

Update on the New Library Project March 27, 2017

On Monday March 27, 2017 the City Council considered direction and planning efforts toward the construction of a new library. They were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. Does the Council want staff to study options for a dual facility service model, keeping a location at the South end of town?
2. Does the Council support the Library Advisory Committee's (LAC) recommendation to develop a comprehensive public outreach strategy to be led by the LAC?
3. Other direction the Council finds appropriate at this time.
4. Does the site at Palmetto and Montecito, currently planned for a new library facility, continue to have Council Support.

Prior to addressing the questions, the Council was addressed by Planning Director Tina Wehrmeister and Library Advisory Committee chair Cindy Abbot. Cindy presented a PowerPoint that summed up the results of the committee's last meeting and the brainstorming session. The presentation covered four areas: Library Needs Assessment, Library Services, Site Analysis, and Community Input.

Question #1. (retain two libraries)

Based on the results of the election, the general feeling was that we should study more options that would allow Sanchez to remain open. Councilmember Martin said that it was the loss of community space as much as library services that was important to people. Tyger Bigstycyk suggested that a free shuttle to the new library could be a solution. Council member Vaterlaus mentioned the idea of maintaining Sanchez as a Children's Library, and requested a current study to find out who actually uses Sanchez. She stated that a lot of misinformation was put out on social media during the campaign. Chris Fogel reported on SCA3, a proposed constitutional amendment that is sponsored by Senator Dodd and co-sponsored by Jerry Hill, which would lower the voters' approval threshold of library bonds to 55% from the current 67%. Council member Keener suggested that the city explore paying more to increase the hours as had been done in the past. Several members of the public spoke out against new taxes to pay off a bond. Mayor O'Neill spoke in favor of one library, saying that there was no need to do another Needs Assessment as it was done in 2015 and is expensive.

Question # 2 (Outreach program led by LAC)

The whole council was in favor of the outreach program which would engage and respond to the community across both geographical and demographic borders with council member Keener suggesting that the outreach should include those who are not library supporters.

Question # 3 (Other Direction) Combined into #1, #2 & #4.

Question #4 (Site approval)

Council member Digre suggested the former Lumber Yard as a potential site. She also said we need to define what a library is in the age of cell phones as information sources. She also referred to a prior speaker's statement of a possible Ocean Discovery Center in conjunction with the library on the Palmetto site. Mayor O'Neill said all options, including the Palmetto site, should be on the table, and Council member Digre agreed. Council member Vaterlaus had to recuse herself due to a conflict of interest. Council member Keener suggested the parking lot site on Francisco which would only allow for a much smaller footprint. He is opposed to the Palmetto site. Council member Martin said that the city needs to look at another site, but had no suggestions.

Caroline Barba, President, Pacifica Friends of the Library