

From: Susan Pastor <skpastor@uwalumni.com>
Sent: Wednesday, July 13, 2022 6:25 AM
To: Park Commission <pacommission@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Items 18 and 19 - Neighborhood Background

Hello Parks Commissioners,

> I'm writing in regard to Items 18 and 19 on your agenda for this week - the Reindahl Master Plan and the Imagination Center update. I want to share some history, including nuances I think are important. I also want to urge that you be as certain as possible that you have a plan for sustainable operation of the library this area deserves and desperately needs. The "no" votes of seven alders on the operating budget in the spring, and the mayor's removal of the Imagination Center from previous budgets are a source of anxiety and concern.

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> About the history - to be clear, I have never, at any time, been authorized to speak for the neighborhood and have never represented myself as more than a "resident" or a "member" of the Greater Sandburg Neighborhood Association. I have had the email list, and have been listed as a contact person for the city. That is all. My role was to convene some early meetings, including the November 16, 2015 meeting at which our by-laws were approved and we met with Library Director Greg Mickells. At that time, the report that became "Communities Inspiring Libraries" was in progress. Neighborhood residents expressed great frustration with the lack of a library, and multiple options for siting it were offered. I do not remember who suggested the park, but it was one of multiple locations proposed in the greater East Towne vicinity. The merits of both sides of East Washington were considered by the 35-40 people in attendance. I thought the idea of the park was worth exploring and I am sure I said so.

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> There is a lot of enthusiasm for the Imagination Center at Reindahl. There would have been a lot of enthusiasm for a library most anywhere in the area. We are so starved for that extremely important resource that many people would've willingly waived the right to say anything further, as long as you just build it. That is not the same as there having been a process. There were ad hoc meetings, for example of the neighborhood's library committee or working group with planner Kevin Englebert. I happily participated in that and in conversations with Kevin. I was excited, but as much or more about the opportunity to develop a community-designed facility than about the location, and to serve our struggling populations, including transient families living in the hotels, whose access to city services is extremely limited.

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> I believed all along that besides the ad hoc opportunities for discussion and input, there would be a formal process - the Reindahl Master Plan revision, and that this would include thorough attention to the location of the library within the park, if it was to be within the park.

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> I am guilty of telling people concerned about the park location that there would be a thorough process in connection with the revision of the park's master plan. I do not know what happened to the revision - maybe the pandemic.. I thought the neighborhood would be closely involved with the revision and would have the opportunity to address multiple issues, not only the location of the library, but the uses of the park overall. I was surprised to learn that soccer fields were up for another lease this spring - I thought we'd be able to weigh in on that. In July 2017, when Superintendent Knepp kindly met with about 15 Greater Sandburg members at the park, we learned that the planned softball complex was stalled. A lot of great information was shared. At that time, we heard about the park land's restrictions that could be a barrier to including a library. There would have to be assurances that any such facility would "serve parks purpose."

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> When I liked and was willing to explore the idea of the library in the park, the Sewerage District had not yet cut so many trees (unnecessarily - who knew that when they said they'd protect the trees that this meant they'd eliminate them). We did not yet know about the PFAS contamination of Well 15, located within the park, and the contamination of the surrounding ground water, as evidenced by borings taken while the storm sewer project was in process. I was distressed that the DNR allowed the Sewerage District to dewater PFAS contaminated water into the park. The summer of 2021 had not yet occurred, during which (I hear) still more damage to trees led to more cutting. I am not reassured when baby trees are planted to replace mature trees, or when cut trees are not "quality" trees.

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> I realize there has already been considerable expenditure in the planning of the Imagination Center and I appreciate all efforts to bring a library to this area. I appreciate our former Alder Joe Clausius' advocacy in this, and the efforts of former Alder Samba Baldeh. But if you gave me today's circumstances and asked about the Imagination Center in the park, I'd have serious reservations that could only be addressed through a thorough community process (not a handful of Zoom meetings with three minutes per person). I would have those reservations even though I was originally delighted at the idea of replacing the unappealing shelter. We deserve to know the environmental and fiscal costs of what we hope for and to be able to participate in a process of weighing the costs and benefits. I am not sure when it became clear that planning was proceeding without our involvement in some important decisions. I continued to share information, such as about upcoming Common Council votes, but this was not going to be that model of community design I thought other places would want to replicate.

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> I urge you to do the utmost diligence while carrying out the commitment to a library for this inequitably underserved part of the city. Make sure the plan is sustainable financially and does not damage the environment further. Every tree has value. All permeable surfaces have value. Conditions have changed since the model of the Imagination Center was introduced. One of the new conditions seems to be strong financial pressure. Can you develop a comparison of the ongoing costs for a model like Pinney that includes housing, especially in light of the new vision for housing at East Towne? One plus would be preserving park land. A Pinney-style model is not what I had envisioned or hoped for, but if it has become the most financially viable path to building and sustaining this resource, it should be considered. Please work through a set of "what if"s that address new conditions (in addition to financial pressure, damage to the park, beginning with the Sewerage project) and PFAS. Taking the time to do that now could eliminate more delays in the future - and we needed the library years and years ago already.

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> Sincerely,

> Sue Pastor

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