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## Oregon Public Library Board MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, December 1, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.  
Oregon Senior Center

1. **Call to Order** Jenny Nelson called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.
2. **Roll Call** Present were: President – Jenny Nelson, Vice-President – Carrie Schudda, Treasurer – Laura Shtaida, Secretary – Leslie Bergstrom (School Board Rep), Carlene Bechen (Village Board Rep) (arrived at 5:02 and dismissed at 6:35), Coral Goplin, Kyle Severson, Owner’s Representative – Geoff Vine, Director of Planning and Zoning Administrator – Elise Cruz, Library Director – Jennifer Way, Technical Services Supervisor and Administrative Assistant – Laura Dewey (recorder), Dan - OCA Media (recorder).
3. **Adopt/Amend Agenda** Shtaida made the motion to adopt the agenda as written. Goplin seconded. Motion carried 6-0.
4. **Community Input** There were no comments
5. **Discussion and possible action items**
  - a. **Listening Sessions & Community Feedback** – Way explained that this meeting is to review, ask questions and discuss the packet of community feedback which includes the three listening sessions and the online feedback form. In preparation for the Joint Village Board and Library Board meeting on Monday, need to discuss the specific priorities and areas of importance the Board maintains for the new library. Working together with the Village Board is important and we will find out Monday night how the Village Board wants the Library Board to approach the project and what the Village Board wants the next steps to be. Severson said that this process has evolved into a community-wide sharing of thoughts and this has made the Board more informed of community member’s opinions. He noted the three main themes from the listening sessions were: “don’t build on the Main St site”, “Alpine Keller is not a good spot and would decrease the value of the site”, “Alpine Keller is a great spot and would increase the value of the site”. Although the last two have very different ideas, they both want green space to remain. Shtaida thanked everyone that participated in both the original listening sessions and the most recent ones and she appreciates everyone’s opinion. She added one more main theme of “accessibility for the community” which is very important and should be kept in mind during the discussions. Goplin noted that the Board understands and agrees that it is important to keep a vibrant downtown. There was a strong push from a group to keep the library downtown but didn’t necessarily want the Brook St site and didn’t have an alternative spot to suggest. At this time, there is not an option available for a site downtown that is the size the library needs. Schudda noted that from the original listening sessions, everyone wanted the municipal buildings downtown but they learned back then that the Brook St site can’t fit both the Library and the Senior Center and Brook St would be a better fit for the Senior Center. The library didn’t have any options until the church site opened up and everyone supported it as the only option, and we have since realized that the Main St site isn’t viable. Bechen wasn’t able to attend the listening sessions in person but watched all of the events and read all of the information. She commended the Board for their years of service and dedication to try to come up with the best solutions for the library and for the Village. She noted the Main St site is too small for the library and would be destructive to the neighborhood. Bechen stated it is not feasible to think Keller Alpine will never be developed and keeping in mind the vision for the library, the library would be the best option for a building on that site. It would enhance the area and have the opportunity to have a positive environmental impact on a space that does have fragile portions to it. It was agreed upon that people really care about the library and the community, have become more informed of the Library Board and Village Board processes, want to be involved, and want to make a difference. Bergstrom pointed out that it is heartening to note that having accessibility and environmental impacts as the two main issues from the feedback says a lot about our community in general. Cruz noted that Oregon has a very engaged, growing community and our community is also strong and healthy with a highly developed downtown. The Library serves not only people that live in the village, there is a whole community beyond our village limits that benefits from the services the library provides. Nelson thanked the library staff for accumulating all of the information, running the listening sessions, and answering all of the questions of the patrons. Jennifer and her staff have been amazing and the Board wouldn’t be here without them. Way wanted to thank OCA Media for coming to every listening session and making them available to the community, and a big thank you to Village Staff especially Elise Cruz, Jeff Rau, and Martin Shanks for answering questions, exploring all options, and giving the

Board a better understanding of the sites. Severson said the three things that stood out for him from the listening sessions were Cruz stating that what makes a strong downtown is housing near the center of the village, the Nature Alliance and their organization of what Keller Alpine Park could look like, and Andy Weiland talking about the 8<sup>th</sup> graders visiting Lerner Park and only 1-2 out of every 10 kids had been there before. It shows that we have so many resources in Oregon and that it is important to not only have the space, but make sure it is accessible and is used to its potential. Nelson stated that Oregon is a great place to live and it's a great place to build a new library because the library is all about educating the public, creating community, and reaching out and being a part of the community. The fact that we have these discussions and we are able to gather this information is why we all want a library – it is a part of growing and creating educated people for the future.

- b. Questions Resulting From Listening Sessions – *Is it true that Brook St can only support a one-story building?* The Brook St site has poor soil conditions, like the Main St site. It is all low-lying land with water conditions that may need structural support for foundations. A multi-story building becomes exponentially harder and more expensive when there are poor soils. The Brook St site is a combined 2.6 acres which is about the same size as the Main St site so we would have all of the costs associated with that site plus potentially more soil issues. Considering combining with the Senior Center at Brook St, there would be no green space, no drive-thru book drop, no drop-off capabilities for the Senior Center, inadequate parking. Although it looks like it would all fit on paper, it would compromise both facilities and while we could do a multi-story building and underground parking, the cost would be unreasonable. The other ongoing costs would be the expense of staffing a third floor of the library plus another elevator, decreasing the efficiencies of the library which checks in 400,000 items per year - and the operating budget will not be increasing. If a private sector would build a multi-story housing structure at the Brook St site, they would generate revenue and could afford a lot more infrastructure than a library or senior center budget would allow. The Senior Center prefers to be on one level for the safety of the population they serve – meal delivery, covered entrances, close parking for mobility issues. Those same priorities also apply to the library – the library wants to have a Book Drop Off and a Pick Up Window on the first floor. *If they were to combine space at the Brook St site, what would be the costs of reconfiguring both the library and the senior center elsewhere temporarily during construction?* When discussing where a temporary Senior Center could go, the cost of updating the Village Hall – which is not ADA compliant - to accommodate the facility would be approximately \$250,000. The costs have not been calculated if the library would temporarily go to the Village Hall to include the structural concerns about the book cases and the ADA compliance, but it is assumed to be more than \$250,000. People would be losing out on services during that time – drive-thru meal pick up for the Senior Center, a book drop for the library as examples and it would not be an easy shuffle of services. *How much is the Civic Plan influenced by who is on the Village Board at the time?* With any statistics or plan for the future, it is only true for that moment in time. When the Civic Plan was done, there were specific understandings of what land and budget were available. The Main St site wasn't an option at the time so when it became available, that site became the focus. People wonder why the Main St site was selected. It was purchased for Village use and was later designated for the library by the Village Board and Library. Storm management and specific needs like drive-thru book drop and parking details were not fully understood. It was a logical choice at the time but we have since gained more knowledge. In the last five years, the Library Board has had new members, the Village Hall has new staff, and the Village Board also has members that are new. The circumstances of where we are now and where we were when the Civic Plan was constructed are two different points. The Library Board needs to make decisions based on where we are now. *What is the future plan for the Village Hall?* The Village Hall is in poor condition and is not ADA compliant. It could be used for storage short term. It is valuable real estate and in the future, the land could be sold, it could be green space, or the Fire Department could expand. *What is the status of the Post Office lease?* The Post Office lease goes through the Summer of 2022 and is planned to be renewed. *What about the Bethel Green Acre Park site?* It is a neighborhood park established as a subdivision covenant with specific dedicated land for park use and it is a low-land area with a history of flooding. Cruz wanted to challenge the Board to think about the community facilities in a different way and look at them the same way parks are designed in a village. They are spread out among the community so every family has a neighborhood park within walking distance. We could distribute our facilities so some buildings will be closer for one neighborhood and another building will be closer for a different neighborhood. Everyone lives close to something versus one area is close to everything. *If the land owned by the Oregon Bowl could be acquired, what would that mean in terms of property size?* The parcels are about .7 acres total so if it is added to the 2.6, it is 3.3 acres which is still under the 4 acres needed. The purchase price would be at least \$390,000. *Would any donors want a refund if the library was at a certain site?* Only one donor requested a refund to date and did not elaborate on why. One donor made a donation in August because of a close tie to the Main St site and may want to revisit that if another site is chosen. One donor paused their pledge until the future of the project is known. Way and Nelson have reached out to as many donors as possible – with over 800 donors not all can be contacted with every update. Donors can reach out to Way or Nelson if they have any questions or concerns.

- c. Needs & Priorities for New Library – Vine stated that going to the Village Board, the Library Board needs to know if their priorities for a library have changed and what areas could be compromised. The discussion was that the Library Board has a vision and that vision has not changed, priorities have not changed, and the pandemic has proven that the library is more valuable than ever. Way mentioned that the budget amount is expected to stay the same no matter when the library will be built so there will need to be some difficult decisions made at some point. It was discussed that the scaling back decisions can't be made until a site is determined. Like previously mentioned, to have a vibrant downtown, you need 24/7 activity and use of the space which means housing might be better than a library that is closed on Sundays. Cruz discussed that it is possible that if the school site had been available a few years ago, the discussion about the Civic Plan would have been much different. To the point of concern about the Keller Alpine site and accessibility and equity in access, Kelly Allen and Kara Ripley are already doing so much in the community bringing the library to people where they are, to say the library is only accessed at one address is demeaning to the work the library is already doing and overlooking the amount of services and programs that are happening in the community right now. It is clear that outreach would continue regardless of where the library building is. Also there are a lot of ways that the library can be accessed and being on a more heavily traveled road with a site that allows better handicapped access, safer book drop area, and pedestrian crossings could improve the traditional accessibility that we think about. Data about Oregon has been presented showing where children live, where the households are located, and where the seniors live. The Keller Alpine site is near two day cares, a planned affordable housing location, rentals, a park system, and more children live in that radius than the other two sites. Equity is very important to the Library Board and Severson made the point that like the parks are spread out in the village, when there is a development, the housing is diverse so there isn't a place in the village that is the "equity place" or a place that is the "non-equity place". One thing the Library Board has always agreed on is that the library will always advocate for access and equity no matter where the building is. Nelson talked about how she sees the library as a "verb" instead of a "noun". We need to communicate to the Village Board that the library is beyond the building – it is the librarians, the outreach, and the materials. Right now, the Sue Ames Room is being used as work space so the staff can do their jobs, the children's area is one couch, so if we don't get the new library built, it worries her that we aren't providing the services that we should be giving and are capable of giving the community. It's great that the school district is letting storytime borrow space to meet but those kids don't get the experience of exploring the library and picking out books. It's not just about the building – it's a vision of how we can serve the growing community - it is about all of the programming and experiences and all of the things a library could be. The November 2021 listening sessions weren't about the vision of the library – they were about the placement of the building. With more space, there is an infinite possibility. It's a place to be and have more opportunities to encourage us to be a community. It's a "verb" and we need the Village Board to understand that.
- d. Joint Meeting with Village Board & Next Steps for New Library Project – The shared Library Board vision will be summarized based on the "What is needed" slide from the listening session and the result of the original visioning process, including sustainability and COVID-related considerations. Goplin made a motion that to prepare for the Joint Library Board and Village Board meeting, advocating for the library, the Library Board will put forward their vision reaffirming what the Library Board requires for the new library and a specific location(s) that meets those requirements based on what they have heard from the community. Shtaida seconded. Motion carried 6-0. Nelson thanked the Library Board for all of their hard work to advocate for the library and the community. A goal for the joint meeting is for the Village Board to determine what additional information is needed to make an informed decision and what are the next steps that are necessary to move forward. This meeting will provide the needed direction from the Village Board so we can focus our efforts on getting whatever information is needed. The Village Board may or may not wish for the Library Board to make a recommendation on the new library site.

## 6. Closing and Future Agendas

- a. Joint Meeting with Village Board: Monday, December 6, 2021
- b. Next meeting: Wednesday, December 8, 2021 via Zoom
- c. Request for future agenda items: none

## 7. Adjournment Severson made the motion to adjourn at 6:55 p.m., second by Schudda. Motion approved 6-0.