

NOVEMBER 10, 2009

MINUTES OF MECKLENBURG COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

NORTH CAROLINA  
MECKLENBURG COUNTY

The Board of Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met in Special Session at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 10, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. at ImaginOn: The Joe & Joan Martin Center, in the Wachovia Playhouse, Main Level, located at 300 East Seventh Street, Charlotte, N.C.

ATTENDANCE

**Present:** Chairman Jennifer Roberts and  
Commissioners Dumont Clarke, Harold Cogdell, Jr.  
Neil Cooksey, George Dunlap, Vilma Leake  
and Daniel Murrey  
County Manager Harry L. Jones, Sr.  
Clerk to the Board Janice S. Paige

**Absent:** Commissioners Karen Bentley and Bill James

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*The Board met in joint dinner session with the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County Board of Trustees.*

*The purpose of the meeting was to receive a presentation on the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County (PLCMC) Draft Facilities Master Plan.*

*The meeting was called to order by Library Board Chairman Darrel Williams.*

*Board of Trustee member Bob Bisanar gave the Invocation, which was followed by dinner.*

Following dinner, the presentation began.

Library Board Chairman Williams said the Library Board and staff understand the budget challenges the County continues to have in light of the current economy.

Library Board Chairman Williams reminded the Board that the Library Facilities Master Plan was recommended and funded by the County, which is why the Library Board wanted to share the draft of the Plan to receive input, prior to the Library Board's vote on it.

Library Board Chairman Williams called on Director of the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County Charles Brown to present the Draft PLCMC Facilities Master Plan. The following was covered:

- National Awards received by PLCMC
- Knight Foundation Announcement
- Projects funded through Bonds, COPs, and Private Donations 1985-Present
- Current Projects
- Planning Ahead
  - Facilities Master Plan Process
  - Those involved
  - The Methodology
  - Results of Survey
- Population Growth

- Joint Use Success Stories
- Joint Use Challenges
- Leasing vs. Owning
- Phases of the Facilities Master Plan and costs (It was noted that the original Facilities Master Plan was a fifteen year plan, but it's been extended out to a twenty year plan.)
- Prioritization Process
- Existing Library Locations
- Update on Main Library Redevelopment

## Comments

Chairman Roberts asked about partnering with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS).

*Response: The concept of having a public library in a school seems logical and appropriate, but it's challenging in some instances because school libraries and public libraries have different missions. School libraries are more structured and bound by local value. Public libraries reflect local value but are more open in terms of what they can be. There are also desired location differences. Often schools aren't visible or located in high traffic areas, contrary to public libraries that prefer to be in these types of areas. Also, there are some adult library patrons, parents with young children, and caregivers of young children who find teens intimidating. Safety and security can also be a problem. It was noted there are very few instances on a national level where joint use facilities for schools and libraries has worked well.*

Commissioner Cogdell asked about the Independence Regional library site, in lieu of the possibility of a library at the Eastland Mall site. *Response: The intent would be to sell the current Independence Regional site and build another library in that general vicinity but not across from East Meck High School. The new facility would not have the designation of a regional library. The regional designation would be applicable to a site at Eastland Mall.*

Commissioner Dunlap commented on joint use with the school system from the concept of buying land, placing a school and a library, separate and apart from each other, but on the same property; that could also possibly do something with park and recreation. He said especially if it's on a main thoroughfare.

Commissioner Dunlap asked about the Library's experience at the Sugar Creek Branch on North Tryon Street versus the one in the school. *Response: The Sugar Creek Branch on North Tryon Street has been very successful. The only drawback is the location of the branch within the joint facility. The preference would have been for it to be located more to the front of the building, thus a little more visible. Director Brown said this was not a criticism because the branch has been a success at that location.*

Director Brown acknowledged and thanked Commissioner Leake for her encouragement that better signage be placed at the site, which was done and has proven to be a good thing to do.

Commissioner Dunlap asked about plans to expand the University City library. *Response: The library is pretty much landlocked at the University City site. What the Library would like to do is work in partnership with University City Partners in the possible redevelopment of the University City area. It's felt the current location is a very marketable space. It has a very interesting real estate arrangement because the Library doesn't own the land the library is on but it does own the building. It's felt the hospital may have an interest in the current location, which would allow the Library to build another larger building near by.*

Commissioner Dunlap commented on partnering with other entities in terms of opportunities other than that of joint facilities, such TV production. He referenced past discussions about the library combining with CMS when it comes to TV production. He consideration should be given to other possible opportunities.

Commissioner Dunlap in response to Director Brown's concern about joint use with the schools

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and how the Sugar Creek Branch on North Tryon Street was not situated correctly, asked were there other areas the Library feels the County might consider consolidating that might negatively impact the public library going forward. *Director Brown clarified that he was pleased with the success of the Sugar Creek Branch. He said his only concern was where it's located within that joint use facility. Director Brown noted the Library's success in working with Park and Recreation and Central Piedmont Community College and cited examples. Director Brown said if the location is right, the Library can work successfully almost with any other entity.*

Commissioner Dunlap said his concern was for libraries to be used to their fullest potential as the Library moves forward. He said the Library shouldn't be put in a position where it feels like it has to accommodate someone else if the library is not going to be used to its fullest potential.

Director Brown addressed libraries being on the same property as a school. He cited the Highland Creek area as an example. He said there's not a library in this area besides University City which is about ten miles away. He said he was very excited when he came on board six years ago to know that land had been set aside for an elementary school, a middle school and a public library off of the Highland Creek Parkway. He said five years later and recently when he went out to view the site, what has happened is that the prime location had been taken up by the schools. He said the little strip of land that's been left for the library would create a very challenging architectural design and make parking a challenge. He noted also that Highland Creek Parkway is not that heavily travelled at 11:00 a.m. in the morning as one may think in light of the population density in this area. He said very often with schools the library becomes the junior partner in terms of site location on a campus.

Commissioner Cooksey asked for an update on the proposed redevelopment of the main library block, and what if any public money is expected for that project, which was addressed. The following was noted:

- The current site is a highly desirable site for redevelopment, however, developers don't have any money for redevelopment at this time.
- The cost for the new 200,000 square foot main library would cost about \$250 - \$300 per square foot for about \$90 million - \$100 million.
- Private and public funding would be needed.
- The project is on hold, in light of the economy.

Commissioner Clarke asked about development of the northwestern part of the county. He said there appears to be a gap between Mountain Island and Beatties Ford Road. Commissioner Clarke said he thinks consideration needs to be given to this area of the county.

Commissioner Murrey commented on looking out into the future, say twenty years from now and asked what's the prospect of revisiting this plan and how often, because clearly no one knows what the community will look like in twenty years.

Commissioner Murrey said he concurred with Commissioner Clarke's comments about looking at service needs in the northwest corridor and especially if 485 gets completed.

Director Brown said the Plan was a very flexible plan and the intent is to review it every two – three years. It was noted that the thought was that the Plan would address development in this area, although it's not firm in the Plan at this time.

It was noted further that the goal of the Plan whether now or in the future, is to ensure access, convenient access, to library services for every resident of Mecklenburg County. Convenient meaning, visible, well located, easy to get to on major routes and that it is no more than a 10-15 minute drive, regardless of the mode of transportation.

Commissioner Leake thanked Director Brown and the library staff for being so responsive.

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Chairman Roberts thanked the Library Board and staff for having the Board over and sharing the draft of the Master Facilities Plan. She said the Board looks forward to continued dialogue between the two bodies.

Library Board Chairman Williams thanked the Board as well for coming.

This concluded the discussion.

*Note: The above is not inclusive of every comment but a summary of key comments/questions.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Board the meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

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Janice S. Paige, Clerk

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Jennifer Roberts, Chairman