

South Portland Public Library Improvement Study

Preliminary Report
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Introduction

This is the 4th largest city in Maine. In 1965 the city built a modern style library in a prominent location on the East side of the City, at the edges of both the Knightville and Meetinghouse Hill neighborhoods. The library is a few blocks from the City Hall, half a block from a busy Hannaford food store and a popular public park and just a short distance from a busy local shopping center. The Main Library building shares a parcel of land with both an elementary and a middle school and is situated across the street from Holy Cross School, a small Roman Catholic school.



Figure 1: The Main Library Building, parking lot and grounds. Brown Elementary School can be seen on the left of the photo and Holy Cross church and school on the right hand side, across Cottage Road.

South Portland is the home of the huge Maine Mall and a growing retail district, which now extends into adjoining Scarborough - a much larger town in area with a greater potential for expansion. Although South Portland has a healthy property tax revenue from gas and oil storage facilities, the Maine Mall and from National Semiconductor and Fairchild Semiconductor, the city is not growing in population and its small area limits its future population. The city has many capital needs. They are planning a new high school, and the City Hall needs a new facility as does the Public Works department.

South Portland has an extensive and well run recreational program which includes a large community center with indoor track and pool, a golf course, and a large complex of outdoor athletic fields.

The public library and its small branch (located on the western side of the City) are well used, but the 40+ year old Main Library building has many limitations.

Insufficient children's and young adult facilities and a general lack of public space, combined with hours of operations that many users find to be inconvenient and inconsistent are barriers to growth. Although the staff

attracts considerable loyalty from many users, others are critical of what they experience as less than friendly staff attitudes.

The much smaller branch library services have been growing at a more rapid rate than services at the main library and many users seems to appreciate branch library services more than the main library.

Meetings with the library staff, a focus group of over 20 library users and interviews with key people in South Portland form the basis for this preliminary report.

Demographic Information

City of South Portland Maine

Area: 12.93 square miles

Population: 1966 - 22,788

2006 - 23,784

Tax limitations

AA+ bond rating

Other capital projects \$56 mill new HS (defeated by a nearly 3 to 1 margin), City Hall, Public Works (failed by 11 votes)

Educational Comparison

South Portland has a very well educated population who should be well prepared to make extensive use of the public library without additional literacy training. Residents who have graduated from High School:

South Portland 89.7%

Maine 85.3%

U.S. 80.4%

South Portland %	ME %	US %
High school graduates (includes equivalency)		
4,814	29.5%	36.2%
		28.6%

Some college, or associate's degree		
5,251	32.2%	26.3%
		27.4%

Bachelor's degree		
3,138	19.3%	14.9%
		15.5%

Master's, professional or doctorate degree		
1,420	8.7%	7.9%
		8.9%

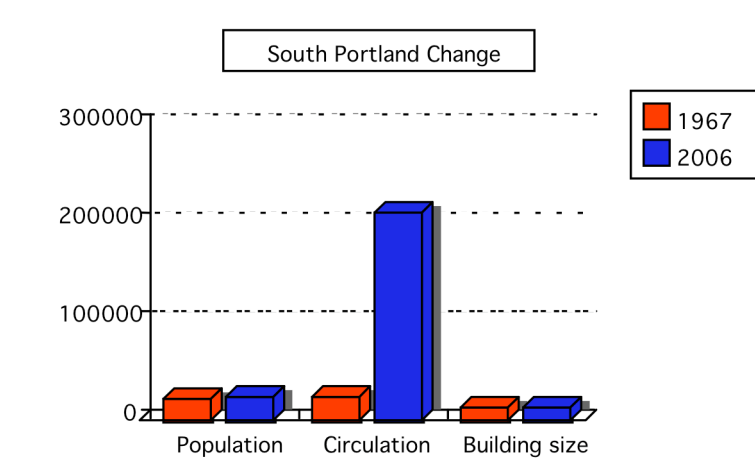
Public Library Services

Changes in population and library services since the first full year of use of the current Main Library building:

	<u>1967</u>	<u>2006</u>
Population	22,788	23,784
Circulation	98,169	211,048
Service Hours Per Week	50	46
Budget as percentage of tax dollar	1.5%	.9%
Staff	<i>unknown</i>	15 FTE
Interlibrary Loan*	125	22,000

** It should be noted that Interlibrary Loan is a very different service now than it was 40 years ago. Due to the library's membership in the statewide Minerva network, many more materials are much more readily available to patrons through a far less cumbersome process for the library staff. While there is no question that use of the service has grown significantly over the past few years, it should be kept in mind that the service offered now and the service of the past are very different offerings.*

Although the population has remained relatively constant, library circulation has grown dramatically.



Main Library

Annual attendance: 119,392

Annual reference questions answered: 4,719

Collection: 90,000+ items

Building size: 15,000 square feet

Branch Library: Open 34 hours a week with 2 Full Time Equivalent Staff

Library Activities

Children's Class Visits

The library is located adjacent to an elementary school, a middle school and a private parochial school, so classes are brought to the library several times a week. When these classes are in the small children's room, class activities interfere with children and parents coming to the library for individual service.

Socrates Café

This is a philosophical discussion group that meets at the Main Library the fourth Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. for 10 months of the year. This group is entering its fourth year and routinely attracts 13 to 15 participants. The psychological space of this group is as important as the physical space in which the group meets. At Socrates Café, participants are encouraged to listen carefully and to take a risk in voicing their opinions.

Says a staff facilitator of the group:

When we relocated the group to the newspaper reading area, Socrates Café found its footing. Group members enjoyed the view from the windows. The space felt expansive and cozy. The comfortable and flexible seating is appreciated. And, most importantly, the group loves being visible. They take great pride in their ownership of the group and are very welcoming. They seem to feel that by happily philosophizing in public they lower the bar for folks who are interested in participating but might otherwise be intimidated by a group that seems "too intellectual" or elitist. On a number of occasions, people who are browsing in the stacks start listening to the discussion, are "caught in the act" by group members and are invited to join in. It's important to have meeting space that is visible so people see that the life of the mind isn't purely a solo activity and that thinking and reading is enhanced when we share with others.

Book Groups

The Main Library hosts two monthly, on-site, book discussion groups. The morning book group usually meets in the Young Adult room, as it is generally unused during the morning hours. The evening book group meets in the Kaler room, a closed special collections room with the ability to seat about 8 people around a conference table.

Children's Story Times

The Main Library hosts three story/activity times – for three different age brackets – weekly. These activities are held in the Library's multipurpose room in the basement level. The room serves as a location for large meetings, presentations and other activities, which occasionally conflict with the scheduled children's activities. Because of the nature of the room as a multipurpose space, it is not particularly child-friendly.

The Library Building

This modern style two-story building is on a low hill with a steep pedestrian entrance ramp. The front door is not visible from the street and the sign for the library is almost invisible from the road



because of the growth in plantings in front of the library. The glass façade is obscured by heavy curtains behind all the windows. Materials visible at the entrance have their backs towards the door so the view is actually into the backs of materials.

Most users enter the rear of the building from the parking lot (a lot which is often also used by the elementary school and church when those institutions have programs). This rear entry is onto a stair and shabby lobby with a damp odor. The lower level of the library - down a gentle ramp from the back entrance - consists of a closed storage area, a program room which is cold and dark with poor heating ventilating and air conditioning, and a young adult library that is open only part of the time that the building is open. Much of the time there are no services open on the lower level. An elevator is available at the base of the ramp to the lower level, but not immediately visible to people entering the building.

At the top of the stairs as you enter the library proper you see a large checkout desk. The desk is situated in such a way that staff are side-to patrons entering from either the front or the rear of the building. The desk features a built in book return slot, though this is situated on the side of the desk opposite from where most users enter the building.

To the left of the entrance, as you enter from the rear of the building, is the adult area with several computers and a large book stack area with tall narrow stacks. At the end of the adult area is the closed access Kaler room with a large collection of old, seldom used, early 20th century boys

fiction and some local history materials. This room is narrow and tall. Traffic statistics show that many visitors to the library's web site find the site through searching for information about James Otis Kaler, whose books and papers make up the bulk of this special collection.

Situated behind the staff service desk is the crowded children's area with a few tables, chairs and computers and thousands of children's materials. There is no designated story hour space or children's program room and no children's staff work area.

Main Library Capacities

Square footage:

Adult:	6,400
Children's Room:	1,680
Young Adult Room:	896
Technical & Office:	1,520
Meeting Room:	<u>1,792</u> – seats roughly 100 people
Total:	12,288 square feet

The Kaler Room seats 12 people but is really not intended to be a public use space but, rather, a closed special collections room.

Adult area public seating:

2 computer terminals for online catalog access only
7 workstations for internet/word processing
9 "comfy" chairs
24 four-seat work tables
6 seat work table

Total: 48 seats

Shelf allocation:

Adult Non-fiction	3294 linear feet
Adult Fiction	<u>2169 linear feet</u>
Total	5463 linear feet or 1,821 - 3-foot shelves

Children's Room

Shelf allocation in linear feet

Reference books: 60
Coping/Parenting: 15
Juvenile fiction: 396
Juvenile non-fiction: 597
Picture book: 198
Easy Readers: 27
Audio materials in hanging bags: 51
Video materials (VHS and DVDs): 160
New book display: 9
Juvenile fiction paperbacks: 40
Miscellaneous display and other: 31

Branch Library Capacities

Public Work Space

- 1 computer terminal for online catalog use only
- 2 computer terminals for internet/word processing
- 2 chairs + 1 sofa arranged around coffee table
- 12 work table seats

Meeting Room seats 25 adults

No office space, back room or storage space at Branch

Shelf Allocation (linear feet)

Adult Fiction	648 feet
Adult Nonfiction	387 feet
Young Adult	48 feet
Juvenile Fiction	81 feet
Picture Books	96 feet
Juvenile Nonfiction	132 feet
DVD/Video	34 feet
Audiobooks	<u>49 feet</u>
Total	1,475 feet or 491 — 3 foot shelves

Facility Evaluation

This is a difficult library building to get at. The main front entrance is up a steep hill and the back entrance from the parking lot - where most people enter - is through an ugly rear lobby and up a steep stairs. Both front and rear doors are heavy and awkward to handle.



Figure 2: Though technically the building's main entrance, this door, facing Broadway, is seldom used by the public.

Although the library is in an excellent location at the busy intersection of Broadway and Highland Avenue and not far from a major Hannaford supermarket, there is no lighted sign visible from the many cars passing by and the building itself is up above the street level.

Entrance to the library parking lot is around the corner from the building and the parking lot is not adequately marked.

Although it is possible for a handicapped person to get into the building from the rear parking lot, the building is set up above the road up a steep ramp and obscured by plantings that have grown over the years so it is not a very welcoming experience.

The building was obviously designed to be entered from the front facing the street, but most people come in through the parking lot entrance, which is very unattractive. Entering the library



from the parking lot you come into an unattractive lobby and climb a steep stair to enter the library to the side of the service desk.



The center of the library is filled with service desk materials and activity.



The book stacks are narrow and in some cases made even narrower by the addition of end-of-range bookcases.

The small children's area is crammed with books with only space for a few tables. There is no children's staff work or storage area and no designated space for children's stories and programs.



There is no quiet study area and no place for tutorials.

Downstairs there is a 100 seat industrial looking meeting room with folding chairs and bright glary lighting. It looks like a warehouse. The room is dark, cold, has uncomfortable seating, and, most importantly, the heating and cooling system is so noisy that participants find it difficult to hear one another.

The young adult area is downstairs isolated from other library services.

The Kaler rare book room is a cement block room with tiny slit windows and an open stair to the basement.

The overall appearance of the library is dirty, dingy and old.

The recently installed lighting is too glary and bright in some areas and dark in others.

The public complains that the rear book drop is not available during the day so busy parents have to park and climb the stairs to return library materials.

Tentative Recommendations

Immediate low cost activities

- Prune front plantings to reveal the library sign.
- Clean library thoroughly.
- Install front cover displays of new library materials at the front and rear entrances.
- Reconfigure staff service desk so that staff greet users as they enter from the rear of the building.
- Weed lesser-used library materials so that the newer materials that users want are more prominent.
- Create display space on each eye-height shelf in the book stack for the display of face out newer books.
- Open bathrooms without keys. Older people hate keyed bathrooms and keyed bathrooms encourage vandalism.

Increase library visibility in the community

- Staff to attend community events such as City Council meetings and city wide celebrations
- Staff to collaborate with other city organizations and establishments
 - Meet with school administration
 - Work with parks and recreation
 - Work with Hannaford on food shows with library cookbooks
 - Work with local bookstore to sponsor book signings
- Library Friends to sponsor library programs
 - One Book celebration
 - Author book signings
 - Music in the library
- Open the library with consistent hours year round
 - Mon-Thurs. 10 AM-8 PM, Fri and Sat 10 AM-5 PM, Sunday 1-5 PM.
- Install 24 hour lighted library sign easily visible from automobiles.
- Cultivate City Council by inviting them to special library open house annually with food and drink. Find out what they might like to read or see and make sure they know library has it for them.

Long Term Recommendations

- Reconfigure the library entrance for easier access and a more welcoming appearance.
- Construct an addition to the library
- Expand the children's library with a story/program area and staff work and storage space
- Relocate the young adult area to the main library floor
- Refurbish the library building
- Renovate the program area — Install improved HVAC and movable partitions
- Space book stacks 6 feet on centers for easier access.
- Install additional standing and sitting electronic workstations.
- Install new book returns.
- Improve “Green” aspects of the building with natural light, economical HVAC, indoor plantings, ergonomic seating and full spectrum lighting.

Spreadsheet

The spreadsheet shows the approximate sizes of the present functions as well as the sizes necessary to accommodate the seating, collections, and services for the future compared to present capacities. Numbers in the materials column are for linear feet in public use and do not include materials in process or otherwise unavailable for public use.

Sizes are calculated by using standard formulas to calculate space necessary for materials and seating as well as for public and staff support services.

Meeting Room capacity was determined in consultation with the library board, and staff based on the library's mission, program attendance and community group use.

Material storage considerations:

Intensively used browsing collections are often housed in bookstore-type low display shelving combining spine out and cover out display. This type of shelving may require a square foot of floor space for five volumes. A relatively small number of materials will need to be displayed in this way since most of them will be out in circulation.

Children's picture books and CDs with very thin spines that are difficult to read are sometimes shelved in bins that often result in higher circulation rates than conventional shelving. If bins are used, alphabetical separators and bin lettering will be essential as sequencing and finding guides.

Library shelving often consists of ranges of shelving 6-7 shelves high spaced 5' to 6' on centers allowing for a 40" or 52" aisle. This type of shelving may require a square foot of floor space for ten to fifteen volumes.

The usual ratio is five seats per thousand population **minimum**. To determine space for seating these sizes were used:

Table seat	30 sq. ft.
Carrel and Seat	35 sq. ft.

Percentage of materials in circulation

The percentage of materials in circulation is constantly changing. An improved facility may increase the percentage of materials in circulation requiring less space to house materials. For example a library with a collection of 80,000 books that has 20,000 out in circulation will need space to house 60,000 books while a library with 45,000 books and only 3,000 in circulation will need to house 42,000 books. However, variations in seasonal circulation should be considered when sizing the stack. When summer reading materials are returned in the fall the library may need many more book spaces. Additional materials will be added to the collection to cover new subjects.

Seating

Numbers of seats are derived from population.

Electronic Workstation	40 sq. ft.
Lounge Seat	40 sq. ft.

Architectural Layout

To some extent the architectural layout of functional areas and the combinations of functions will affect capacities, so the area required may differ from the general estimates contained in the program.

Non-Assignable

Non-assignable space is required for arrival space, walls, elevators, stairs, halls, heating, ventilating and air conditioning, risers, bathrooms and non-library storage. Architectural designs differ in the amount of space for non-assignable functions. A high percentage of non-assignable space may make the building very attractive and spacious. However, the cost may be high. Highly efficient library designs with a low percentage of non-assignable space may appear very utilitarian and cramped. The percentage used in this program will result in an attractive but not overly expensive project.

South Portland Public Library Improvement Study

South Portland	Current Area	Materials	Seats	Future Area	Materials	Seats
Adults						
Browsing		50		180	60	4
Magazines		60	9	520	100	12
Media		220		460	300	4
Bookstacks		5463		5210	5000	6
Reading			30	840		24
Reference		50	9	800		20
Kaler Room	392	356	8	392	200	12
Adult Total	6400	6199	56	8402	5660	82
Young Adults	896	400	11	1000	500	16
Children						
Small kids		200	8	800	300	20
Tall kids		1000	18	2340	1500	24
Media		300		800	600	4
Reference		60		580	50	12
Story/Program				600		*30
Staff work				400		
Storage				200		
Children Total	1680	1560	26	5720	2450	60
Multi Purpose Room	1792		*100	2000		150
Service Areas						
Circulation	432			500		
Technical services	1300			1300		
Administration	220			300		
Staff room	280			300		
Storage	896			1000		
Total service	3128			3400		
Total Library	13896	7330	93	18364		158
Non-Assignable	4104			5636		
Grand Total	18000			26000		

Staff meeting August 8, 2007

Children's circulation is 50% of the total, but the children's area is inadequate.

The basement meeting room is cold, dark, ugly and not adaptable for smaller meetings.

The teen room in the basement has safety issues since the staff member works there part-time alone. It is a former storage room and smells moldy.

The rear entrance where most people come into the library is ugly with worn and chipped stairs.

The Book drop is noisy. The circulation desk is oriented to the front door and most people enter from the rear so the staff have their backs turned to them.

The library looks like a bunker.

The parking lot is also used by the church and school, so there are conflicts when there are events at those facilities, coinciding with library hours.

Maine has higher taxes so money may not be available to improve the library and there are many other town needs such as town hall.

The library recently lost a staff member.

Inter library loan is up from 500 to 17,000 per year.

Staff meeting November 19, 2007

The library doors are not working properly. They are too heavy and some cannot be unlocked.

There is no air lock in the rear entrance so cold air pours into the building and up the stairs.

There is no area in the building for quiet study.

The Kaler room is noisy because of the open center stair to the basement. There are no tutorial rooms.

Meeting groups such as the Socrates group cannot meet in the library without disturbing other users. We need acoustical dampening to permit conversation that does not interfere with others.

At the circulation desk the returns area should be relocated to be convenient to the rear entrance where everybody enters the building.

There is not enough waiting space near the circulation desk.

The seven shelf stacks are too high.

The increase in interlibrary loan is too great to be accommodated at the service desk. Additional counter space is needed.

In the children's area classes of 25 or more coming from the nearby schools four times a week disturb other children. We need additional space for modular or folding tables for these classes.

We need dedicated word processing computers for the public.

Privacy for computers is a problem because of children being exposed to questionable materials.

The stair from the parking lot is dangerous because children may wander down it by mistake since there is no upper door or gate.

The open design of the library does not provide for private interactions in the public space. We need tutorial rooms.

We need full spectrum lighting for good health.

Branch Library problems

- The book drop empties into the rest room.
- The community room is too small for many meetings.
- There is no storage
- There is no staff space

Interviews with City Officials

Interviews with:

- **Rob Coombs**
Finance Director, City of South Portland
Interviewed at the City Hall Tuesday Aug. 28, 2007
- **Linda Boudreau**
Member of South Portland City Council
Interviewed at the library on Wednesday Aug 29, 2007
- **Jim Gailey**
City Manager, City of South Portland
Interviewed at the City Hall Wednesday Aug, 29, 2007
- **Dana Anderson**
Director of Parks, Recreation and Public Works,
City of South Portland
Interviewed at the Community Center Wednesday Aug, 29, 2007

Library Services

All interview subjects expressed their support for and understanding of the value of the library as an integral part of the community, but they also expressed the need for change. The library is seen as having grown old and worn, in terms of the physical building as well as less relevant in terms of the services offered.

All interview subjects see that the role of the library has changed over time and that the library has to catch up with the community's needs. One subject stated, "Libraries are less in the information business since the rise of the Internet, so the library must attract people to use their other services."

One interview subject saw growing potential for the use of the library's traditional print collections, since books are so expensive and people's discretionary income was so limited.

The library staff seems resistant to change. Some decision makers interpret this as a lack of caring for the needs of the library users.

There were many suggestions for improved relevancy for the library. The library should be as user-friendly as a retail establishment – more responsive to the needs of its users.

Comments were made advocating for consistent hours of operation for the library as well as hours convenient to when people want to use the library. A desire to have more weekend hours was specifically mentioned.

Citizens want – and value - the services provided by a library, though there is a vocal minority of citizens that do see the library as a “want” rather than a “need”. To counter that sentiment, the library must do a better job of raising its perceived relevancy in the community by offering services that will be seen as being of greater value to more citizens.

The library is seen as an important social and recreational outlet for users. Having appeal to children was identified as being a key component to the library’s future success. The library should be a dynamic and interesting place - it was expressed that “a quiet library is like going to a funeral home.”

All subjects expressed support for the library and felt that the library needed to do a better job advocating for itself. Staff and management need to ask for what they feel is needed to better the library, and to demonstrate that these needs will benefit the public.

Library Administration

The Library Director needs to have the support and backing of the City’s upper management to be able to effectively run the department. The Director must run the library in concert with other City Departments in order for it to succeed.

Any Department Head should take more risks and trust their own feelings. The key to success is CARING when you come to work each day.

There was some confusion expressed over the role of the Library Advisory Board. In the past, the Board appeared to run the library, which was not appropriate. The Board should not interfere in operations. Their role is advocacy with the City Council on behalf of the library, and advocacy to library management on behalf of the citizens of South Portland.

The Library Building

Though subjects acknowledged that the current Main Library building is, too small for the current service needs, there would be more support to the idea of remodeling the existing facility than for relocating or building an entirely new facility. The current building was seen as being acceptable, though it’s appearance has become worn and dated over the years, due to inattention to upkeep and maintenance.

The prominent location at a busy traffic hub in the City was seen as a particular strong point, with proximity to a business district, other City offices, a park and three schools. There was acknowledgement that the library, essentially, sits ‘backwards’ on its current lot – the primary entrance in at the rear of the building, at the basement level, which is seen as not very user friendly.

The library should be a central meeting place and the facility should reflect that. The facility should be upgraded to not only better serve its current usage, but to embrace more contemporary needs. In addition to a larger children's room the library should have a state of the art 'cultural center room' for programs. The library should also have more flexible-use space to meet the needs of smaller programs, meetings and other, currently underserved and unrealized uses.

It was expressed that, perhaps, the City could spend \$2-3 million on the facility, but \$5 million would be hard to find.

City Priorities / Economic Issues

Public safety is a priority for South Portland, but the city also wants good quality of life at a reasonable cost. The City Council would rather deliver fewer services very well than to spend money on many 'passable' services. Public safety, health and welfare and infrastructure such as sewers and roads etc, are city budget priorities. The library is seen as recreation and, thus, a much lower priority than many other budget items.

When the budget gets tight, there have been past attempts to close perceived 'extra' services such as the municipal pool and the branch library. The branch library location was closed in 1992. Such actions – when taken – have been reversed in fairly short order. The branch library has strong constituency support and, even though the suggestion to close the branch is still raised annually at budget time, there is a reluctance to pursue that option due to the past outcry.

Currently, the library is not on the radar screen of the City Council. Library users do not speak at council meetings and the library keeps a low profile in the community. The library should treat all City Councilors consistently.

The economics of providing services is a concern of the City's. The state of Maine has faced – and continues to face – citizen driven tax-cap initiatives, though only a minority have supported these measures when they appear on the ballot. Should one pass, however, it would have devastating consequences for municipal budgets. There is much talk, statewide, about consolidation of services, both within and between communities.

The state of Maine currently has a law in effect, LD-1, which limits the growth of the tax rate, so the City must fund services with care not to exceed these limits. The City needs to prioritize its capital expenditures and to plan for them and not just be opportunistic when it comes to these expenditures. Currently, the City has several capital needs, including a new Public Works facility, City Hall and fire station. The needs of the

library have not been discussed.

In long range capital planning the City tries to set aside a revenue surplus but has been unable to do that recently. The City currently has an AA+ bond rating, but that may be changing.

As a portion of the total City budget, the school department receives 62% while library gets only .9%. The City encourages enterprise, self-supporting, services like the golf course. The library should explore private fundraising as a means of becoming less dependent on tax-based funding.

The library union is in the process of negotiating a contract and officials are unsure as to whether or not this process will lead to higher operating costs for the department.

Comparable Towns

Comparisons were drawn between South Portland and other Maine communities. Auburn, Brunswick and Scarborough, were mentioned as being similar in size, population-wise to South Portland – though Scarborough has a significantly larger area. Taxes in South Portland are lower than those in Portland.

Notes from Interviews with City Officials

Library Services

Citizens want library services.

People love their library, but some residents (a vocal minority) see the library as a want not a need.

There is some negativity on the part of residents who want to keep taxes low, but that negativity eats them up.

I do have family friends who use the library extensively. They use books, computers and all the other things at the library. The library is important for social and recreational purposes especially for retired users.

A quiet library is like going to a funeral home.

The branch library has different hours than the main library so they supplement main library services when the main library is not open. The branch should not duplicate main library services but supplement them.

The library should have consistent hours. The library is not open when people want to use it on weekends.

One library user was aggravated that the staff could not accommodate her when she did not have her card.

The library staff seems resistant to change. The staff is not paying attention to patrons.

The library staff should ask for what they need.

The library should be as user friendly as a retail establishment.

The library is out of date, we need more promotion of library services.

Libraries are less in the information business since the rise of the Internet, so the library must attract people to use their other services.

The key is enjoyment by kids.

Books cost too much so people should use the library more.

The Library Building

The library building is OK. It is a prominent location. The library used to seem bigger when there were less books.

Don't expand the library. Remodel the existing facility

It should be a central meeting place. We need a larger children's room and a new state of the art cultural center room for programs that can be easily subdivided.

The current library building is backwards. The entry is in the rear basement. It is unfriendly looking because you can't see the front door. We could spend \$2-3 million but \$5 million would be hard to find.

The Advisory Board does not run the library. I don't know their current role in the library. City Management, in the past, treated the advisory Board as having the power to run the library. This was not appropriate. The Advisory Committee should not set policy or interfere in operations. Their role is advocacy with the City Council but this should not be dull.

City Priorities

The city of South Portland wants good quality of life at a reasonable cost. The Council wants to deliver fewer services well, rather than spend on lots of poorer services. If the budget is cut they might try to close the pool and the branch library, but it was not closed for very long. The branch has strong constituency support. There is a movement for a Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR), but only a minority support this.

The town needs to prioritize its capital expenditures. We need to plan not just be opportunistic.

We encourage Enterprise self-supporting services like the golf course.

Public safety is a town priority.

In long range capital planning we try to set aside a revenue surplus but we have been unable to do that recently. We have an AA+ bond rating, but that may be changing.

We have many capital needs, Public works, town hall, fire station.

The State LD-1 law limits tax rises. The library union is in the process of negotiating a contract.

Cities want departments to consolidate to spend less on administration.

Public safety, health and welfare and infra structure such as sewers and roads etc, are town budget priorities. The library is for recreation.

The school budget is 62% while library gets only .9%

Libraries are not on the radar screen of the council. Library users do not speak at council meetings.

Department heads should take more risks and trust their own feelings.

The key is CARING when you come to work.

Try private fund raising.

Comparable Towns

Comparable towns are Auburn, Brunswick Scarborough, but we are small in area compared to Scarborough. We have lower taxes than Portland.

Public Focus Group of Library Users

August 29, 2007

25 Participants were asked to talk briefly about what they thought about the library.

The library is an integral part of raising my daughter we always have 25 or more books out. The staff is wonderful.

I telecommute to work in Berkeley, CA. I always have 15 books. The staff gets books for me by interlibrary loan. The library is a community center.

I have 3 kids. I come to the library 4 times a week. I use everything including genealogy and audio books. The staff is not always helpful. In the summer the library is not open on weekends. The facilities are poor, not renovated. The main library staff is not as friendly as the branch.

Home schooler. The library is poor. Not enough space for children. It has poor access and a poor environment for study.

Uses ILL and new books. There is a good selection. Weekend hours are needed.

This is a good location for a library. I find it very welcoming.

A school teacher feels that his grandchildren find the teen program "Awesome"

He reads 23 books a year. He likes the Socrates Café program. The library is a community gathering place.

MLS candidate found Marian, the former librarian very welcoming. Needs a book drop outside when the library is open so that she can return books quickly and easily without parking and entering to return.

I have been using the library for 18 years. It is a magnet for people.

The schedule of hours should be for the convenience of the community not the staff.

The library should change and be better. It is not good enough for the 4th largest city in Maine. The library is stagnant and the staff are affected by this.

It is dull physically. The library is not given the value it deserves by the Council or the City Manager.

The video and audio selection is not good.

Young man uses nonfiction, audio books and graphic novels. The staff is wonderful and the library has a great collection.

Likes the branch library better than the Main Library. It is more welcoming.

The noise level made by the staff is distracting.

Story Time is great. Lots of children's activities and a friendly staff.

The staff is welcoming but the building is too small. It is "blah!" You walk right into the stairs when you enter from the parking lot.

The library is an asset. It's a jewel of a library. I love the staff.

A weekly user says, "If you want to know about the community visit the public library"

There is room for improvement. At the branch the parking lot is often filled by the golfers so I can't park to use the library.

I like to be greeted by name. They are more welcoming at the branch. She dislikes staff commenting on the books she borrows.

Judy is a huge loss. She (patron) likes Borders.

What is the bureaucratic process for library advocacy? Friends organization raises money for the library but doesn't have the power to spend it.

In a recent survey about city services in South Portland the library was rated Number 1 about what people liked about their city.

The library report should be presented to the city council at a regular meeting NOT a workshop because citizens cannot speak at city council workshops.