

Library Trustees Meeting Feb 11th: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2EwiGb9XBJQ>

Notes taken by Mark Salisbury, founder of Citizens for a Library in West Boise

- The first part of the meeting was unfortunately plagued with technical difficulties; the meeting started late.
- A change in policy, adding a limit to the policy to say you can only check out 999 books was discussed. Some trustees were not comfortable with a number that high, though previously no limit on book check-outs has been in the policy.
- 45:30: Director Dorr: Proximity Goal is part of Blueprint Boise; the goal is to have access within a 3-mile radius. My discussion today -- I want to walk through the advantages and disadvantages of a proximity goal. I think we have, to date, well-located branches but they are inadequate for our population and certainly for our growth. Therefore, I would like to discuss adding a square footage per capita goal.
 - Brian: I like that, as a strategy.
 - My thoughts: there is no *disadvantage* to having a proximity goal. (If we were thinking about city parks, could you ever imagine Mayor McLean talking about the advantages and *disadvantages* of having a goal to have a park within a 10-minute walk of all Boise residents?)
- 49:15: Director Dorr: I would like to talk about why we would focus on square footage and not proximity. No industry standards for proximity or square footage. Lots of variables. Density, how libraries were created in the city, geography, population density. The 2000 branch library plan helped us get well-located facilities. With a 3-mile radius, 87% of Boise citizens live within 3 miles of a Boise library and 97% live within 3 miles of a Boise or Lynx library. But they are inadequately sized to meet current and future needs. Collister is the prime example. No meeting room is large enough for a board meeting.
 - My thoughts:
 - That's true, each city has a different shape, population density, geography. However, that doesn't mean that you can't look at what library coverage looks like in other cities, that you can't find comparable cities. Spokane WA is a very comparable city. It has a population just slightly lower than Boise's, and it is close in size, in square miles.
 - The 3-mile radius sounds like a reasonable goal, but it's not.
 - If you use a 2-mile radius, you see that Boise, and comparable cities, provide very good, often overlapping, coverage to their citizens at 2-miles. Some cities start to show gaps at 2-miles, and some don't – some provide very good coverage to all residential parts of the city at 2 miles.

- Even though I don't live very far outside the 3-mile radius shown on the map shared in the meeting, it's exactly 5 miles to drive from my home to the Cole & Ustick library. Garden City, Orchard Park, and Eagle are close to the same distance.
 - Cause and effect are wrong here. The message is that having, or focusing on a proximity goal in the past, has created a lack of space. Population growth without corresponding increase in combined facility size creates a lack of space. An additional facility addresses the square footage and proximity problem at the same time, reducing load on other facilities, whereas adding additional square footage to an existing facility only addresses the space problem.
 - I do agree that expanding Collister, and probably Hillcrest too, should be part of the facilities plan, but not without including a branch for West Boise residents in the plan. Otherwise, the plan is to shut us out for *another* generation.
- 52:18: Director Dorr: In previous discussions, other ways of looking at the city were requested:
 - Map with "Best in Class" Transit Corridor
 - Map with Title 1 schools
 - Library proximity with drive time calculated
 - 2-mile radius
 - My thoughts:
 - In my view, the Title 1 schools map shows that title 1 schools are in 4 parts of the city: Vistas/Central Bench (6), West Boise (8), Veterans Memorial (2), SW Boise (1). North End, SE Boise, and NW Boise have no Title 1 schools.
- 54:50: Director Dorr: Proximity drive times. Starting with a 5-minute drive time. No overlap between libraries with 5-minute drive time. Transit corridors play into how people access a library. 94% of Boise residents can drive to at least 1 library in 10 minutes, 99% can drive to at least one library in 15 minutes.
 - My thoughts:
 - The drive time maps are useful. At 5-minute drive times, you can see much of the city has a library quite close by, but it also shows many opportunities for improvement. The 10-minute drive time map makes it clear these drive times are under "best possible" traffic conditions. From where we live, you can access the Eagle Library and Orchard Park in 10 minutes only if traffic is light and you hit stoplights right. That's hard to do with Eagle Road and Chinden.

- The worst areas with a 10-minute drive are foothills and part of SE Boise. Bown Crossing isn't too far, but there isn't a direct path to drive there from parts of SE Boise. I think the city would be wise to acquire land in the very SE part of Boise for a potential future library, park, low income housing project, or something else, but to not build there until we've addressed existing shortcomings.
- The value of overlapping libraries is being overstated here. Having 5 libraries within a 15-minute drive isn't as useful as having one within a 5-minute drive.
- It would be interesting to hear the % of residents that can reach a library in a 5-minute drive. That wasn't stated.
- 58:40: Director Dorr: Potential of 2-mile radius proximity goal. We move from 87% (at 3-mile) to 68%, within a 2-mile radius. When we add Lynx libraries, that moves us from 97% (at 3-mile) coverage to 79% (at 2-mile radius). This very clearly shows a significant portion of our West Boise residents would be outside of a 2-mile coverage and it also opens up questions around SE Boise, this is where tying into city planning discussions, because I think they factor in. We have a very large % of West Boise outside, but then you also see S, SE, up into the foothills, you could actually build 6 proximity circles to really capture those areas as well.
 - My thoughts:
 - It's good to highlight that there are multiple areas of the city outside of 2 miles from a library. I [did this in 2023](#). What's omitted, and is significant, is that the **population** and **land area** of the West Boise library desert **is much larger** than the other areas. It's unfortunate nobody pointed this out during the meeting.
- 1:00:49. Director Dorr: Connecting to City Planning Discussions. We wanted to make sure that public works, and PDS are in our steering committee, so that we take future growth into consideration, particularly around the S part of Boise. Planning team did work on Jan 27th planning for these 3 areas. They are called "Lake Hazel / South Airport", "Third Bench" and "Columbia Bench / East Columbia". Staff were asked by council for a plan to plan for these 3 areas. I'm happy to get our (library) site selection criteria so that that planning team could use that input when looking at these areas.
 - My thoughts:
 - It's nice to think ahead to the future. It's nice to imagine the places where homes and apartments may be built. It's a **crime** to do that while **ignoring underserved** areas where people already live and have been paying city **taxes for decades**.

- 1:02:33. Director Dorr: Focus Development in Key Areas. Yesterday's council work session - Josh Wilson on Zoning Code, Deanna Duquee on where housing might go. These are the focus development areas identified, where the city thinks growth might go, according to modern zoning code, best in class transit (State, Vista, Fairview), activity centers (identified in Blueprint Boise), and mixed zone use. This is where the city is anticipating that growth might happen. Another slide showing where housing has been approved. You can see it is lining up with those development areas they are expecting. Additional map showing where the city thinks growth could happen by building type (High Density, Compact, and Suburban). Could we be on the ground floor of a place that has affordable housing on top of it?
 - My thoughts:
 - I'm curious why there's no compact development anticipated west of Maple Grove. I imagine this is due to the prevalence of HOAs. There is some High-Density potential, around Boise Research Center and State of Idaho Chinden Campus (HP). We do see a large (150 unit) apartment complex under construction today in Boise Research Center (Ashbury).
 - But again: it's nice to think ahead to the future. It's nice to imagine the places where homes and apartments may be built. It's a crime to do that while ignoring underserved areas where people already live and have been paying city taxes for decades.
- 1:05:50. Director Dorr: My recommendations. I'd like to have discussion on this.
- Director Dorr: Keep current three-mile proximity goal. It does a good job of us helping us think about placing libraries appropriately. I think that shrinking to 2-mile doesn't take advantage of how people are traveling, doesn't reflect where we think people will go, and really opens us up to having more small libraries that aren't able to meet our current users. Particularly knowing we're going to see more density, in Collister, Hillcrest, those are areas that are already undersized. I would recommend we consider right now we've got that 0.52 (square feet / person), I think we should consider moving to that 0.66, 0.7, not just that we have libraries in the right place, but that we're adding square footage to keep up with growth in Boise. We use the library site selection criteria to help focus on sites.
 - My thoughts: it's strange that while (library) staff is talking about the need to increase square footage, and [space is available adjacent to the Hillcrest Library today](#), but they're not interested. I agree a standalone facility is always better, but it would come at higher cost. As cost is ultimately why staff don't want a West Boise library, it feels that staff are completely fine sacrificing West Boise to make incremental improvements for Hillcrest.

- 1:07:48. Director Dorr: Engage in City Planning discussions related to growth. I think when we look at West Boise not having a Boise library, I'm more concerned about us missing an opportunity for growth in the south. I think in West Boise we have to think about ways of expanding a smaller footprint using creative options, in terms of holds and lockers. The cost of a full site is as we know super challenging in today's economic climate. I want to make sure we engage in city planning discussions, so that we're fully tied in for opportunities tied to growth.
 - My thoughts:
 - Jessica is working very hard to defend her position against a West Boise library. It's very odd coming from a library director. Why are we worried about missing an opportunity for growth in the south when we've neglected an area that growth came to decades ago?
 - I believe that the staff have **inflated** the projected **cost** of a new facility, mainly by saying that we **need** new **25-30k** square foot facilities, while Cole & Ustick and Bown Crossing are **half** that size and they serve the community very **well**. I believe there would be interest from the community in making private donations to help build a facility too, but there has to be an **official city plan** to have a branch library before that can happen.
- 1:10:00. Director Dorr: Staffing Additional Space. An additional branch would require staff, whereas you don't have to add as many staff if you expand the square footage of an existing facility.
 - My thoughts: this is true. This is basically an argument against branch libraries in general. Branch libraries serve the community better by being more centrally located to where people live.
- 1:10:30. Director Dorr: What do you think about shifting focus from proximity to square footage goal? Keeping the goal at 3-miles. Density. Future planning.
- Brian Klene. Slides say the homework has been done. I appreciate that, when we go to present it. I agree with your recommendations. It seems like whether it's 2 miles to 3 miles, it points out some areas where we already know we have an issue. I think the slides say we've done our homework. We feel confident about our recommendation.
- Evelyn Johnson: Similar assessment, I agree.
- Reshma Kamal: Slides speaks more than what the need. (her comment wasn't captured well on mic, I'm not 100% sure I got it correctly)
- Nikki Pantera: I agree with Jessica's recommendations. I agree it makes more sense not to use 2-miles, but to use other factors, based on what we found out in that study about how people use the library. In the listening sessions, there was a lot of

conversation about how people would be willing to drive to a different location to take advantage of different services. What Jessica said, I remained concerned about the density questions at our existing locations. I'm concerned about Collister. It's too small, and not able to be utilized how it should. I think that aligns with your recommendations.

- Ron Pisaneschi: I have a number of thoughts. I'll just say it out loud. I'm very frustrated by the restrictions imposed by prop 1. The nearly hour long presentation about how the city budgets for capital projects and the enormously long lead time, even to acquire a piece of land, with the restrictions, and the way things are budgeted. I think we have to come up with more creative ways. Co-locating, especially with low-income housing, which has its own funds set aside. I see this as the only short-term solution for new facilities, unless we want to go to prop 1 and have voters change the law. I want to codify that our number 1 priority needs to be the city adequately funding the maintenance of our existing facilities. Adding facilities, as you've heard, they've not been funded at the replacement level that is needed. To me that's the biggest priority. I think the study adequately describes the fact that there is an opportunity to look at growing Collister and Hillcrest, by moving into adjacent spaces as they become available. I think it's worth examining the cost to expand Bown Crossing and Cole & Ustick. They're undersized for the recommendations provided to us for 25k square foot. We still have the notion of moving central staff out of down town to create more public access. Is that in Hillcrest or Cole & Ustick area for central staff to be moved out. Is that short term to create more square footage. What is the cost of leasing space for central space. What's the cost of downtown renovation on top of the renovation we're going through now. I think a little more examination over time needs to happen: what is it that our public thinks is an advantage of a Boise Public Library vs. a consortium library experience. Are there things they think they're getting from a BPL vs another library. We need to make sure we're not just assuming that what we provide is available in the other city branches. If it isn't, what can we do to work with those facilities to partner with them, to provide those things.
- Brian Klene: when we went through a growth discussion, was the impact of multi-family homes vs single family homes part of the analysis? They have greater growth impact. Yes, it was spoken to yesterday. When I sent link to yesterday's work session... modern zoning code...
- Brian Klene: I didn't fully appreciate when I started 5 years ago how proposition 1. Seems like there's no way to be successful to keep up with growth. I wonder if it makes sense for some group to get an initiative on the ballot to retract proposition 1. Seems like the only way to get the future course of the library back on track.

- Ron Pisaneschi: besides the dollar figure, it's a super majority. We've never passed a bond for a library. Because 2/3 majority is so difficult to overcome.
- Ron Pisaneschi: Luci, what do you think?
- Luci Willits: There is definitely a limitation. Without a plan that includes people to be motivated to have a new branch, I don't know why they would care. Unless they could give the entire city a plan about how it would benefit them, I don't think there would be urgency to overturn prop 1.
- Ron Pisaneschi: I want to speak to the 2-mile vs 3-mile. This becomes the bubble about what's realistic vs. not. I would love to see 2-mile, but if we do that we're looking at 6 new branches, more than doubling. It seems a bit unrealistic, as much as it would be a fabulous goal. Dollars won't make it happen, I'd rather concentrate on (viable) opportunities.
- Director Dorr: I want to move us to the joint work session on Feb 24th. What would you like discussed with Council? I'll put together what you'd like to share with them. I met with Mayor last week and asked her to help you as trustees join that conversation. Council is familiar with more formal board meetings; I saw in Oct meeting as trustees wanted to speak up... She's going to look for opportunities for trustees to speak up.
- Evelyn Johnson: What are the goals?
- Director Dorr: We're going to look at the city selection criteria and proximity goal. We'll go back to the library site selection criteria and why we recommend the update, and then we'll have a more specific discussion on proximity goal and square footage goal. I think we'll be in a place where we can take the square footage, under 15k square feet, what would it cost in terms of new build, renovated build, staffing level, what is the one time and ongoing cost. We'll bring that after we have a real discussion with council and board, we'll put the two pieces together to cost out. We're going to need to look for places we can co-locate. Purchasing land and sitting on it is no longer an option.
- The meeting continued for another 10 minutes, and was focused about the new trustee position, which would be open to apply to from March 30th to April 24th.
- My thoughts:
 - The trustee's reaction was disappointing. But the trustees all live in parts of Boise well served by a library (I understand they all live east of 36th street), so it's harder for them to relate firsthand to the library desert that we have in West Boise. They're only hearing one viewpoint on this topic, Director Dorr's, and she's held this viewpoint for a long time and has expressed similar views

in previous meetings. They hear her viewpoint again and again, and it makes sense. She's a great communicator.

- What is quite disappointing is that in the January meeting, there was discussion about service distance / proximity, and even the topic of **comparable cities** came up in the January meeting. Jessica's only words on comparable cities in this meeting is that there are no uniform standards, unless it comes to square footage, and there we are below where we should be. Basically, she's saying there's no point in even looking at comparable cities to think about location. I think she's very wrong in this. Comparable cities show Boise can and should do better. It was disappointing that trustees did not ask follow-up questions on this topic. I emailed the trustees, and Director Dorr, on February 6th, a detailed analysis about comparable cities, and the message appears to have been ignored. I received a reply from Director Dorr on Feb 10th, saying it would be included in the March meeting packet.
- Nikki Pantera stated that in the library listening sessions she recalls a lot of talk about how people would be willing to drive to a different location to take advantage of different services. In the session I attended, it was more of a question: "Would you be willing to drive to different locations for different services." My recollection is that there were varying thoughts about this, with the consensus being, occasionally, yes, but I would prefer a branch close by with a wide array of materials.
- Ron Pisaneschi is incorrect regarding super-majority. [Boise Code 27](#) says a "majority" of voters is required to approve a library project costing more than 25 million. It does not say a super-majority is required.
- Ron Pisaneschi felt that adopting a 2-mile service goal would require the city to build 6 additional branch libraries. He's wrong. It simply helps to see where you have the greatest need. In fact, if adopting a 3-mile service goal requires new branches to be planned for areas outside the 3-mile radius, that would require a new library branch be on the plan for West Boise.