

SPECIAL SESSION CITY COUNCIL JOINT MEETING
City Hall Conference Room
109 E. Olive Street, Bloomington, IL 61701
Monday, January 16, 2018; 5:30 PM

Call to Order

The Council convened in Special Session in the Council Chambers, City Hall Building at 6:32 p.m., Monday, January 16, 2018. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Renner.

Roll Call

Mayor Renner directed City Clerk Cherry Lawson to call the roll and the following members of Council answered present:

Aldermen Diana Hauman, Mboka Mwilambwe, Jamie Mathy, Scott Black, Kim Bray, Amelia Buragas and Mayor Tari Renner.

Chairman Mike McCurdy of Connect Transit called the roll of its membership and the following answered present:

Vice Chairman Ryan Whitehouse, Trustees John Bowman, Judy Buchanan, Monica Bullington, Jennifer McDade, and John Thomas.

Jeanne Hamilton, Director of the Bloomington Public Library Board called the roll of its membership and the following answered present:

President Alex Cardona, Board Members: Alicia Henry, Van Miller, Kiasha Henry (Absent), Susan Mohr, Julian Westerhout, and Alicia Whitworth

Public Comment

Mayor Renner opened the meeting to receive Public Comment. The following citizen offered comments.

Glen Ludwig	Vicki Tilton	Josh Barnett
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Meeting with Connect Transit Board and the Bloomington Library Board for the object and purpose of discussing the potential future joint needs of the three different public bodies as well as recommendations of the Downtown Task Force. *(Presentation and discussion only.)*

Mayor Renner deferred to Alderman Amelia Buragas for opening statements on this item. Alderman Buragas stated, the Downtown Task Force was formed last year to prioritize action items for the continued evaluation of downtown Bloomington over the next three to five years. The action items are to be grounded in the planning documents that have been formally ratified by Council, including the City's Comprehensive Master Plan and the Downtown Strategy. The majority of the Task Force were focused on smaller, easier to achieve projects with a high potential of return on investment.

Following the guidance of the Downtown Strategy Plan, the Task force also made recommendations related to potential catalyst projects. The Task force defined catalyst projects as only those projects that had the potential to bring in large numbers of people to the downtown area on a daily basis. The Downtown Strategy Plan identified three potential non-retail catalysts for the downtown area: the YMCA, the public library, or a community college. The Task force further explored the possibility of a library catalyst, since the need for expansion of that facility has been publicly discussed for quite some time. This focus was also consistent with the comprehensive plan which advises as follows, "Those facilities that serve the entire communities such as the Bloomington Public Library should be located at the city core, preferably the Downtown District.

Connect Transit was identified as a potential project for a catalyst project because the comprehensive plan identifies the need to upgrade the Front Street transfer location as a short-term priority. The Task Force was pleased to learn that partner with Connect Transit can provide an alternative source of funding through federal grants and low-interest loans. Ultimately, the Task Force made three recommendations for catalyst projects that were placed into tiers based on the following criteria: current opportunities, level of risk, availability of partnerships. The tier one recommendation was to redevelop the Market Street garage into a mixed-use facility including parking, a transfer station, and a new public library. The Task Force report notes that the inclusion of the library in this project is not feasible, there are other options, such as residential or office space.

Isaac Thorne, General Manager for Connect Transit provided a brief overview of its involvement in the process. Connect Transit serves 1500 passengers per day on average, Monday through Friday at the Front Street location. It's been a transfer location for almost 30 years -- currently nine different routes through the downtown location -- and Connect Transit doesn't have the required space to fit all 9 buses simultaneously. A new downtown transfer center will allow Connect to reduce inefficiencies that limit the current Front Street transfer center facility.

The facility reduce the time and mileage required to go around the block and make each route align perfectly with Front Street. These increasing routing inefficiencies...or efficiencies, will allow for maximized, on-time performance getting out of downtown Bloomington, improving system performance. In the event of a delay, however, the transfer center will be able to provide real-time customer information to customers, making them aware of potential detours, alternative routing options, which Connect Transit is unable to do at its current Front Street location. The transfer center will improve access for existing transit users and transit-depending customers by providing a safe and convenient place to access transit out of the element, increase customer service opportunities such as a customer service desk.

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After Farnsworth Group has presented to the Connect Transit board of trustees, a presentation will be offered to the City of Bloomington Council. The next step in the planning process is conduct a feasibility study reviewing up to three possible locations in downtown Bloomington and how it will affect the current routing, and timing of these possible locations. Before a feasibility study is started, a public process, a public comment process will be developed to ensure customers and stakeholders are given ample opportunity to voice...to have their voices heard. Public presentations will also take place in regards to feasibility-type process and final report. Once a site needs analysis and a feasibility study has been conducted, it gives Connect Transit the opportunity to apply for federal and state funding for the project. It may take three to five years to secure the funding for a new...to kill and fund a new transfer center. This is why it's so important to start the process now and have several locations selected. Connect will work with only the Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Transportation to approve our grant application every year.

Jeanne Hamilton, Library Director provided brief comments regarding the library's involvement with the Downtown Task Force stating, the library was built in 1976 for a population of 41,000 people. It was renovated in 2006, which included flipping the building to face the parking lot, and enclosing a portion of the lower level, open-air covered parking to gain 7,000 square feet of internal space. That brings it to a total of 57,700 square feet, and 70 spaces in our parking lot. Multiple studies since 2000 have determined that we actually need 98,765 square feet for our population. Since the renovation in 2006 we've seen a 73% increase in circulation and a 13% increase in program attendance. The library has inadequate parking right now, frequently library visitors have to circle the parking lot to find a place to park and/or leave without coming in, due to lack of parking. Our collection is 4,000 items less than our standards recommend, and so this leads to discarding material sooner than we would like, and a collection this full can actually lead to decreased circulation because it's harder for people to browse and find what they're looking for.

Our demand exceeds capacity for programming, and we have to turn people away or have waiting lines for more popular programs. We also have inefficient staff areas. Our funding that we have available for a project, with our existing reserves and estimated fundraising capacity, is about \$5.1 million. Since 2000, the library has developed three (3) long-range strategic plans focused on building, conducted three (3) needs assessments, conducted two (2) community surveys, explored nine (9) plus potential sites for expansion, and some of those were explored with the normal public library. Hired three different architect projects and presented seven different project proposals to City Council, and three different joint City Council, Library Board and Task Force have been made over the year. Most of these were at the request of city council, and approximately \$140,000 has been spent by the library, but I would say not all of those are sub costs -- some of those costs are for long-range plans or building a program that can be reused no matter the location.

Mayor Renner turned the meeting over to Stacey Tutt and Deborah Halperin, who volunteered to facilitate the discussion. He indicated that the groups will recess for table discussion, then reconvene to further discuss the small group comments.

Ms. Tutt stated, she and Ms. Halperin would be posing several questions to the groups within the 90 minutes allotted for the meeting. The first half is focused primarily on discussions regarding the catalyst project and thinking that through, and giving you opportunity to reflect on the information

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that was learned here today, as well as your thoughts on moving forward. After that first half, we will then, on the second half, focus more particularly on the library's expansion and the work that they've done this far, and get in discussion on next steps for them, and feasibility of those things. All of this will be memorialized into a report that we, as facilitators, will provide to each of the boards, to have an opportunity to review and look at the materials that were provided and what information was gathered, and then we'll let you know. One of the things that we are looking to establish with this is, what are the next steps in this? What additional information is needed for decisions to be made?

Alderman Bray questioned the nature of the report and surveys that Ms. Tutt submitted to others within the groups, asked whether Council provided direction for those to occur. Ms. Tutt stated those questions were developed as facilitators and were circulated in an online survey to all of the attendees participating in the small groups this evening.

Mayor Renner asked who has the survey results and whether those were publicly available. Ms. Tutt responded they were not, and would be made available with their final report. That only she and Ms. Halperin has seen and reviewed the results.

Ms. Tutt asked several questions of the group, "If the catalyst project were to move forward, what would be the ideal conditions for it to be completed? Please include time frames for the project, potential funding sources, and those individuals who would be decision-makers in that?"

Mayor Renner called for a recess at 5:58 PM
Meeting Reconvened at 6:23 PM

Members from each of the table groups reported on the question discussed at the table.

Alderman Bray asked about the catalyst project that was mentioned in the Downtown Task Force report.

Ms. Tutt stated, the tier one catalyst project is the one I want, that we wanted to discuss. That whole combined project involving the Market Street garage -- the catalyst tier one project.

Mayor Renner called for a recess at 6:33 PM
Meeting Reconvened at 6:38 PM

Alderman Mathy stated, it took us about half the time to actually get around to the part where we understood that this was 'if' the catalyst project would actually move forward, what would the ideal be. The first half of the conversation was, how does the catalyst project move forward at all? When we got to talking about the situation, what it would look like, I think that we were pretty unified that it needs to be a comprehensive public referendum, where the taxpayers of the City of Bloomington need to say, yes, we are willing to entertain the idea of a combined library transit and parking facility, and are willing to pay for such a project. There are still issues where we could have unified boards for library and for Connect Transit, but the buck stops at the City Council, and

Council needs to realize that as well. We were all pretty unified on the idea of a public referendum if this was going happen.

Judy Buchanan stated, if in fact the catalyst project were to move forward, we were in agreement that partnership is ideal. The City Council would need to be a prime partner if it going to be a two-way partnership. In the absence of the Council's full support, endorsement and engagement, we don't see that moving forward. We think that three to five years is the ideal in terms of the time frame. We would more realistically suggested three to 10 years, particularly in lieu of where we are now and where the funding sources that might be available.

Chairman McCurdy stated, based on the Task Force's...the work was rigor given to this project. The argument on the other side was that perhaps this is the discussion that needs to happen and that this is part of the rigor, at the risk of putting words in people's mouths. There was some discussion of the need for a feasibility study, there was discussion of how the project...how this catalyst project would intersect with the current capital improvement program of the city. There is an issue with deferred maintenance with the current library location, there is \$2 million in deferred maintenance that needs to be addressed rather soon.

Mr. Thorne stated, we discussed the timeline between what Connect Transit's trying to do with applying for state and federal grants.

Alderman Black stated, we discussed at least about 80% of this was about all of the group's concerns with the project, whether it be timelines, funding, all the obvious questions. There was discussion on whether there would be public buy-in. Any ideas to request a conversation, table over there was getting an overall sense of public buy-in for the catalyst...tier one catalyst project, and that becomes a form of great potential there. Also, there is concern about sufficient for the organization and the communities that are involved. Security concerns were cited for...on the library end as well as appropriate staffing.

Mayor Renner called for a recessed at 6:32 PM.

Meeting reconvened at 6:38 PM

Ms. Hamilton stated there has to be buy-in from the public. Mr. Miller stated there has to be a shared-vision. Mr. McCurdy stated, there is a public perception on the Coliseum that may have poisoned the discussion. Ms. Buchanan stated there are barriers to public perception including fear and trust. Alderman Mathy echoed the same sentiments of the others.

Mayor Renner called for a recessed at 6:41 PM.

Meeting reconvened at 6:48 PM

Alderman Mathy stated, convenience from a Connect Transit point of view, definitely convenience, safety, warmth for folks that are using the service. Close parking, and maybe convenience for library customers, but we're not 100% sure we're seeing the benefits for the library there. A terrific combination with the parking deck in transit being available there -- we think that that works really well.

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Ms. Buchanan, Connect Transit trustee stated, our benefit is the potential and the possibility for the Connect Transit to at least identify and perhaps increase federal resources. Another benefit is potential multiple constituencies being engaged. Third benefit is the plans and contingent plans of all three bodies have identified some of the things that we're talking about, the need for a transit transfer station that includes the library.

Chairman McCurdy stated it would automatically bring more people to downtown Bloomington. Alderman Hauman stated, they looked at economic development in the downtown area as well as the benefits to the area. Mr. Thomas stated, they discussed funding sources, on how the revitalization of the downtown area, and how the various entities would leverage each other and kind of create a synergy onto which there's a multiplier effect of each of the investments.

Alderman Bray expressed concern over the length of the meeting as it was to conclude at 7:00 PM. Ms. Tutt stated, she was told that she had a total of 90 minutes to facilitate as that is the time frame that she is operating from.

Mayor Renner recessed the meeting at 6:56 PM
Mayor Renner reconvened the meeting at 7:11 PM

Alderman Mathy stated, there are a list of unknowns. If they were...all three of the projects were to be considered separately, one of the risks we wrote down is, "Some or all of them may never get completed." That's definitely the risk that we have. The total sum of all of the individual projects may be more expensive, but on the other hand they may be less expensive because the combined library and parking deck is going to be a very heavy and expensive building. There is a perception of lack of support for downtown.

Alderman Buragas stated they identified risks as well as there might not be enough funding to go around for all projects; funds might be most likely, and then nothing would happen and we would all miss an opportunity to achieve the various projects. It would allow different entities to focus on what they need to do and their parameters, or their prerogative.

President Cardona, Bloomington Library stated, they discussed some of risks and benefits for the parking garage. Then you have the parking garage, the transfer station, the library, it's all separate budget allocations that's part of the CIP. In regards to the transfer station, you have the risk of losing federal dollars or the ability to garner some of those without that partnership with, the Library or the City. For the library, working alone could accelerate those timelines.

Mr. Miller, Bloomington Public Library stated, for Connect, we thought the risks were potential loss of funding that could come with partnerships, benefits could be that there are more sights open to explore. For the library, risk this would be potential...loss of potential increased circulation that may or may not come from the Connect that potentially become... Benefits, we would be able to...the library move forward as planned and with the current trajectory, and that may lead to ability to serve more people more quickly. For the City, the rest would be what catalyst project is definitely moving forward, and the benefit would be making a decision.

Ms. Henry stated, one of the benefits is that each entity gets what it wants, size-wise, a patient and kind, my constraints. Then we would break up the risks, one of the risks coming to doing something that garage specifically... The garage will be degraded--that sort of decline and degradation is not something any City wants. We can look with the...under the list of what's a Benefit for Connect Transit if they wanted to stay where they are, and through that site, decisions have to be made about who's in charge of it.

Mayor Renner recessed the meeting at 7:23 PM.

Mayor Renner reconvened the meeting at 7:27 PM.

Ms. Tutt address the issue with the survey and who it had been sent to, stating the survey was only sent out the attendees of this meeting including the Library Board of Trustees, Connect Transit Board members, and the City Council including the Mayor. Stating the survey was answered anonymously, and she is unaware of the responses to the survey. All responses to the survey will be recorded and aggregate.

Alderman Mathy stated, they would like to see a survey put out as scientifically done as possible that we can draw upon specifically asking whether there is a willingness in the public to fund an expansion of the library, as well as opinions in moving the location of the library. They would like to see some research that shows what other communities that had done with similar projects where there was a combined library and a transit center or something of that nature, or a library into downtown to see...get it actually act as a catalyst in those communities. They would also like to see a comprehensive funding list of what's available that we could possibly go after for each individual sector.

Alderman Buragas stated, they would conduct a transit assessment.

President Cardona stated, they would add some additional items such as: exact word advice and input, due diligence items from engineers, and architects. Also, a process for vetting downtown ideas and projects, either current or proposed, and specifically empowering our city staff to do what they had been hired and paid to do, and city council buy-in in regards to funding collaboration and capital improvement.

Alderman Hauman commented they wanted to have regular feedback, including town hall meetings, and surveys.

John Bowman, Connect Transit Board Member stated, feasibility of the site that's being proposed would be tier one; look at properties adjacent to the site, and plans for those long-term. One question -- how much do you invest before you get to the point of issuing a referendum? How much money do you have to invest to a point of getting public input? Are these groups interested in moving ahead with us?

Adjournment

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Mayor Renner asked for a motion to adjourn the Meeting.

Motioned by Alderman Hauman, seconded by Alderman Bray to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 PM.

Ayes: Aldermen Mathy, Mwilambwe, Buragas, Black, Hauman, and Bray

Absent: Alderman Schmidt, Painter, and Sage.

Nays: None

Connect Transit

Chairman McCurdy asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 PM

Motioned by Board member Buchanan, seconded by Board member Bullington to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried: Viva Voce

Bloomington Library Board

President Cardona asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by President Cardona, seconded by Susan Mohr to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 PM.

Motion carried: Viva Voce.

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

ATTEST

Tari Renner, Mayor

Cherry L. Lawson, City Clerk