MOVED** by Commissioner Walters, seconded by Vice President Madison and unanimously carried that the following resolution be adopted:

LIBRARY RESOLUTION NO. 2012-40 (C-30)

WHEREAS, on October 25, 2007, the Board of Library Commissioners approved Contract No. 744 with Makhani, Inc., owner of Villa Piacere Restaurant, for the after-hours use of the parking lot at the Woodland Hills Branch Library for a one-year period with an option for two additional years; and

WHEREAS, Contract No. 744 expires on October 22, 2012, and John Makhani, President of Makhani, Inc. expressed interest in a successor agreement with renegotiation for a lower rental fee due to the economic downturn:

RESOLVED that the Board of Library Commissioners approve an agreement with Makhani, Inc. for a one-year term with an option to extend for two additional years, at a reduced rate of 17% over the life of the agreement, for the after-hours use of the parking lot at the Woodland Hills Branch Library; and

FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Attorney and City Librarian be authorized to make technical changes to the Agreement prior to execution.

RECOMMENDED APPROVAL TO PLANT
A 24" BOX AUSTRALIAN WILLOW AND
DROUGHT RESISTANT PLANTS AT THE
MAR VISTA BRANCH

The City Librarian recommended replacing the coral tree that was located in the planter in front of the Mar Vista Branch Library with a 24" box Australian Willow tree and drought resistant plants. He said the 50-year old coral tree fell on July 9, 2011 after being damaged by strong winds that split the tree. The Department of Recreation and Parks removed the fallen branches; and after determining that the tree could not be saved, they cut down the remaining portion on July 11 and 13 and the stump was removed later.

The City Library reported that the Mar Vista community has expressed a great deal of interest in what will be placed in the planter in front of the library. He thanked the community members for offering their thoughts and guidance on how to remedy the situation of an empty planter. The Mar Vista Community Council has recommended replacement of the coral tree with a suitable and large tree replacement. The Mar Vista Friends of the Library have recommended the placement of a bush and/or drought resistant plants in the planter; and also commented on the increased visibility of the library now that the large tree is no longer there.

Mr. Szabo stated that staff consulted with the Department of Recreation and Parks' chief forester regarding a replacement tree and she offered a few options and ultimately made the recommendation of the Australian Willow, based on ease of maintenance and suitability for the site. He said that upon approval, the planting could begin and be completed before the end of October.

Public Hearing

(1)

Best Brust, Friends of the Mar Vista Library, spoke on behalf of Friends' President Patty Richmond who could not be here today. She stated the Friends are in favor of the motion and expressed her appreciation for the compromise that was reached and said that the tree chosen for that area won't be a flowering tree and the droppings will stay contained in the planter and won't be as bulky as the other tree, because it was shrouding the entire entrance and covering the signs.

Ms. Brust said that related to this issue is the sign with the name of the Branch. She proposed and submitted in writing that a sign with contrasting colors be placed because the current sign is in silver lettering and its almost invisible against the stucco. She said that the Friends hold book sales outside the facility entrance, which generates interest from the community and then they realize it is a library facility.

President Hirano-Nakanishi stated she would pass on her recommendations to the City Librarian.

(2)

Sharon Commins, Chair of the Mar Vista Community Council, stated that when the coral tree fell she received a lot of e-mails asking to replace it with a large suitable tree. She mentioned that a couple of stakeholders are present and they may have comments on that. She requested that whatever tree goes in the planter it should be a tree that could be trimmed in a more open manner so that people can see the banners fluttering behind it and so forth.

(3)

Christopher McKinnon, Stakeholder, stated he had written to the Board about replacing the tree. He said that even though he loves Australia, he wouldn't have selected the Australian Willow tree and he doesn't think there is one in Mar Vista. He pointed to the coral tree located across the street at the fire station and said the idea was to have four coral trees (one at each corner) as an entrance to Mar Vista.

Mr. McKinnon asked that if the if the community couldn't have a coral tree then one could be selected from the four types of trees in the Proposition F list, which built the fire station across the street.

Mr. McKinnon advised delaying until next Spring to investigate another tree and actually removing more of that stump because he was worried that any new tree would not grow successfully if the stump had not been drilled through and removed completely.

He also mentioned that the ongoing maintenance is a problem and they have had community volunteers cleaning up. He said the community votes to pass bond issues for libraries and fire stations and when they open they have beautiful landscaping but beyond the installation of landscaping there has to be a plan for maintenance.

(4)

Mr. Tom Ponton, former chair of the Mar Vista Community Council and currently works with one of the committees for recreation and open space. He said the he had organized a couple of clean up volunteer projects both here at the library and at the fire station to try to help out the city with its limited funds and maintenance ability. He mentioned that the committee is planning to continue working with the library and with the fire station in general trimming and planting.

Mr. Ponton also spoke about the replacement tree. He pointed out the fire station across the street has a coral tree that was in the design and planted right in front of the corner of the building and on the other side of the driveway is an Acacia Yellow tree. He showed some photographs of the trees. He also read an e-mail from Maritza Precott, a professional planter with the City of Los Angeles who has worked a lot with his committee on various community projects like this. Her e-mail read:

“Coral trees are the official tree of the city and is planted at many city facilities. There was a lot of thought during the design of the new library about the placement and selection of a tree. The second option would be to pick from a list of preferred native trees, which willows are not on this recommended list. Alternatively, to select a tree that is significant to the context of the neighborhood or the history of Mar Vista, which would either be a Pepper tree, which are Mar Vista’s first tree; or the Yellow Acacia tree, which would match the other one on the other side of the driveway on the fire station. It is important to have a unified scheme that will mark the entrance to Mar Vista Civic Center. Having the same type of trees makes a strong statement for the library and the fire station. It is not just one tree, it is the composition of the entire corner... It is important to observe the urban design principal as well. I can’t make the meeting but my first preference would be to replant another coral tree and secondly a Yellow Acacia, which matches the one at the fire station.”

Board Discussion

Commissioner Walters thanked the speakers for taking such an interest in the replacement of the coral tree, since that tree was taken into consideration at the time the building was constructed. She mentioned that she was here for the opening of the branch and the tree was so gorgeous and when she drove by a day or two after the tree fell, she almost caused an accident because she was so shocked to see the tree laying there. She indicated that coral trees have quite a history in Los Angeles and probably some of the most famous are those that go along strip on San Vicente, Brentwood, and Santa Monica. She said she is someone who believes that street trees have an enormous importance in an urban environment and that there are not enough of them.

Commissioner Walters stated that everybody's concerns can be appreciated and incorporated and she expressed the following concerns about the proposed plan:

- The 24-inch box tree is too small and according to the report it will take seven (7) years to mature which is not very fast growth.
- Surrounding the tree with drought tolerant plants may take over the space that the tree would occupy before the tree has a chance to develop and grow. She said she is not opposed to drought tolerant plants but not as proposed on the report.
- There is not another willow tree or have been informed of another kind on the report that that it is in this area.
- Removing the stump before planting rather than later, as one of the speakers mentioned that it had not been completely removed.
- A mature tree is very important to the aesthetics of this building

Commissioner Walters requested that this item be continued so the Board could hear from the City Forester and explore this issue in more depth.

Vice President Madison concurred with Commissioner Walters and she would like to revisit this issue so that a professional with knowledge and authority can be present to be consulted about what would be best for this community, taking into account legacy, history and aesthetics.

The Vice President also mentioned that she was looking for the sign of the library since she hasn't been at this branch before and she could have totally missed the library if there had been a really big tree in front of it. She apologized to everyone who came because and hopes they would be able to participate in the future discussions.

Commissioner Wieder stated that staff spent time working on this issue and consulted with the forester to come up with the recommendations on the report; however, she has the following concerns that need to be discussed further:

- Concern on the size of the tree knowing that it is not going to get regular trimming maintenances that it should get. I don't see that happening the way we operate right now.
- The Australian Willow, at least in the pictures, looks like a big tree, so we go back to the problem of it hovering and this is not a big building.
- The concern about having a tree in front of the sign identifying the library.
- Some drought tolerant plants can grow to be quite large and can overtake a tree that is in the center.

- Making sure that the library is visible for the community and the comments that have been made about it being more open, and the comments about the books sales being better and that sort of thing. Driving by and trying to find the flag where the flagpole is behind the tree. So you can't even see the flagpole.

President Hirano-Nakanishi concurred with the issue of maintenance as well as with the question about legacy, consistency, and history, plus being able to see the library, and all the things that are important for this community. So it does appear that the Board needs to continue this item to be able to speak to a forester prior to making a decision.

Commissioner Walters asked the Board President if she could ask the City Librarian to add to that information another array of choices or alternative choices for trees.

BOARD DIRECTIVE

The Board unanimously voted to continue the discussion to October 25th, 2012; and requested a report that addresses the concerns expressed above by the Board and community members, including the following:

- Alternate selection of trees.
- A forester or representative from the Department of Recreation and Parks who is knowledgeable about forestry and that has the approval authority in that department.
- Comprehensive plan for maintenance.

VARIOUS COMMUNICATIONS:

Reappointment of Commissioner Rita D. Walters

Noted and Filed letter from the Mayor, dated August 2, 2012, advising the City Council of the reappointment of Ms. Rita D. Walters to the Board of Library Commissioners for the term ending June 30, 2017.

President Hirano-Nakanishi congratulated Commissioner Walters for her reappointment to the Board of Library Commissioner.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS &

REVIEW OF MATTERS PENDING

Commissioner Wieder inquired about the City Services Card that was announced in the media.

City Librarian John Szabo stated that the City Services Card was proposed by Councilmember Richard Alarcon at the Arts, Parks, Health and Aging Committee. The primary purpose of the card would be to act as a debit card to provide access to financial services for people without a bank account (“unbanked”). The card would be available to any city resident, and it could be used to obtain city services. The card also could be used to obtain a Los Angeles Public Library card and all library services including those designed to build financial literacy and access to the library’s wide range of financial literacy resources, including workshops, books, assistance from librarians and Web-based information.

Mr. Szabo said it was important to point out that this card would be separate from the LAPL card. The Library card would continue to be free for all residents in our community. He indicated the proposed services card is in its preliminary planning stages and it would involve participation from various city departments, including Councilmember Alarcon’s office, the Mayor’s Office, Community Development Department, City Administrative Analyst, Chief Legislative Analyst, Information Technology Agency, and the Los Angeles Public Library. The final proposal will require the approval of the city council. He concluded by stating that the proposed City Services Card could be an avenue through which people would discover the services offered by LAPL.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 p.m.

ATTEST: _____

Marsha Hirano-Nakanishi
President

Raquel M. Borden
Board Executive Assistant

Date to be approved: September 27, 2012