

Old Library Accessibility Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 2, 2016

Members Present: Leo Blair, Wendy Cote-Magan, Mark Mikitarian, Lucy Wallace
Press: Joan Eliyesil, *The Harvard Press*

The meeting was called to order at 4 PM.

Administrative: Mark Mikitarian was elected chair of the committee. Lucy Wallace offered to take minutes.

Scope of Work: Mark asked what Brian Valentine, the LLB architect who authored the February 22, 2016 report to the Board of Selectmen (BOS), was asked to review in the Old Library (OL) and what this committee's scope of work was. Lucy noted Brian had been asked to respond to four accessibility-related issues in the OL noted in a December 5, 2104 letter to the BOS from the state Architectural Access Board. This committee's task is to review the report and determine which items need further assessment, particularly with respect to cost of addressing them, and make a recommendation to the BOS.

Review of LLB Report: Wendy had been able to walk through the OL a couple of days before the meeting and, based on that, review of the LLB report and state law, prepared a memo for the committee regarding triggers for levels of accessibility and improvement to the OL that would be required. Lucy noted that, given the building has always been in public use and it would continue to be a public use given the options currently under consideration (leased to the Harvard Cultural Collaborative (HCC) or as town office/department space), change of use would not be a factor driving improvements to the building.

According to the AAB regulations (521 CMR Architectural Access Board) for existing buildings, meeting accessibility requirements is driven by the cost of proposed work to be done on the building. Costs are generally based on activities requiring a building permit, as opposed to interior improvements such as painting walls, replacing carpets, etc. In addition, landscaping, roof repair or replacement, window repair or replacement, and masonry work are exempted from the calculating costs for purposes of driving accessibility requirements, unless exceed \$500,000. The three cost thresholds, calculated over a 36-month period, are:

- Less than \$100,000
- Greater than \$100,00 but less than 30% full and fair value of building (in case of OL \$105,840 is 30% building value per assessors' records)
- Greater than \$105, 840

In the first instance, only new work need comply. In the second instance, all new work must comply and there must be one accessible entrance and toilet. In the third instance, the entire building must comply with 521 CMR and no work is exempted. All public entrances must be accessible.

It appears that the proposed future uses of the building and level of retrofitting could be accomplished without exceeding the \$105,840 trigger for greater accessibility improvements. There is an internal (small) elevator, an accessible toilet, the halls and exterior door at the base of the rear path (current accessible entrance) wide enough to meet code. The report noted the current

handicap parking space (off Old Littleton Rd) was too narrow and not level. Provision has been made with a curb cut on Fairbanks Street for a handicap space. Measuring from that space to the building's accessible door, Wendy estimated the change of grade would fall within the maximum allowed slope. (1:20). Landscaping would be required to smooth out the path, as in some places it does exceed the allowed grade. There is also a question of the path going onto the abutting property, in which case an easement or taking is required. The accessible entrance should also be fitted with a handicap accessible button to activate the door's opening.

Other options for accessible entrance to the OL were briefly discussed, including a lift adjacent to the current main entrance and a ramp to the current entrance which would include modification of the entry. All access to the building would be by the ramp, as it would need to cover the stairs in order to end at the exterior entry point.

Action Items: Several next steps need to be taken.

- The building's property lines need to be confirmed. It appears from the assessors' plan that the OL sits on its rear lot line and that the landscaping along Old Littleton Road may actually be in the road right of way.
- The change in grade and distance from the proposed new handicap parking space to the rear accessible door needs to be confirmed as meeting the 1:20 slope limitation. In addition, we need to obtain an estimate for the cost of doing this work.
- Request information form LLB on costs of various accessibility options (regrading the path, installing a ramp, and installing an exterior lift).

Leo offered to follow up on these actions, including drafting a letter to LLB.

The committee agreed whatever course is recommended, it will need to be vetted by Gabe Vellante, Mark Lanza and the AAB. There was some agreement that if the next occupants continued the public use status of the OL and made no significant improvements requiring a building permit, the building would not need any improvements with respect to *current* accessibility. However, in order to improve accessibility, at minimal improvement of the path and installation of a proper rear door would be prudent. Another issue that would need to be addressed if the HCC leased the space would be continued use of the rear door as the accessible entrance when the Hapgood Room would probably be repurposed as the dance/movement space.

Lucy suggested that should the HCC take over the building, one option would be to do the minimal amount to improve access through the current rear door and see if the HCC can get successfully underway in 5 years or so. More significant upgrades for accessibility could be considered at a future time when costs perhaps could be shared between the Town and HCC.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 PM. Next meeting will be on March 14 at 3:30 PM.