

The Multnomah County Library Board met on Tuesday, March 14, 2006 at Central Library in the U.S. Bank Meeting Room. Chair Dean Gisvold called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

Board members present were: Rob Brading, Gwen Farnham Hyland, Mark Garber, Molly Gloss, Jon Kruse, Marneet Lewis, Diane McKeel, Alice Meyer, Donna Oden-Orr and Marian Creamer, Stephen Feltz, and Rick Gustafson. Board members Joe Arellano, Diane Xiong, Virginia Koontz and Martha Gies were excused.

Staff members present were: Molly Raphael, Becky Cobb, Ellen Fader, Cindy Gibbon, Mike Harington, Penny Hummel, Lance Murty, Vailey Oehlke, Leila Wrathall, Steve Armitage, Virginia Tribe, Carol Rogers, Deanna Cecotti, Fun Martin, Ellen Ullrick and Yvonne Chambers. Also in attendance were: Merris Sumrall- Library Foundation.

The minutes of the February 14, 2006 meeting were approved.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Dean Gisvold reviewed the agenda. The following reports were filed:

For the Nominating Committee, the Chair Mark Garber said new member Virginia Koontz is excited about joining the Board, and informed the board that health related issues prevented her from attending today's meeting.

Merris Sumrall reported on behalf of the The Library Foundation that April 8th is the date for the Gala. Tickets are available on line and through the Library Foundation Office.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Molly Raphael asked the Board members to review the Director's Report. She also discussed the Strategic Plan. Completing the plan has been difficult because budget preparations for the County and the ILS migration have demanded the attention of library staff. The goal will be to draft a plan to address the six areas previously outlined and present it after the April meeting.

LEVY UPDATE

Jon Kruse reported that he continues to work on the library levy ballot referral. He and others on the levy committee continue to meet with the commissioners in order to move the referral process forward. Jon stressed that to pass the levy in November, referral is critical as it will increase the level of awareness and the committee's ability to fundraise. At this time, there is some ambiguity about which county elected official will sponsor the levy referral. The levy committee has completed its planning phase and is now moving into active campaign mode. Jon stressed the need for ongoing support of the whole process.

LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD AND THE BUDGET PROCESS

Alice Meyer reported on the LAB and its involvement in the budget process, which increased this year. The goal next year will be to continue to increase this involvement.

REVIEW RECOMMENDATION FOR NEW BRANCHES

Dean Gisvold opened the discussion of the CBAC report and the consideration for the two new branches. Dean cited the need to identify the first quarter of 2007 as the start date for the planning process for the two branches, and stated that at present, the levy takes priority over any other issues being discussed. The general fund contribution to the library's budget is a critical issue and he expressed concern that focusing on the two new branches could create challenges for the levy's passage.

Mark Garber shared the concern of the three East county LAB representatives that since the current levy passed there has not been much progress on the Troutdale and New Columbia branches and that without committing to opening them, the library levy will have a lack of credibility in East county.

Jon Kruse asked for clarification on the difference between the two paragraphs presented for consideration. It was explained that Dean's version focuses on the process and how the two branches will be implemented. Mark's version requires the new library branches be initiated even if it would require reallocating existing resources. Dean suggested changing the word "in" instead of "by" the first quarter of 2007 to allow more time for the planning process.

Molly Raphael cited different issues regarding the challenges the library faces in the development of the new branches. The general fund contribution has declined every year, and she stated that this is the primary reason why the two

new branches are problematic. In the last seven years, the library's staff has remained about the same size, but useage has doubled, so staff resources are already stretched to capacity. Within the last several years, the library has already implemented numerous efficiencies and at this point, she does not see how current staff could be reallocated to two new locations and still maintain services at the existing 17 locations. The same is true for the books and materials budget. Molly also pointed out that the general fund contribution that the library will receive in FY07 may be significantly less that what has been requested, causing even greater challenges in providing library services.

Donna Oden-Orr noted that since the last levy passed, the community's financial position has worsened, so that the possibility of opening the new branches now seems further and further away. Donna objected to language about the library "creating efficiencies" as it gives the impression that the library is not already efficient, and said that stable funding should be the focus. She described her experience as a library customer, seeing more and more people and longer lines at the library but still feeling that service is of high quality, and stated that maintaining the goodwill of the public is essential.

Alice Meyer presented clarification of the language in the last levy in that it did not promise new branches, but that the promise of the two branches was implied verbally. Alice also noted that the levy was not supported in East County even with the promise of a new branch. Dean Gisvold stated that the board was comfortable with the implied commitment and has always endorsed the idea of the two branches. Mark Garber expressed a need to address providing an equal level of services to the underserved areas in the county.

Stephen Feltz inquired as to whether we have looked at other models within library systems; for example, partnerships, non-full service branches, transitional branches. In response Molly Raphael explained that the current volume at MCL is extremely high and that many of the smaller branches are at capacity. Going into a neighborhood with a modified plan is undesirable because expectations will be the same as for a full service library.

Diane McKeel reiterated that expectations in East county for a new branch are high and that the perception is that one was promised in the last levy campaign. Diane pointed out that if the Board does not show progress towards the new branches, it could become an issue in the County chair's race. Robert Brading recognized that everyone involved in the levy process is facing a challenge with the new branches. There are equal or greater problems without the new branches. His belief is that without the language committing to the new branches, the levy will fail. He also noted that people in East county are actively watching this issue.

Rick Gustafson expressed a concern with the term "find efficiencies" as not being appropriate. There is a need for all parties to work together to find funding and

explore additional resources. Discussion ensued regarding taking a stronger stand on the general fund and finding funding once the new branches are in place. Finding the money for operating costs once the library is established is a greater issue than one-time opening costs. It was also noted that more funds from the levy will be needed to compensate for the loss of the general fund.

Dean Gisvold reiterated the desire to turn the two branches into a reality, completing the process started four years ago. Minor changes to the language in the paragraph introduced by Dean include changing "not later than" to "in". Dean expressed the need to have a statement of intent, that "the intent of this resolution and the process described is to make these two branches a reality, completing the process that was begun four years ago."

Jon Kruse restated the position that those working on levy planning have been very diligent regarding consideration of the issue of the two branches. He feels there is a need to put forth a recommendation that makes sense. Jon stated again that the majority of East County voters did not approve the last library levy. Recent polling shows that voters from all areas lean strongly towards maintaining, not expanding, library services.

Molly Gloss made a motion to adopt the Review of Two Branch Recommendation with the three changes outlined by Dean Gisvold. Alice Meyer seconded the motion.

For some time and, as the minutes will show, as recently as June 14, 2005, the Multnomah County Library Advisory Board (LAB) has been on record as advocating for two new library branches, one in Troutdale and one in New Columbia. At this time, on March 14, 2006, at its regular meeting the LAB strongly recommends that the Library Director and the Board of County Commissioners initiate a process for Troutdale, and a separate process for New Columbia, to identify sites; to identify new and/or existing funding resources for the start-up/one time capital costs for build out and all that involves, including computers and books; to identify new and/or existing funding resources for the operating costs; and to identify a workable timetable. The process should include the BCC, the Director, the LAB, the Foundation, the Friends, the Library staff, and the communities involved. Since this process depends on the successful passage of the November 2006 Library Levy, the LAB recommends that the process be initiated in the first quarter, 2007. The intent of this resolution is to make the two new branches a reality, completing a process that was begun four years ago.

All in attendance voted in favor except Jon Kruse.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 a.m. These minutes are subject to approval at the next scheduled board meeting.