

Minutes of the Library Commission Meeting of November 20, 2003

Appendix A

The Public Comment Summary Statements included in these Minutes are authorized by San Francisco Administrative Code Section 67.16.

These summary statements are provided by the speaker. Their contents are neither generated by, nor subject to approval or verification of accuracy by, the San Francisco Public Library Commission.

The number of members of the public who spoke anonymously at this meeting. 1

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Public Comment of An Anonymous Citizen

San Francisco Public Library Commission Meeting, November 20, 2003

Item 2:

Public Comment

“The secretary is distributing something that I wish to speak about.

Regarding the joint meeting with Park & Rec Commission, if Mr. Higuera had been given the gavel, there would have been at least three new lawsuits. I hope you have not drawn a lesson from their conduct.

I notice my time is not running.

I also wish to speak about the power of anachronism. We are contemplating putting history plaques on our entryway. One of the things that was suggested by our staff was that we should consider putting something analogous to what was on the old library regarding ‘may this structure throned on imperishable books’ etc.

I considered what would be an appropriate slogan that would commemorate what this library stood for. I have drafted what was distributed to you.

You don’t see it just in terms of my cynicism. The point is that it is an anachronism.”

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Item 4:

Ingleside Prop. 14 Application Form & Selected Attachments

“I wonder if I should comment at all. This is extremely confusing.

I have not had a chance to review the infamous red notebooks.

Last time we were told that there is no comparison with the present building we are in now, because it does not reach the state definition of a previous branch.

Now we given a chart that shows a proposed 4,800 square feet and the documents show a calculation of 6,100 square feet. In fact the total project is 11,000 square feet. I sure with enough time I could figure this out.

But my question: Why are we building a new building that is only going to give us 4,800 assignable square feet?”

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Item 5:

Portola Prop. 14 Application Form & Selected Attachments

“I am grateful for the clarification that this table is not part of the part of the formal application and exists in response to a query from the commission. This shows your wisdom in asking for it.

This is a situation where a total budget is \$4.3 million. I am not sure if that includes the property acquisition costs of \$1.2 million that I criticized as excessive. Now we learn that amount of money is building a collection of 25,725 volumes, including books and audio visual materials.

This is area where standards of service levels per capita and cost effectiveness would be instructive. Is it worthwhile in terms of librarianship to spend \$4 million to give a population thirsty for education a collection of only 25,000 volumes?”

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Item 6:

Visitacion Valley Prop. 14 Application Form & Selected Attachments

“I think it is wise of Mr. Underwood to point out that what is being attempted is to achieve a balance. I think we all recognize that, and what we are concerned about is that in seeking that balance the central role of the library might be neglected if we are not particularly sensitive.

A lot of those concerns cannot be brought into play with regard to Visitacion Valley. This is a special case.

Mr. Underwood said before that this is the most exciting application and I think I have to agree with that. This a neighborhood that has been sorely neglected. What they have had in the past has been so far below pathetic so as not to show up on the scale.

One small concerned is that a footnote says books and audio visual materials in appropriate balance. I would want some specificity about that.”

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Item 7:

Ortega Prop. 14 Application Form & Selected Attachments

“While I am grateful to get out of here early, I don’t think you are distinguishing yourselves by going through these applications at this pace.

You may remember that you were told when these applications were presented for the very first time last week, that there would be plenty of time next week. As we have seen in so many other instances, it is ‘plenty of time later,’ and then ‘should have been here last week.’

In any event, this is the most remarkable example of what we might call ‘much ado about nothing.’ This is a doubling of the assignable square footage but the collection is increasing barely twelve percent. This represents new construction, at least the possibility of a demolition of an old building, a tremendous amount of dislocation to increase the collection a bare twelve percent.

One wonders how the community is going to view that.”

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Item 8:

Richmond Prop. 14 Application Form & Selected Attachments

“One reason for concern is that we have already seen this reviewed at the state level.

I am glad that we have learned some lessons from a conference call with the state technical reviewers. But we don’t understand from the report what those lessons were. We understand that we are going to be revising the technological narrative but we don’t know which direction that will take. Do they want to see more technology? Do they want to see less technology?

I am hoping that the state reviewers recognize that technology is a bottomless pit and that the library should return to its central role as a community service based on books and direct service to people.

I am concerned that this can change as long as the changes are not substantive. I am sure what is meant there is substantial. But then the question becomes: How meaningful is your approval?”

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Item 9:

Library History Plaques

“It takes an extreme position to push Commissioner Coulter and I into the same camp, but comments from Commissioner Chin to the effect that no one cares about this does so.

It is important to take an interest in the institutions history. There are certainly flaws in this.

This draft is better, but what it lacks in historical value it gains in historic value. This is to say that it creates a picture of what we place a value on and how we see our history. This example is repeated over and over again, both in nation-states, various institutions and organizations. The history informs the self-image.

I think that citizens coming forward to create a public-private partnership will soon be regarded as an anachronism.

But if it is not historical, it will be historic.”