LRAC meeting. Thursday, December 6. 6:30 p.m.

Attendees
Mike, Irene, Bob, Marilyn and Isha (sp?) from Lothrop

Tom Deprisco
Yoko Olson
Brian Cresenzi, engineer
Jeannine Clark
Vito Agosi
Geraldine and Des Shaw
Stephen Marmon
Vincent Acocella (retired architect)
Tom Warren
Jim Seidel

McCue welcomed and thank the participants for their time and input. He introduced Irene D’Anna and himself as stand-ins for the Library Director Eugenia Schatoff who has COVID and Board President Bill Morris, who has a serious cold. He did a quick synopsis of the project history to review how the library had gotten to this point. The bond vote, the decision to re-start the process with a new architect, the surveys and focus groups over the last sixteen months, the LRAC meetings and the studies commissioned by Lothrop. The Board intends to seek bond approval in May 2023 and must be prepared to move forward with cost and scope by February.

Irene then talked about the areas identified as “must do” (HVAC, concrete slab, roof coating and drains, and window replacement. She then described the programmatic areas identified by the public as important (list talked about at
some length below) and told the group that the Board wanted their input on assigning priorities and their comments regarding overall cost.

All participants were given a packet with drawings and cost estimates. It was noted that the library intended to make these documents available to the public shortly to seek wide input.

Bob Gabalski then gave a history of the building from the 1961 original to the 1980s expansion and the current goal of bringing a viable structure into the 21st century. He noted that the library now had its first set of CAD drawings of the existing building. He turned the presentation over to Marilyn. She noted that the current scheme was version 9A as the Board refined each successive design.

Marilyn walked the group through the areas of the library from the proposed new entry, welcoming area and all through the library. A new learning lab, teen area, public and staff restrooms, children’s area, and the community room. Lothrop’s plans are informed by community input and the Board’s directive to keep a lid on costs. No structural walls are changed, furniture is re-used when possible, and flexibility of space, particularly meeting space, is imperative.

She discussed each zone of the library and talked about changes to same. She used some sample materials to provide design inspirations for the group. At various points, Bob jumped in to amplify her points.

We then turned to the participants for their reactions and questions. Nearly all spoke. Yoko Olson wondered why the adult study area had round tables. Marilyn responded that the plans was an early concept like many other elements and could be changed.

Steve Marmon asked what annual cost savings would be realized as a result of installing new HVAC, lighting, etc. and that these should be communicated to the public. Tom Warren remarked that he felt the administrative and staff work areas were too big. Bob explained the count of workstations, that the staff restrooms needed to be larger than the current closet size, and that a secure file storage area was vital for the adm. Assistant. Brian asked what the community surveys showed as their ranking of priorities. Bob listed the children’s room and the
meeting room as receiving the most “votes”. Brian also asked about wall layout and Bob reiterated that wall movement was not proposed.

Steve asked if the project is all modular so that staged completion can be accomplished. Bob said the big 4 (the “must dos”) can be done so that the other stages can be completed over time.

Is the HVAC equipment going to be on the roof or on the mezzanine level? He stated that only the chiller would be on the roof in the current plan. He also pointed out (first time I had heard) that Lothrop now recommends a completely new roof vs. coating the current one with new drains.

There was further discussion about the cost of re-locating all HVAC equipment to the roof (4 million) and the value of using the mezzanine for admin., etc. Cost of elevator, new staircase, etc.

Jeannine Clark asked about a project that might include only the “must do” items which did not include bringing the building into ADA compliance. Bob noted that everything new that goes in must meet code requirements. As to the rest, it is only when you get to 50% coverage of the overall building does everything have to be brought into compliance.

Tom Warren followed up stating that new restrooms should be first after the four must haves. He affirmed that the library needs to have long range plan. McCue responded that the Board president, Bill Morris, was editing a mission statement and long-range vision plan drafted by Lothrop for Board approval.

Des Shaw asked about the rise of interest rates and the impact on bond costs. It was noted that municipal bond rates are lower than other loan rates but have indeed risen.

Vincent Accolla, a retired architect, asked Bob about the slab issues. They were addressed.

Jeannine Clark asked if the surveys and focus groups had included good cross sections of the community. Director Schatoff was given credit for ensuring that this was accomplished.
The last ten minutes of the meeting saw rapid commentary on the need to present a project with “something for everyone” and that cost savings from doing the must haves need to be clearly delineated. Almost everyone prioritized the bathrooms as the #1 priority followed by the Children’s room and then the Community room. The total for these seven items comes to $12 million and the Library would commit to providing an additional $3 million over the years to come.

Irene made clear to the group that on top of construction costs must be added 20% for soft costs such as design, permits, legal fees, etc. Thus, if the Board sought $12 million for renovations, an additional $3 million would be required.

She made two further points: the library will seek to contribute additional funds each year from the capital line of the budget and it will continue to seek grants and donations. The Pfizer Learning Lab?? State library construction grants have a multiplier in that a project generally receives some 60 to 80 per cent funding so local funds can be enhanced. (Eugenia, please edit this sentence).

Tom Warren and Steve Marmon wanted the presentation to the public to make clear that this is a $19 million plan, of which we will bond for $12 million, the library will contribute $2 million in capital and grant funds, and the rest would be paid for through savings of efficiencies (i.e. chiller rental and utilities) we will gain over time. So the taxpayers will pay $12 million and get $19 million.

Steve Marmon was introduced as the voluntary leader of the campaign for the bond referendum’s success. He made brief remarks and donations would be welcome. The Board of Trustees and Friends of the Library were initial funders.

In wrapping up, all members were invited to communicate their thoughts/reactions to the Library Director. A date for the next meeting will be announced in the near future.