Meeting of the Town’s Library Board of Trustees, and the Jones Library Inc

20 May 2024 - 9 a.m. – meeting conducted online via Zoom Webinar

Members Present: Austin Sarat, Tamson Ely, Lee Edwards, Bob Pam, Eugene Goffredo, Farah Ameen

Member Not Present: None at start, Trustee Eugene left at 9:42 am

Also Present: Sharon Sharry, Ellen Anselone, Josephine Penta. Members of the Public (25 attendees at start of meeting)

1. Call to Order/Attendance – Austin call to order @ 9:00 am.
2. Changes/Additions to Agenda. None
3. President’s Report.
   a. MBLC Extension Request (Trustee Goffredo recused himself from this agenda item due to possible conflict of interest, Trustee Ameen took the following minutes)
      i. Motion: to submit a letter to the MBLC requesting extension to our deadline to sign a contract with a general contractor from June 30, 2024 to December 30, 2024. Passed 4-1 with one abstention/recusal.
         1. President Sarat explained this motion would allow the town and Trustees to explore the possibilities to move forward with the renovation and expansion plan and attempt to go out for a GC rebid of the project in September, including some changes to the design document; those changes and hopefully receiving multiple bids would bring the project back into the budget range that is doable.
         2. Trustee Ely asked if all of the addendum on the original bid document would be incorporated into the new bid document, Ellen Anselone confirmed that would be so
         3. Trustee Pam asked since there were no subcontractor bids on the elevator work, would the cost default back to the subcontractor therefore raising the costs even more.
         4. Ellen Anselone responded that “…nowadays we do not get elevator bids...it’s the method the elevator contractors use...”, so the amount gets assigned to the GC bid, and that “it’s in Fontaine’s [the GC] number.” Trustee Pam asked if that number indeed was included in the GC bid and Anselone responded she would check and provide that information to Director Sharry.
         5. Trustee Pam asked if what effects this bid situation was having on the Capital Campaign and how they anticipated it would affect them in the future. Trustee Lee responded that if this motion passes and the MBLC approves the extension the Capital Campaign would continue fundraising efforts ‘vigorously’. Trustee Pam stated that in the past project uncertainty had contributed at times to lower than expected pledges so with the project still uncertain what is the probability of donations while the project is still uncertain.
         6. President Sarat stated that as the MBLC and rebid process goes forward, the Buildings and Facilities committee would be working on contingency plans in the meantime to address current issues and also in case the project does not go forward.
         7. President Sarat stated there is some basis to believe that getting a single bid on a project like this increases costs by approximately 20% and the bid did come in at 18% over. Ellen Anselone referenced an Army Corp of Engineers study that confirmed that, and that 5 bids is what the original bid documents were based on. President Austin stated that we will make a ‘concerted effort’ to ensure we have more than one bid.
         8. Trustee Pam stated that when someone is selling a house the ‘perceived wisdom is’ you try to put it up for sale early in the spring to maximize buyers and we put the project bid
out in early spring [note: the bid was submitted to the state portal on] so putting a bid out in the fall might mean the 6 pre-qualified bidders might already have jobs booked. President Austin stated he did not know what happens with the current 6 qualified bidders but that for general contractors the timing of our contract to bid happened during a period where many/most contractors had already committed to work for the coming summer and that going out to bid in the fall would result in more bids as contractors look to book the next year/summer’s business. Ellen Anselone stated that the 2 independent estimators advised the same. Stated that several of the pre-qualified bidders already had met their bonding caps so could not complete the bid. Also stated that the college, school markets are ‘crazy’ busy in the summer and were already booked for this year so did not bid. Stated that in conversations with the lone bidder Fontaine that they were getting low responses to their subcontract bid requests which raised their costs.

9. Trustee Lee asked if all the addendum and drawings would be included in the new bid. Ellen Anselone stated they would be and said that some of the tables and drawings that were addendums due to that subcontractor not being brought into the process until very late. Those items would now be included in the general bid request.

10. Trustee Pam asked about the amount of cost savings would be for the rebid / redesign. President Sarat stated we do not know yet.

11. Trustee Ely asked if the MBLC were supportive of the extension, Director Sharry stated she had spoken to the MBLC several times and they are supportive.

12. Trustee Ameen asked about some edits, some stylistic, some wording, about the letter that will be sent to the MBLC.

13. Trustee Pam read a statement outlining why he does not support the extension and rebid approach

4. Public Comment
   a. Clare Bertand voiced her support to go for the rebid. Stated several other examples of projects that came in over budget be they were needed to they were completed
   b. Jeff Lee asked who would be paying for the redesign work. Also stated it was unfortunate that the MBLC letter was not included in the meeting packet
   c. Pam Rooney stated her question was the same as Jeff Lee’s, who will pay for the redesign work and will that require an updated MoA
   d. Laetitia LaFollette stated her and her family really support the project and grateful for the Trustee and Building Committee for their efforts.
   e. Kelly Erwin stated that her and her neighbors were looking forward to the new library and to keep on keeping on.
   f. Arlie stated she and Hilda Greenbaum are not comfortable with the amount of risk to the town of proceeding with the project
   g. Maria Kopicki stated that the vote should not be taken because of the unknown cost and not knowing who would be funding the redesign. Also stated that only one bidder on the project does not drive the effect of the cost increasing. It was not a single bidder that caused the cost to higher but that just that the costs are a lot higher than the estimates.
   h. Kent Faerber stated he supports the rebid process and that the plan is well thought out and abandoning the project now would be disastrous.

5. Trustee Pam stated the endowment as of April 30th, was a total of over $9.6m between the endowment and Woodbury Funds

6. Adjourned at 9:49am by President Sarat.

Respectfully submitted by Farah Ameen and Eugene Goffredo