

Speech given by Dr. Leroy Hommering at Ground Breaking Ceremony on April 5, 2011.

Good Day. What a day this is!

My name is Leroy Hommerding, Director of the Beach Library. It is my pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the Library Board, to this remarkable day. In 1955, residents asked all "To Imagine the Possibilities;" this was renewed in 1960, with the location to this site and in 1994, with the current facility constructed, and again in 2002, with the addition of land. This day truly belongs to all of us. Today marks both an end and a beginning to our renovation and expansion project. The design and development phase, which required the support of so many, will come to an end.

We have waited years for this day. With your collective generosity, we have raised over \$400,000 to help defray the cost of this project. I would thank all the individuals and families who have contributed financially to this project.

We stand in front of a library that celebrates its 56th birthday, but more important, we look forward to the next 56 years. And we do so with a goal and a focus, that this library will be home. This library addition is a very significant addition to this community, and a very important expansion for our library services.

The architect and town planner Daniel Burnham summed up the attitude at the turn of the last century: "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood." And indeed for the Beach in 1955, the women's club and dedicated residents made no small plan, for this library has served thousands of our area's sons and daughters. The areas inside this building have been dedicated to knowledge, the arts, history, science and literature and, more importantly, as a free public library for the people of the library district and its many visitors.

Your Board of Directors has been diligently working for more than 8 years on the current project. Through the support of the community, work began in earnest when we purchased these extra lots in 2002 and a master plan for construction was gradually compiled between 2005 and 2007.

Beatrix Potter was publishing her first animal stories, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, at the start of the 20th century (in 1901). Reading is as important now as it was then. As we fast forward to today, where a wizard boy named Harry has captivated millions of readers the world over, even in our digital age we find comfort in the turning of pages. We have replaced copies of the Beatrix Potter and Harry Potter stories because of their frequent usage, and during our planning stages, staff did hear me mention that we needed to remove some titles to keep Beatrix Potter and Harry Potter on the shelves. When this new library is completed, there will be a place for both Potters on our shelves, and more.

Today, at long last, the construction phase of this project begins. We ask you to join with us in celebration. This is our ceremonial groundbreaking to be shared with all.

It is now my pleasure to introduce the Library Board of Directors: Katie Corning-President, Karen Swanbeck-Vice-President, Sallie Seabury-Secretary, Judy FitzSimons-Treasurer, Debbie

Whitehead-Director, Mark Lafave-Director, and Lorrie Wolf-Director.

In the age of the Internet, the public library has never been more relevant. Access to technology and knowledge management is key to our new literacy in the information age. This new building will embrace information architecture in a significant way.

The library as a gathering place where citizens can come together and learn from each other is a precious and timely gift. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Be a little careful about your library. Do you foresee what you will do with it? Very little to be sure. But the real question is, what will it do with you? You will come here and get books that will open your eyes, and your ears, and your curiosity, and turn you inside out or outside in."

I am proud to be associated with this project. The product of vision and dedication, it will make our lives fuller, richer and more fulfilling. We are beginning today a new chapter in the history of the Beach Library District. As we break ground, we continue to fulfill our promise to each other, our children and the generations to come.

Groundbreaking ceremonies, like all social rituals, are meant to connect individuals to a community, and present communities to their past and future. This groundbreaking is special in that it is a groundbreaking for a public library, an institution that itself serves to build community, that through literature and cultural programs creates historical connections, and embodies our faith in a better future. This groundbreaking is more than special in that it is our **own** community Library, and we have in this, our time, connected our past and our future. I look forward to realizing the possibilities we have until now only imagined. Thank you for making it really happen.

Because no project of this magnitude is ever easy, Katie Corning, our Board President has brought to the task a sense of history, civic responsibility, and a passion for whatever she undertakes. Katie has helped make this entire process a satisfying pleasure. I invite her now to say a few words.