Columbia Library District
Minutes, Meeting of September 19, 2007

Board members present were Tom Richards, President; Rosie Gerding; Marie Glaze; Lynn Hostetler; David McDonald; and David Webber. Jim Loveless and MaryEllen Sievert were absent.

Also present were Melissa Carr, Director; Elinor Barrett, Russell Niermeyer, and Lauren Williams, DBRL staff; Nestor Bottino, Bottino Grund Architects; and Wes Bolton, Allstate Consultants. Kris Farris, DBRL staff, was present for a portion of the meeting.

Call to Order

Richards called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m. in the Virginia Young Room of the Columbia Public Library.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Work Session with Traffic Engineer and Architect on Parking Lot Traffic

Bottino said that since the last meeting with the CPL board he and the traffic engineers had further studied the options for improving parking lot safety. Bottino reviewed four possible schemes for improving the lot, all of which include losing a parking space in order to widen the exit ramp and increasing the number and the width of handicapped parking spaces. The ten-minute parking spaces would be relocated to aisle number three directly across from the ramp entrance.

Bottino explained that not including the current number of handicapped and short-term parking spaces, the lot has 123 parking spaces. In the first option, aisle one’s entrance would be narrowed with some sort of barrier, resulting in the loss of one space. Another would be lost to widen the exit ramp for a total of 121 spaces. Bottino showed a second option that would narrow the entirety of aisle one so that it mirrors the last aisle at the west end of the parking lot. This option would require the removal of concrete and the addition of landscaping in the newly created green space between the parking stalls and the existing stone wall. The total number of spaces in this option is also 121. Bottino then reviewed an option that angled the spaces of two aisles (for a total of 119 spaces) and an option that angled the entire lot, creating one-way aisles (113 total spaces). Bottino said he felt angling the spaces would make the parking lot’s traffic flow too confusing for patrons and result in too many lost spaces. He said he preferred option two because all aisles function the same way and the narrowing of aisle one largely eliminates the “no man’s land” directly across from the stairs. In response to a question about cost, Bottino said that option two will be somewhat more expensive than option one because of the concrete demolition and landscaping.

Bottino then reviewed his ideas for emphasizing the ramp with concrete stain. He said that concrete that has been in place for a few years does not take stain very well, so he recommended sandblasting the ramp in bands before applying the stain so that the bands will absorb the color.
He said the board also could consider sandblasting the ramp wall in front of the handicapped spaces, but applying stain to vertical surfaces is more complicated and he will need to check the feasibility of doing this. Bottino recommended putting a four- or five-foot tall screen wall between the loading and parking areas on the west side of the ramp to further define the area. He then described a possible 15 by 30-foot canopy structure in the waiting area or plaza at the base of the ramp, and he suggested the canopy be the same elliptical shape currently over the main entrances. He said that of all the lot improvements this would be the most expensive because of the foundation work and structural engineering required.

Bottino next described fabric banners that could be placed at the base of the ramp and possibly at the end of aisle three, directly across from the ramp entrance. He explained that the bottom of the banners would need to hang at least 8 to 10 feet above the ground so they would not impact visibility. Barrett explained that the City of Columbia has signage ordinances with different rules for signs versus fabric art, and she recommended visiting with the city about the banners as soon as possible. She said that the library might need to meet with the city’s Board of Adjustment on this issue. The board discussed using the same banners in the north lot, with one at the corner of north Garth and Broadway and one at each entrance for a total of three. The board also discussed adding two more banners to indicate the dimensions of the lot. In response to a question, Barrett said that the Youzeum is looking at similar banners, and they received a quote of $5,000 for six or seven banners. Bottino suggested that the library could purchase just a few banners initially and then buy more if they seemed to be effective. Gerding pointed out that the board would need to budget some money for ongoing banner maintenance.

The board then discussed preliminary cost estimates for each improvement. Bottino said he had talked to John Schenk of KCI regarding some of the work, and Schenk had given him some rough numbers. He said widening the exit and narrowing aisle one would cost between $10,000 and $11,000 to remove the concrete, put in the new curb, and re-stripe the area. He said that Schenck estimated sandblasting at $3 per square foot and staining the ramp at $4 per square foot for an estimated total of $15,000 and $18,000. Barrett said that adding a new bike rack in the waiting plaza area would cost approximately $940. Bottino said that the screen wall would cost an estimated $5,000 and he anticipates that the canopy could cost an estimated $20,000 to $30,000. Carr added that a bench in the waiting area could probably be paid for with a gift or memorial donation. She said that what the CLD has left in its capital project fund and building fund would cover these costs, and she confirmed that all of the projects discussed would be appropriate uses for these funds. Barrett added that these projects also involve professional fees for the architect and engineers.

The board discussed how they would rank these changes in order of importance and effectiveness, and some members expressed concern regarding the cost of the concrete staining and the canopy. Hostetler expressed the opinion that the safety issue is important enough to justify completing a number of these projects at once for them to make a real impact and for patrons to notice and respond to the changes. The board discussed painting the concrete instead of staining it, and Bottino suggested that while the staining would need to be done once, the painting might require frequent maintenance and reapplication. He agreed to get pricing for both options. Richards expressed concern about the cost of the shelter and the negative reaction the board might get from the public. Bottino suggested that if the purpose of the canopy is just to draw attention to the ramp, then the board could look at less expensive options; however, if the
structure is meant to actually provide shelter, then it will be important to do the structural engineering that will make it more expensive. Barrett suggested that the safety improvements and the increased width of the handicapped parking spaces would positively impact our patrons, and a shelter at the pick-up/drop-off area at the end of the ramp would be helpful to our patrons, particularly those using para-transit. Hostetler added that the board has a responsibility to the library’s users and shouldn’t let the library’s critics keep the board from acting on this issue. Carr suggested that the PR department could provide the board with talking points to address any criticisms and to highlight the positive nature of these changes. Richards suggested saying that the board felt it was essential to keep the library downtown, which means dealing with the limitations of a constrained site. The board discussed meeting with the mayor in October to review the proposed changes to the lot.

Richards said he heard consensus on widening the exit ramp and asked about the other options. Webber moved to direct staff to get cost estimates for all six changes as outlined in option two. Hostetler seconded the motion. [The six changes discussed are: narrowing of aisle one, emphasizing the ramp, building the screen wall, rearranging the parking at the steps, adding banners in both lots, and constructing the canopy.] Barrett asked for clarification that Webber’s motion includes a cost estimate for the canopy. Webber said yes, and added that a range of designs at different price points would be useful. Carr said that she would also explore Foundation funds set aside for the Columbia facility. The board discussed the suggested changes to the handicapped spaces and the elimination of the ten-minute parking spots next to the stairs since the high turnover of those spots exacerbates the traffic problems. Bottino asked if he and the engineers should wait to move forward until the board meets with the city. There was consensus to move ahead with gathering cost estimates while staff worked on scheduling a meeting with the mayor, select board members, and the engineers as soon as possible. The motion passed.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**Miscellaneous**

Webber and Glaze left the meeting.

Barrett reminded the board that staff and the architect have been discussing ways to address the “wind tunnel” effect that happens in the lobby when both sets of doors are open, an occurrence that is more and more frequent with the increased usage of the building. Bottino said that there is an issue with the pressurization of the lobby due to the mechanical systems, so taking this into account he had explored creating windscreens of sorts with a perforated aluminum frame backed with a corrugated plastic material to let in light. He reported that he and staff had experimented with the placement of these screens, considering traffic flow and patrons in wheelchairs and with strollers, and he showed a model of how the screens might be placed at the entrances, both inside and outside the lobby. He said that adjustable feet on the four corners of each screen would allow staff to move and fine-tune the screen positions until they found the placement most effective for blocking the wind. Richards suggested a phased approach, initially trying the screens at just one door. Barrett confirmed that these screens were not permanent structures and
that staff can try out this solution for a low cost, well under the limit Carr can authorize as Director.

In response to a question, Barrett said that she had received a preliminary cost estimate on motorized screens for the glass block walls in the reading room, another building improvement the board had discussed previously. She said that the local vendor estimated the cost at $10,000 per glass block window panel, not including electrical costs, and that the library would probably need to install them on three to five panels total. The board members present said that they did not want to move forward with the screens at this time.

Returning to the topic of the windscreens, there was a consensus without a quorum to try placing the screens at one entrance to judge their effectiveness.

**Adjournment**

Richards adjourned the meeting at 1:11 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Lauren Williams, Executive Assistant.

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Board Secretary