

11 January 2018

Dear DLAC members ~

We send you these comments, encouraging you to reconsider your final recommendation at the January 25 meeting, to approve your report for the City Council.

For your careful consideration, the following are important ways in which the downtown library planning process **went astray**:

- **Requirements of the February 2017 RFQ have not been met**

According to the RFQ for the Downtown Library Building Program, the objectives of this project were to:

1. Provide a ***solid foundation*** for the proper evaluation of a facility site,
2. Support the creation of ***schematic designs*** through the development of a detailed building program,
3. Examine the feasibility of co-locating the SCPL administrative offices (currently residing elsewhere in 14,000 square feet) on site with the Downtown Library,
4. Examine the feasibility of co-locating the Downtown Library, and possibly the SCPL administrative offices, with a new parking structure to be built in the downtown area, and
5. Estimate the cost of program goals against the current budget.

- **Our response:**

There have been no schematic designs (RFQ #2). Such designs would have been very helpful as the Downtown Library Advisory Committee evaluated the 4 options that were eventually presented, and would have helped the public visualize the possibilities of a renovated or new library.

The DLAC never addressed the feasibility of co-locating the SCPL administrative offices on site with the current downtown library or in a parking garage (RFQ #3 or #4). Even though this part of the direction given to the DLAC is not our primary concern, the lack of any consideration of it by the DLAC shows disregard for what was requested as part of the process.

- **The Addendum to the RFQ (3/15/17) specified deliverables which were not met.**

The following (3, 4 and 6) is quoted directly from the RFQ. Our emphasis is bolded:

3. The deliverables for this project are:

- a. A **community engagement plan**.
- b. A report summarizing the current and future spatial needs of the Downtown Library.
- c. A program list with function and square footage, ***including a proposed floor plan***.
- d. A report evaluating the adequacy of the proposed sites: remodel existing, demolish existing and build new, and co-locate with a new downtown parking structure.
- e. A report summarizing the costs of all project elements by site.

4. **Community Engagement**

The company will work with a Library Advisory Commission, the Library Director, and Library staff to develop the program. Citizens of the City of Santa Cruz are very engaged politically. The City anticipates there will be active participation by the public during this project. **Plan and design a series of meetings (minimum of three) to engage citizens and stakeholders in meaningful dialogues. Use this process to guide final designs and documents.**

Section 6: Fee Schedule, provide pricing for **three public meetings. *Include costs per meeting for additional meetings, should they become necessary.***

- **Our Response:**

Item (c) A "proposed floor plan" was never provided.

Concerning Item (d) Upon seeing the price tag for a total remodel, several members of the public requested to have Noll & Tam modify the renovation proposal so that costs would be closer to the Measure S allocation, prioritizing the absolute needs but omitting some of the “soft costs” such as all new furnishings, etc. ***The scaled-down renovation was done hastily at the end of the 6 month process and the option was never fully considered by the DLAC.***

Most important was the absence of any public engagement with the firm hired to do this. While they were present at several DLAC meetings, they only made presentations to the DLAC, and ***did not engage the public.***

- **Other ways in which the DLAC process went astray:**

Only some of the DLAC meetings were advertised in the Santa Cruz Sentinel in the Coast Lines section. They did eventually appear on the calendar of the city’s web page. There were no ads placed in the Good Times weekly. There could have been notices placed on the library front doors or in the lobby. The schedule of all meetings (established in August) could have been published in the Friends of the Library newsletter, but were not.

The first Work Plan that included ***Public Input*** went through two revisions, resulting in a final plan (Aug. 9) where there was NO chance for public ***dialogue*** (as required by the RFQ), only a 3-minute per person comment period at the end of each 2 or 3 hour DLAC meeting. The content of emails received by DLAC members was never discussed at their meetings. ***The public had no idea whether its comments were read or if they were considered.*** At the last meeting, one member spoke privately to two of us thanking us for our input.

Because the language of the Work Plan was unclear from its very first appearance, three concerned citizens met with Library Director Susan Nemitz on August 25 to ask for some clarification. At that meeting Director Nemitz admitted it was her decision to delegate the public outreach to the DLAC rather than the architects, in contradiction of the RFQ.

At least two of the DLAC meetings included agenda items that diverted the DLAC from its charge. The greater portion of the August 9 meeting was spent hearing about the city’s homeless problems, which the DLAC could have read independently and *over which the DLAC have no influence*. Noll & Tam’s valuable time was wasted. The July 12 meeting included an hour long pointless exercise about site criteria, when in reality the two sites were already established. Again, time was wasted discussing such things as views of the ocean and siting a new library close to the river.

Communication with the public – There were many missed opportunities. In order to find information about Measure S in general and specific library branch projects, one had to know enough to scroll all the way down to the bottom of the Library’s web page (SCPL.org), click on “Governance and Funding” or “Boards” and

then scroll to the bottom of that to read the text of Measure S or see updates on the individual projects. Furthermore, the SCPL.org web site had chronic mistakes, leading to confusion. These mistakes had to be brought to the attention of library administrative staff throughout the 6 months process.

Several concerned citizens took it upon themselves to create a comprehensive, easily-navigable web site where all documents pertaining to the Downtown branch discussion could be accessed. At the first DLAC meeting, one of the Noll & Tam architects even remarked that they used the web site (Don't Bury The Library) to get good factual information not available to them otherwise at the time.

Despite the fact that a more intensified survey was done in 2016 in conjunction with the library's Strategic Plan for 2017-2020 (with 1000+ responses), a subcommittee of the DLAC took on the task of asking similar questions about the kinds of library programs the public favored. This new Online Survey was not professionally designed. It was hastily changed from its original list of questions within a 2-day period.

Most significantly, the survey **had no questions about how people felt about the library moving to another site, specifically the proposed garage.** This should have been a primary concern from the start. When residents were engaged in conversation at the weekly downtown Farmer's Market about the potential library move, nearly every person disapproved.

There was never any notification placed in the library itself as to the potential move or ongoing process. **Nor was this idea mentioned when voters were asked to approve Measure S.** A new library in a parking garage was not included in Measure S ballot language. County residents believed they were voting for long-overdue upgrades to branches throughout the system.

- **Options presented to the DLAC by Noll & Tam**

If the costs of the options had been presented to the DLAC earlier in their process, the committee could have had more time to confer on how consultant Penny Hummel's recommendations for square footage per programming needs could have been whittled down or prioritized to be more in line with available Measure S funds.

When presented with Noll & Tam's "Feasibility Study" (10/4/17), with only a few more DLAC meetings scheduled, the DLAC came up with a list of Pros and Cons for each option, many of which had no actual facts to support them.

Concerned citizens urged the committee to include a 5th option, a "renovation light" option. Noll & Tam produced this by the following DLAC meeting, but one has to wonder if this was done in haste. They provided no preliminary floor plan sketches to help the committee or the public visualize how the interior space could be re-configured to meet the specific programming needs, although they did state that the building could most likely accommodate them. It should be noted that there is a significant amount of poorly used space in the present building.

- **Belated Outreach**

The long-requested public "forum" was held on a Sunday afternoon, December 3. Slightly better advertising, in great part due to a Letter to the Editor in the Good Times, encouraging participation at the 12/3 event by the Don't Bury The Library group, produced attendance by residents that was much better than other DLAC meetings (estimated at more than 70, excluding DLAC members, Library and/or City staff).

The Library Director, Assistant Director, some other library staff, City Manager, and several DLAC members were in attendance. Attendees were asked to sit in groups of 6 - 8 for the purpose of discussing the 4 options as presented by a subcommittee of the DLAC.

Unfortunately, the public was given faulty and biased information on Option A. Yet even with this misinformation, the “renovation light” option was overwhelmingly favored, with the idea that the present library location was preferred. Many questioned the desirability of or need for a multi-story parking structure downtown. Unfortunately, there was no provision to record the meeting, either with audio or video recording.

Additionally, despite the public’s many questions and suggestions, there was no opportunity to have questions answered at this meeting, since nobody from Noll & Tam was present. The RFQ "deliverable" for *community engagement* "by the company" was *unmet*.

- **Before and After the 12/3 Meeting**

Throughout the process any Committee member statements about the inadequacy of a partial renovation were not based on examination or discussion (not even cursory) of what could be accomplished by renovation with \$23 million, even though the architects stated the building would need only minimal seismic attention, and that the 44,000 sq. ft. would accommodate the identified community programming needs with better division of interior space.

At the December 13 meeting, DLAC members were presented with transcribed notes from the 12/3 community meeting. Despite these notes indicating most participants favored Option A, the DLAC did not discuss Option A, other than to discard it out of hand. Option B was recommended by a unanimous vote.

- **Biased and misleading presentation of Renovation Option**

From the beginning, the renovation alternative ("an independent study" required by the City Council's 12/6/16 vote) to a new library in a multi-storied parking garage project was given short shrift. Committee members never discussed or envisioned what renovation could provide in the way of a modernized and inviting building. There was never any serious discussion of reconfiguring space (flexibility), a reconfigured and welcoming entrance, new carpeting, new paint, new shelving, or upgrading electrical infrastructure. Members of the public had to consistently remind the Committee that renovation was a legitimate and requested alternative. Even Noll & Tam reported, much to their surprise, that the building itself was substantially sound, especially seismically.

Instead, the notion was perpetuated within the DLAC that there was something wrong with the roof of the existing library, even though there was no roof inspection, nor any evidence to substantiate that statement. "A leaking roof." "Not enough money to fix the roof." These things were repeated and embellished until the roof red herring was well established.

One final comment. This is difficult to relay but relayed it must be, for it is an egregious mistake.

Although the Noll & Tam cost estimate provided a \$720,000 allocation for relocation in the renovation option, that figure was missing from the DLAC options packet for discussion on 12/3. Committee member Steve Blair was the main author of the 4 options presented at the 12/3 public meeting. It is noteworthy that he was present at one of the tables when someone asked specifically if Option A contained relocation funds. He replied that he did not know. A member of the DBTL group was at the same table and she had the Noll & Tam documents with her. She replied that, indeed, there was \$720,000 allocated for Option A and showed the document to those at the table, including Mr. Blair.

At the same 12/3 public meeting we were told by the Assistant Library Director that the 4 Options were just finished in haste that morning and that they would be revised where necessary. We assumed that Mr. Blair would catch his mistake during review of the Options and Summary materials. This revision did not happen, because at the 12/13 meeting of the DLAC the \$720,000 was still missing from Option A.

After the meeting was adjourned, Mr. Blair was again questioned (by another DBTL group member) about the missing \$720,000. Even though he had been shown the correct Noll & Tam information on 12/3, he feigned surprise and replied that, no, he did not know about the Noll & Tam figure. In fact, he said he had not looked at the Noll & Tam figures when he drafted Option A. Considering the importance of how Option A was poorly presented and with obvious bias, one is left to wonder whether this was deliberate.

Rather than debate whether the absence of an important bit of information was deliberate or accidental, the point is that Option A was ***never fairly presented to the DLAC or to the public at the 12/3 meeting.***

In our opinion, this brings into question the final recommendation, as well as the many other mistakes of the DLAC process.

We send you these comments now, so you may reconsider your final recommendation at your January 25 meeting, to approve the report for the City Council.

Sincerely,
Judi Grunstra
Michael Lewis
Jean Brocklebank
on behalf of [Don't Bury The Library](#)