

**CITY OF ALAMOGORDO, NEW MEXICO
CITY COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 1376 E. NINTH STREET
7:00 P.M., COMMISSION CHAMBERS
APRIL 17, 2001**

MAYOR DON CARROLL COMMISSIONER DON COOPER

MAYOR PRO-TEM JOHN VAN DOREN COMMISSIONER ED COLE

COMMISSIONER INEZ MONCADA CITY MANAGER PAT McCOURT

COMMISSIONER RON GRIGGS CITY ATTORNEY REBECCA EHLER

COMMISSIONER STEPHEN EASLEY CHF DPTY CLK TERESA GUTIERREZ

Call Meeting to Order, Roll Call, Invocation, and Pledge of Allegiance.

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Absent was Commissioner Inez Moncada.

1. Discussion on future needs of the Public Library, including, but not limited to, land acquisition.

Mr. Jim Preston, Library Director, asked the Library Board members, as well as the Friends of the Library, to each stand and introduce themselves. He then read excerpts from a memo he had presented to the Commission as part of their agenda packet (Attachment "A" to these minutes). He also felt that our Library had a very rich heritage and history which could be attributed to staff, the Library Board, the Friends of the Library, and the community at large all working together. The Library Board, staff, and Friends of the Library were looking forward to working closely with both the Commission and community at large in making plans for choosing the most cost effective user friendly facility in order to meet the growing expectations of its customers.

Mr. McCourt said Mr. Preston mentioned either refurbishing the existing building, or utilizing the IGA site for the Library. He questioned other options, such as a branch service at another site in the City, or perhaps using other City-owned land for a location. Mr. Preston said at the current time the Library Board did not put a priority on those options. They felt the most important options were the possibility of either refurbishing the current site or looking into the possibility of the IGA site location. They had looked at length at the possibility of including in their feasibility study a new site on a new location, but had decided to exclude that from the current feasibility study because they believed they could take the cost estimates and facility design from the new site on the IGA building and project it elsewhere if the need be. In his experience, it was most cost effective to have one library serving a community of this size. The main reason the IGA

site was being focused on was its central location to the downtown area and they believed it would most effectively service the clientele.

Commissioner Cooper said if they doubled the available floor space to about 44,000 square feet, then would they also need to double everything else, including staff and equipment? Mr. Preston said not necessarily. Design features could be incorporated into a facility which would minimize the expansion of staff.

Mr. McCourt asked for some background on the needs assessment. Mr. Preston said regarding future spacing, it was based principally upon a user space needs study in which projected population was looked at and viewed for the next twenty years. They arrived at a figure of a need for approximately 44,000 square feet. Our current facility was 24,000 square feet and he might note that it was rapidly shrinking in regard to having space to serve the current clientele. This study was put together by former Library Director Paul Miller, and he had reviewed it thoroughly and endorsed it completely. The 44,000 square feet was broken down into various aspects and segments contingent upon different departmental needs. A copy of that study had been provided to the Commission approximately a year ago. The numbers derived from this study were based upon standard formulas recommended and endorsed by the American Library Association. It paralleled his experience as well. It was very fortuitous that the population estimates in this study were right on the mark.

Mr. Preston proposed as a statement of fact that they would preserve the Eugene Manlove Rhodes Room, as well as the storybook wall. There was no question from a structural perspective insofar as a decision was made to move. They could move those items that were near and dear to us. They could relocate the Southwest room successfully. They could remove the tiling on the walls. Contrary to some opinions expressed, they could be successfully removed. It wasn't so much a question of "could" these items be moved, as it was a statement of fact that they "would" be moved. It could be done.

Commissioner Easley felt the people of Alamogordo would have the opportunity of designing and equipping Alamogordo's Library for the first half of the 21st century. He asked Mr. Preston to help them out in the thinking process and design ideas by making some kind of presentation in conjunction with the Library Board about what the library of the 21st century should actually be like. He knew Mr. Preston at best could make informed judgments about what that should be. He would like to ask him to help the Commission by extending his expertise about what their 21st century ought to be as opposed to just a continuation of the library they had now. Sometime within the next few weeks while they were busy and deliberating on all of this, that would be a helpful presentation that he'd like to see. Mr. Preston said one of the fundamental driving issues with a feasibility study was that an Architect would come in and solicit input from the public, the staff, and from administration in regard to likes and dislikes, desires and needs. From a very practical perspective, many of those issues were hammered out in the context of these focus group meetings. In a more theoretical aspect, the library literature now on the national level was driving in a direction that stated that in regard to user needs for the 21st century, they saw that there must be a combining of the electronic data bases

with print resources and that the library of the future must be reaching out in such a way as to meet the needs for local communities. A second concern on the national level related to home-schooling and the fact that there was a very valid user constituency that needed to be reached out to, which were the home-schooled users and how they successfully incorporated their needs into the Public Library. There was a third driving concern which pertained to successfully meeting the needs of the local business economy. Commissioner Easley said those were the kinds of things he'd like Mr. Preston to discuss with them. He didn't think that printed material was going to go away anytime soon, but clearly electronic delivery systems, optical delivery systems, and even unimaginable delivery systems were going to become more and more important to the library of the future. They needed to prepare themselves now to be flexible and open to be able to use those technologies as they came along.

Mr. Michael Shyne, Realtor, said Van Winkle's IGA moved out of their store next door to the Library some time back, and the building has since sat vacant. A large vacant building right in the middle of a city is something that attracts attention and sometimes gives the wrong impression of a city. Recently, the opportunity presented itself that there may be a way to donate this building to the City of Alamogordo. This building was appraised in 1996 for \$1.4 million when a partnership bought it from the Saulsberry Trust, which was the Ruckman family. There were 48,000 square feet to this building. The property included almost the entire block except for the very small lot on the northeast corner of that property, which was under a different ownership within the Ruckman family. The Ruckman's had a mortgage on that property of nearly \$1 million. When they started working on this project earlier this year, they'd taken the approach of how this \$1.34 million asset could be presented to the City specifically for the use as the Alamogordo Public Library of the future, totally free--where a \$1.75 million asset would be donated to the City of Alamogordo with no debt whatsoever. A mortgage of \$1 million didn't disappear, but three major contributions to that had been arranged to allow for that mortgage to be paid off. Van Winkle's IGA would commit a quarter of a million dollars to paying down that mortgage. Another quarter of a million dollars would be committed by the holder of that mortgage by a reduction in the balance of the mortgage in the form of a gift to the City of a quarter million dollars because of the purpose of this contribution being a library. The family that held that mortgage was Carol and Stan Ruckman, and Stan Ruckman had spent his life as a Librarian. The remaining half million dollars would be contributed by a Trust in Alamogordo. That Trust was coming from a couple who moved to Alamogordo in the 1970s from New York State after they retired. They spent about a year and a half travelling the West at that time looking for a place to retire. One of the major reasons they chose Alamogordo was because of the Public Library. This clearly demonstrated to him that the Library they had and the one they could have in the future could be a valuable tool for attracting constructive growth to Alamogordo. Mr. Shyne read a letter from Teresa Keelin, CPA, the co-Trustee of the Trust. The letter indicated that the trustees wished to remain anonymous. Their idea included the donating of a half million dollars to help provide a site to build a new library..

Mr. Don Van Winkle, said he and his sisters were the owners of Van Winkle's IGA. They also owned the real estate which housed the current IGA store. When they acquired that

store two years ago, they had to buy the real estate also. That was a transition piece for them and they were in the process of selling that store, which was at 675 E. Tenth Street. They were in the process of selling that real estate to a group that wished to invest, and they would become a tenant and no longer a land owner. They would have a gain on the sale of that property. They had a window of time where they could either pay the government for the tax on that, or they could donate this \$250,000 and take a loss on the disposal of the 1300 Tenth Street property. If he and his shareholders could do something to help out the Library, then they would. He wanted to put some context to their participation. The Saulsberry Trust held a long term mortgage on the old property, and if it was paid off sooner then there was certainly some economic benefits to the participants of that Trust. This was a real situation and what would happen if it moved through was that the property would be titled debt free in the City's name and the City had to commit within a five-year period to float a bond issue to complete the property into a Library which would be named consistent with the donor, which he felt was very appropriate given the amount of money they were putting into this. If the City could not raise the money, then they could just give it back and there was no residual liability whatsoever. His shareholders did have a window of opportunity tax benefit-wise where they had to move on this. If the City did not want to do this or so elected not to take what was effectively a gift, he needed to know because they had other opportunities with the real estate and they needed to move on those just as a business person would. Regarding the structural concerns, that was news to him. He and his shareholders had no knowledge of anything wrong with the property and they weren't trying to get rid of it as something they didn't want. As business people they were motivated to do it because they re-invigorated that inner-city area which had kind of become somewhat of a Ghost Town. He understood the Commission would be voting on this in May on whether the City would like the property or not.

Mayor Carroll clarified that the donor trust who was mentioned last was really the driving force behind putting this together. He felt this was an opportunity which the City could not pass up. However in fairness to the Ruckman's, the Van Winkle's, and the donor trust, the City needed to have some level of confidence that it would fulfill its obligation. Regarding the decision to be made in May, they needed to get as much information out to the public as possible to make sure there was some feeling of the citizens of Alamogordo wanting to pursue this. As was mentioned, the City did not have the immediate wherewithal to make this happen in the timeframe that whatever agreement they reached would require. So it was going to take some bonding indebtedness, be it a property tax bond or local gross receipts tax option. In any event, it would have to go to a vote of the people. In fairness to the people making this offer, they needed to have some level of assurance that the City was at least willing and able to pursue it. Again, he felt if this opportunity was explained to the citizens of the community, he didn't see why they would not want to take advantage of it. There were not many communities that got million dollar donations to improve their quality of life.

Mr. Shyne explained that the City would be responsible for insuring the property just as it would any of its other real estate. The trustees of this Trust were very willing for the City to either remodel the existing facility or demolish it and build a new building. That would

strictly be a decision of the Commission based on their research. Commissioner Cooper clarified that in the meantime the City would be responsible for insurance, building maintenance, and utilities.

Commissioner Easley said he had carefully studied this and he also felt it was an excellent opportunity for the City which wouldn't come again anytime soon. He was in favor of pursuing it. He did wonder whether the laundromat on the end of the building had been considered in as part of the 44,000 square feet? Mr. Van Winkle was not certain, but would get back with a definite answer. Mr. Shyne said the lease on the laundromat ran out next year.

Mr. Shyne said there was one other point for the Commission to consider which hadn't been brought up yet. If the City accepted this property and if through cooperation and education and motivation of the voters of Alamogordo they successfully obtained a means to finance the construction of a new project, upon the passing of the remaining member of this family, the City would receive the cash residual of their Trust which at this point in time exceeded a half million dollars. That was in addition to this building at this time.

Commissioner Griggs felt this opportunity was certainly intriguing, and it was also a remarkable gift. Mr. Shyne didn't think there had ever been a contribution of this magnitude to the City of Alamogordo in its history nor did he didn't think there had ever been a bond election which had been presented to the citizens which had private money behind it to this magnitude to assist in the project and to reduce the overall size of the bond and the cost to the citizens. He hoped the City would be able to succeed in financing this, possibly much earlier than five years out into the future.

Mayor Pro-Tem Van Doren concurred with the comments made by Commissioner Easley and Commissioner Griggs. He was looking forward to something happening on it. Mr. Shyne asked when the City planned to hold a meeting to reach a conclusion on this? Mr. McCourt said the current plan was to have this on the May 8th Regular Meeting agenda for Commission decision that evening.

Commissioner Cole said after hearing the proposal tonight, he was looking forward to working with the other City Commissioners on this and he felt it was an ideal opportunity. He was glad the Commission would have the opportunity to make a decision to participate in it.

Mayor Carroll said the public's reaction to this would give them some idea on the reality of whether or not they could expect to have a bond issue passed. If they had some expectation that may happen, then he felt what the Commission would like to do was to move ahead. If on the other they came to a conclusion between now and May that there was no possible chance of a bond ever passing, then in fairness to the parties involved they would not want to proceed knowing there was no way to make it happen. That was not his expectation, but he felt they needed to explore that possibility and get as much public input between now and then as they could.

Ms. Annette Claycomb, Library Board member, felt this was just a wonderful thing. She'd received so many unsolicited comments from the community about the Library moving to the old IGA building, that she felt it would be absolutely no problem.

Mr. Richard Coltharp, "Alamogordo Daily News", said he was also for this plan. All the surveys showed they needed a new Library anyway, and now they just had free land to put it on and another half million dollars to put into it.

Ms. Sara Chambers, Chairman of the Library Board, said given the circumstances of this, how could they say no. She wanted to emphasize that for every month except for one in the last six years, their circulation had exceeded the previous year's month circulation. They had grown even much more than was anticipated back in 1986 when the facility was expanded. It was anticipated to last 20 years based on those current conditions, but they had expanded far beyond that in the last five or six years. That was to the credit of the City Commission and all the people involved in making the Library be the best it could be under the current circumstances. The only way people could begin to keep up with technology was if the Library could provide it as the information resource center. This was a very wonderful opportunity.

Mayor Carroll said a couple of benefits of this if it could be put together, was that it would fill up an empty hole in the middle of our community, as well as also freeing up the existing Library to help meet the future needs of the City as far as housing other operations as the City continued to grow. He felt the consensus of the Commission was pretty much that it was an offer they could not afford to pass up; they just needed to figure out how to make it happen.

Ms. Maude Rathgeber, citizen, said they'd only passed one library bond in Alamogordo although they'd had three bond issues. She felt they must hire an Architect who had previously designed and built libraries. She also felt they had an excellent building in the present Library building because of a lot of planning and because of the Architect who had done the initial building as well as the addition to it. She estimated it would currently be valued at \$4 million. She would suggest to go south with the building, go up with the building, or go a half level down, as well as moving the various meeting rooms around. They could put in an upstairs which could also house meeting rooms. She'd not heard a dollar amount yet tonight on how much a new building might cost, and the people of this community were extremely sensitive to bond issues. There was no money to be found federally or state-wise. She also thought they needed to think about the renaming of the building after a donor. Everyone loved their "Alamogordo Public Library" and it had been that since she was a child, and she felt they needed to think about keeping that. Also, she believed the storybook wall could not be moved. She helped put every tile in that wall and they could not be moved. They'd even broke tiles as they mounted them on the wall. She felt the alternative they should think about at this time was how to add to the building already there to make it feasible for this community and serve the people for another 15 to 20 years.

Mayor Carroll said the City didn't even have the resources to expand the present facility. Even to do that would require a bond issue. They did in fact need to come up with some reasonable cost estimate on any of the three options.

Commissioner Easley said regarding Ms. Rathgeber's comments about the naming of the Library, he would respectfully disagree. He felt it was perfectly appropriate to name a library after the donor. It seemed just a matter of opinion and they just respectfully disagreed on it. The only other item he would call to her attention on that, however, was that were they to do this deal with IGA, it was a condition of the deal. It was not an option and the deal was contingent upon renaming the Library. Ms. Rathgeber said there were many others in the community, some of them a long time gone, who had they not had them and their determination, they would not have a Library today. So when they started talking about names, she felt there were others in the community. She believed that was one question they would have to face everywhere they went. Mayor Carroll said part of the rationale for doing that would be the million plus dollar donation to make the Library happen. There were probably a number of facilities in this community which they would be more than happy to name after someone if they were willing to put a large portion of the money to build it. That would be the justification for naming the building after someone. Mr. Preston pointed out that there were other public libraries throughout the State which had been named after personal individuals, and where it had been perfectly acceptable with the community.

Mayor Carroll thanked Mr. Shyne, Mr. Van Winkle, and the two Trusts involved for the offer they had presented. It would be on the agenda for the first meeting in May (May 8th) for the Commission to make a decision as to whether or not they felt comfortable in accepting the offer.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Mayor Donald E. Carroll

ATTEST:

City Clerk Angie J. Rahn

(SEAL)

(Prepared by Chief Deputy Clerk Teresa Y. Gutierrez)

Approved at the City Commission Regular Meeting of April 24, 2001.



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