

West Side Pearland Library task force Meeting 6/5/2008

The set up of a Friends of the Library group was discussed. Because the group would require a charter or by-laws, tax filings and the like, the discussion was postponed.

Current city/county agreements regarding libraries were discussed. The city builds the building, provides furniture and care of the facility and the county mans the library, provides bulk materials and provides the internet service.

The group's first goals were identified.

1. Define the wants and needs of the community the library would serve.
2. The group would work towards raising funds to help achieve the goal of assisting in building/stocking the library.

Roosevelt Weeks, Deputy Director of the Houston Public Library was at the meeting and provided insight that the group should have a vision first.

According to Ms. Threadgill, the group would spearhead the research, but would have to work with elected officials and voters at both the city and county level.

Currently Pearland provides approximately \$20,000 a year for books and periodicals at the existing Pearland library.

Cathy Threadgill said there is no way to isolate book usage other than by zip code, and 77584 reflects more than just Shadow Creek Ranch. Cards are weeded out every three years, so that number might not be completely accurate. In 77584, there are 13,726 cards (broken down: 3,800 youth & 9,700 adult). This represents 15.25% of all cardholders, but represents 56.68% of the Pearland branch usage and 12.33% of the Manvel branch usage.

Cathy Threadgill agreed to provide the following information:

1. Budget of the whole county library system
2. An informal budget breakout for Pearland
 - a. This budget will not include the telecom (telecom for libraries are part of the telecom budget for the whole county.
 - b. There are other items that are like telecom (not listed at meeting)
 - c. There are different size libraries in the county
3. An informal budget for Manvel library (to show a smaller scale)
4. Book usage for the 77584 zip code

Bill Eisen, city manager, agreed to provide demographics from the city

The last library built in Brazoria County Library system was in Clute. The city had the land, and the Friends group raised between \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 in startup funds due to the connections and contacts of the group's chair.

According to C. Threadgill, in searching for grant money, they have had issues in applying for grants. In past experience, they have received responses such as grant money was only available for Houston, not south of it; some groups only give inside Harris County; some only give for the Galveston area.

The group should find people who have contacts that can help pave the way to funding.

Felicia Kyle indicated that the group's first step should be identifying stakeholders.

It was noted that it took several years to raise \$3,000,000 for the Barbara Bush library.

One member pointed out that they have contacts through their employer and asked who should be given as the contact for possible grants/funding. It was decided that the city of Pearland should be put forward as the contact for potential funding partners.

Group leadership was discussed, as were the necessity and duties of subcommittees. Both were postponed to further discuss the scope of the group and its overall duties.

The City brought information that had been requested at the last meeting, including a lot plat and diagrams of the existing library and its planned expansion. The lot plat for the land in Shadow Creek Ranch (SCR) owned by the City shows an easement at the back of the property. This easement would allow for parking, but no building space.

SCR has a TRIZ (Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone); this covers the purchase of land for a library, but not the cost of building the facility.

In its most recent bond election, the City passed a \$3.4 million bond to allow an 11,000 sq. ft. expansion to the current library. This comes to an approximate \$300/sq. ft.

The expansion is slated to include the following:

1. Increase the child area by 50%, including book space, computer space, a story time room and a craft area.
2. The adult book space will increase by 25%.
3. The existing meeting room will be made larger.
4. Circulation desk area improvement.
5. A computer lab will be created
6. Development of a teen zone.
7. Creation of a bookstore.
8. Included in the child area will be a library office, storage and restroom area.
9. Large study rooms will be built
10. A copy/print center will be implemented
11. Custodial areas are included.
12. Expansion of HVAC system.
13. More adult restrooms

According to C. Threadgill, expansions and renovations are more expensive than “ground up” building.

The current Pearland library was built with an expansion in mind. It’s on a large piece of land and the City can opt to have other services on that land. The current library is on a lot that is roughly 550’ x 500’ (from the street.)

C. Threadgill volunteered to provide an estimate where if money were no object the lot and building sizes she would recommend.

Group members asked about the usable acreage of the SCR lot owned by the City.

In considering the available lot, the possibility of saving lot space by including a second floor. According to C. Threadgill, this adds the expense of almost an entire library staff for each floor.

A definite possibility is that this library might do better to serve the communities in Brazoria County from the northwestern county line south to just past Highway 6 on the west side of 288.

Keri King brought up that this would mean trying to coordinate more cities than just Pearland and get them all in agreement with plans, so it might not be wise to consider it at this time.

The concept of “micro-libraries” was introduced by one of the group members. They’re more advanced than storefront libraries, but are small libraries geared towards smaller communities (neighborhood concepts) and don’t necessarily cover research, but focuses on pleasure reading.

To meet immediate needs, the following was discussed:

Storefront:

1. It is a reasonable price

2. It would have to be considered a “small branch” by the County (also could be considered a micro-library)
3. Such a library would be heavy on pleasure reading:
 - a. Children
 - b. Adult “bestseller”
 - c. Large enough to have a meeting room
 - d. Wireless
4. Could be done fairly rapidly.
5. Provides coverage until a permanent library could be established
 - a. Certificates of obligation
 - b. Bonds
6. With the current agreement (which might not be the case), Pearland would pay for the lease and furnishings, and the county would fill it.

Brazoria County does not have a central library. Instead, there are larger (Pearland, Lake Jackson) and smaller (Danbury) branches. These range from 2,500 sq. ft. (Danbury) to 30,000 sq. ft.

It is unlikely there would ever be a central library in Brazoria County. It's too late and too cost prohibitive to build one. Angleton's library was supposed to be the county's central library, but it was never funded properly.

Any library built would have access to all the Brazoria County libraries.

One pro of having a storefront is immediate usage. But, if a 3,000-4,000 sq. ft. storefront library was “built”, it will most likely become uncomfortable quickly. C. Threadgill said it helps to have something and be uncomfortable as an impetus for helping get something permanent. Since the City tries to wait for 7-9 years between bond elections (based on their capital development plans), having a storefront would buy time to prepare for a future bond election.

At the same time, it might also be a negative, because the impetus to build a larger, permanent library would be localized. The greater community might see that there's a library in place and funds might be better spent elsewhere in the City.

C. Threadgill said that part of the county investment in a storefront would be \$120,000 in salaries alone.

Felicia Kyle asked that if the county was willing to put money into the project by purchasing books for circulation and paying salaries, would they be willing to put those funds aside as a seed fund in an interest bearing fund to show their commitment. C. Threadgill said she could not make that decision, and it would have to be discussed with the county.

Instead, citizens should ask the Commissioner if they would put money into a fund for the permanent library instead of funding a temporary library to show their

commitment. Salaries would have to be paid and books would have to be purchased regardless of what kind library is decided upon.

The City's investment of money in the rent would be "lost." The furnishings could be moved to a permanent library, but instead of paying down debt for a building, funds for monthly rent would essentially be "lost."

The City Council talked about the possibility of using the \$3.4 million bond and instead of expanding the current library, transferring it to the proposed library. If the numbers show that it would be a good idea to do this, the City would put it towards a vote of the general public. They would not feel comfortable transferring funds without it being the will of the people.

One member asked if there was any way to ask when people pay bills if they could opt to add money to their bill as a library donation.

C. Threadgill said that Danbury has a voluntary \$2 on their water bills that the Friends of the Library group administers on behalf of the library.

One item to consider: the cost to lease a 5,000 sq. ft. space until a library was built could be the same as buying and building.

Roosevelt Weeks asked about the President of the Friends of the Library for the current library. C. Threadgill said it was Theresa Mueller (spelling?), and she would get member information to us.

The City board oversees the library, and one member of that board is supposed to sit on the County library board.

One member pointed out that when the county and city commit funds, it shows that there is growth and they are committed to help raise the funds necessary.

One member asked about the expansion of the current library, specifically if they thought about building a new library instead of expanding. The answer was that with the existing Court at the time, adding a new library was not a high priority.

However, with a completely different court, that might be different.

It was pointed out that before the current library was built, Pearland has worked fine with storefront libraries. As the neighborhood library gathers more people, they can use those contacts to help provide seed funds. \$10 million (for a new building) is a hard sell to Pearland, but a smaller amount would be easier to support.

A storefront library will fill fast, and there might be discontent if there isn't outreach to show future expansion.

One member asked about doing something similar to Barnes & Noble—teaming up with a coffee chain to help fund the library.

C. Threadgill said that while they allow food and drink in the library, there's not enough money for a coffee chain to consider it.

Roosevelt Weeks stepped forward as a leader for the group. His knowledge of libraries will help our group.

Objectives:

Find viable ideas/options to pursue

What do we have to do to get to the "end of term"?

What data is necessary?

Subcommittee formation

Survey of stakeholders

What is needed by the city & county from the group to move forward?