

November 4, 1966

Minutes of the special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Skokie Public Library with the Mayor of the Village of Skokie and representatives of the Village held November 4, 1966 in the Conference Room of the Library at 4 p. m.

Members of the Library Board present: Conroy V. Erickson, Mrs. W. C. Griffin, Donald Kraft, Mrs. Daniel Petty, Rabbi Karl Weiner, Miss Mary Radmacher, Librarian.

Representatives from the Village present: Honorable Albert J. Smith, Mayor, Village Manager Gordon E. Thorn and Corporation Counsel Harvey Schwartz.

Also present: Mr. James W. Hammond, Architect for the Library.

In the absence of the President of the Library Board, L. O. Green, Rabbi Karl Weiner was appointed chairman of the meeting on motion by Mr. Erickson seconded by Mrs. Griffin. All ayes.

Rabbi Weiner expressed the appreciation of the Library Board at being honored by the presence of the Mayor and his Village Manager and Counsel. He further stated that the Library Board had received the report of the Citizens Committee on the Expansion of the Library and the report definitely states that the Library should proceed with expansion of the central building. Discovered in the Committee's research was information of the plan by the Village planners to bring a highway through what had been intended to be the park between the Village Hall and the Library - referred to as a civic center. In the Library Board's anxiety to go ahead a clarification of this is necessary. At an earlier meeting the Village planner made clear his plans and the Library Board indicated very clearly what its plans had been. This Board appealed to the Mayor and through him to the trustees to see where we stand. A report has been submitted which cannot be held much longer. It must be released soon and immediate action must follow. If not, the Press will pick it up. Because of this concern we are glad the Mayor and Mr. Schwartz are present.

Mayor Smith stated that he had read a copy of the contract made between the Library and the Village and then asked Mr. Schwartz for his legal opinion. The report from Mr. Schwartz (read by the Mayor) stated he had reviewed the agreement and in his opinion the Village is legally obligated to recognize the interest of the Library in lots 8 and 9. In view of the parties represented it would not be in the best interest of the Village to void the contract.

Mr. Erickson stated he was reassured to know this and that he did not feel it is the Library's intention to press for a legal application of the agreement or to force settlement on the basis of the legal commitment. However, the property in question is inadequate unless we have the civic center in conjunction. We would not consider it unless we were going to follow through on the total picture of the conception of the park development.

Mayor Smith stated that the obligations of the Village are quite clear. There is no question there is the need for solution to the problem of traffic congestion of downtown Skokie, but when you agree to participate in a plan or agreement you are only as good as your word and the Village has a moral obligation to pursue the matter to its conclusion. If that precludes the traffic solution as planned, he stated he wondered if there were some other way of working that out. Another way will have to be found. This proposal will go before the public and it seems it should be put into the hands of the people without anything of this traffic problem being thrown into the picture. Would not want the Library to be in a position of having the public make a choice. The program the Citizens Committee has recommended should be given consideration. He stated that what he was saying was this -- "as far as your plans are concerned on lots 8 and 9, go ahead, they're yours -- go ahead with your plans for the building -- there will be no interference."

Mr. Thorn stated that they have the plans for the traffic pattern as the Village needs it, "but about the 125 feet covered by lots 8 and 9 - go ahead - we will not interfere."

Rabbi Weiner stated that he was speaking for all of the Library Board by saying our present building would not be worth what it is if it were not for the concept of the park. It would be better to let this go and find another site. We would not be satisfied with the answer that we can use the 125 feet only to find ourselves then with the main traffic way right under the roof of the expansion of the building. This would not solve our problem. It would not be good for the Library as a structure and would not be good for Skokie. Oakton Street is downtown Skokie. If we were to sacrifice the concept of the very thing that makes Oakton the downtown area we would not serve Skokie, the business men, or our readers. Before we go to the people we would want to know that we are not going to ask the people of Skokie to vote for something that is not going to be what they want.

Mr. Erickson stated that the disturbing thing to him was the conception of the partnership between the Village and the Library. This was to be developed jointly and by working together. Now the Library Board finds itself in a position where it is in conflict with the Village planners but not the Mayor or Village Board. We hope, knowing the circumstances, the Village Board will see the possibility of this development and not accept the legal thing as a contract held over their heads but join with us enthusiastically on the whole concept. We do not want to force upon the Village an obligation unless they support it.

Mayor Smith stated that he had only pointed up the legality of the contract. He then requested information from Mr. Schwartz on open space grants. Mr. Schwartz explained the federal government has very definite ideas about what it considers open space. If that be the case whatever land is taken from that which is supposed to be dedicated to open space and used for that purpose must be replaced somewhere else or money refunded. He further stated that it seems one of the things necessary in the situation is more cooperation between the public agencies.

Mayor Smith pointed out to the Library Board that everything said about

the library and its location aesthetically, can be applied to other properties; also that plans for the central business district are fluent and, because the Library must go to the people with a referendum, this matter should be discussed.

Rabbi Weiner explained that the understanding was there would be a park - when the Village planners chose to make any change. The Library Board is willing to cooperate but cannot negate original plans. To expand and consider this the central library makes sense only in the framework of our original conception which was a joint one with the Village and Library together. The moment the highway comes into the proximity of the Library this building is condemned. In good conscience we cannot go to the citizens of the Village and hide from them the knowledge we have that after they vote the money for us they would wake up and find the Library is at a main highway. We must decide whether we are going to ask the citizens of Skokie for a referendum here or on some other site.

Mayor Smith expressed his opinion that there should be a joint meeting of the Village and Library Boards, with as many officers present as possible. His Board should be informed of the purpose of getting the open space grant and what the Village and Library were hoping to accomplish. The decision could then be made whether to honor the agreement between the two bodies or state that traffic situation is such that the Citizens Committee would have to be reconvened. The Library must know how to proceed without any time lag. Date of the meeting will be set for Wednesday, November 9, or Thursday, November 10, at 7:30 in the Lecture Room of the Library. He further stated that all the facts pertinent to the agreement and copies of the contract should be available at the meeting. He explained that the Planning Department is vital to the Library Board because they are trying to upgrade this area.

Mayor Smith and his representatives retired from the meeting.

Discussion followed of the manner of presenting the Library Board's argument in a logical manner including: cost of building a new library (is this road worth an extra two million dollars); will the new road solve the traffic problem; worsening of the air pollution problem which is already manifested in the proximity of Edens Expressway; and a statement of intent. It was agreed the Library Board must go on record of its intention to build the addition with a provision that the original concept of the civic center stands. The statement should begin with the history and end with the statement. This should be made the basis of discussion between the two Boards. Suggestion was also made that Mr. Hammond be requested to attend the meeting and speak as the Library Board's professional advisor to explain the effect of the road not just to the Library but the community.

Summing the discussion up, Rabbi Weiner stated the point that must be stressed is the necessity for seriously considering abandoning this building. Our procedure should be first to send the resolution with a brief note to the trustees as a document that might enable them to have prior preparation; second, prepare for the meeting an oral presentation that will repeat these points and give a good interpretation of the meeting with the former trustees presenting everything possible to back up our statements. Mr. Hammond's report of what our plans are and how they look should be included along with anything pertinent to the discussion. The two orders of priority are: evidence that we have talked with the Village Board and our remittance verifies that, and make them definitely understand that we must now go before the citizens with a referendum but will not do so unless we have some assurance there is no road to go through here.

Rabbi Weiner, Mr. Kraft and Mrs. Erickson assumed the responsibility of working on the oral and written presentations.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p. m.