

Brad Wright
Jan. 24, 2025

Re: Jan. 16 2025 Trustees Meeting

Hello Trustees,

First, let me compliment you on choosing the west end of the Kalispell Mall as your library site. It is an excellent site and having two acres is ideal to allow for adequate affordable parking. I think the law on public entities acquiring property is that you can't pay more than appraisal, but you can pay less. From what realtors tell me, I think anything under \$3 million for two acres in that good of a location is a good deal.

Second, I think hiring Honore Bray from the Missoula library to discuss space needs with library staff is a logical step and I'm glad you approved her involvement. I'm sure her report will be very helpful. My hope is that she recommends a building program advisory board that would be split into committees. Perhaps one committee could be focused on communications to the public that works closely with the foundation. This group would include community leaders with ties to the general public and benefactors in the valley, but their nuts and bolts involvement would be minimal. The other group would involve more of the stakeholders - trustees, staff, nonprofit and government officials, and other professionals that would assist in the design of the building.

Third, although I don't have a degree, I spent 3 ½ years at MSU majoring in architecture, so I have some understanding of the process. There seems to be a misconception about what architects do. A good rule of thumb is that architects base their fees as a percentage of total project cost. At 4%, the architectural fees for a \$25 million library would be \$1 million. Those fees are why you want to get as much bang for the buck from the architect as you can and not hire additional consultants, other than someone who could possibly assist your fundraising efforts. It's the architect's responsibility to adapt space needs to the building design, so I wouldn't devote too much time on how many square feet needs to be devoted to any particular group or activity, and I certainly wouldn't pay a consultant for information the architect would probably discard. The architect is paid to lead you through the process while consulting with all the stakeholders. I am sure the design will be substantially different than you initially envision. The city of Belgrade, Montana, just went through the process you are. They hired a local architect and a local fundraising consultant. I would consider doing the same. I feel we have plenty of architects and fundraising consultants in the Flathead that the locals will support.

Last, I think it's great the developer has offered \$250,000 to offset your architectural fees, and I agree their primary motivation is to attract customers to their mall. The question is, are they going to be satisfied with a bare-bones library with a nice facade, or is their expectation that the library will attract visitors from out of the immediate area? I think their LOI gives you some indication (see "Design Standards"). Finding the balance between a modest community library and a vibrant library-oriented community center, and what the taxpayers will be willing to fund with bonds, will be challenging. Your advisory board will provide some guidance. My personal feeling is - don't be too frugal, go bold and get the folks excited with the right kind of campaign.

I think you're all doing a great job, and especially Jane, Carmen and Teri. They are devoting a lot of time to this. They deserve a lot of credit.

Thanks, Brad