

MINUTES  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
BUFFALO AND ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
August 18, 2010

A Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library was held on Wednesday, August 18, 2010, in the Central Library pursuant to due notice to trustees. The following members were present:

Sharon A. Thomas, Chair  
Jack Connors, Vice Chair  
Frank Gist, Secretary  
Sheldon M. Berlow, Treasurer  
Phyllis A. Horton  
Anne M. Leary  
Rick Lewis  
Hormoz Mansouri  
Albert L. Michaels  
Elaine M. Panty  
Wayne D. Wisbaum

W. Lawrence Buck, Trustee Emeritus

Absent:

Richard L. Berger  
John G. Schmidt, Jr.  
Judith K. Summer

Chair Sharon A. Thomas called the Special Meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. in the Joseph B. Rounds Conference Room.

Agenda Item B - Approval / Changes to the Agenda. The agenda was approved as presented.

Agenda Item C - Report of the Chair. Ms. Thomas thanked trustees and members of the audience for their attendance and conveyed this meeting was to explore strategies to help the Library deal with the recent 20% proposed cut by the County. The Board is looking for everyone's input.

Agenda Item D - Report of the Director. Ms. Quinn-Carey thanked everyone for their attendance and explained this meeting is to engage in conversation about what the Library's challenges are for 2011 in light of the budget targets the County Executive has

presented and what some general options and scenarios are that can be considered. Her hope for the meeting is to come out with thoughts on direction and guidance as far as avenues to explore, what information needs to be brought back to the Board to engage in further conversation and to stimulate discussion and thinking. She shared feedback from a similar presentation she gave to contracting member library (CML) directors and managers that morning and noted it is an ongoing discussion we need to have with contract member libraries, the rest of the staff, stakeholders and representatives from the Association of Contracting Library Trustees (ACT.) She asked contract member library directors/managers at that meeting to think about: how do we address this challenge; how can we think different about staffing structures; what could be alternatives to layoffs; and what other creative ideas are there to discuss with staff, boards, and our collective bargaining units to address such a dire picture.

She acknowledged Suzanne Jacobs and Dr. Paul Wietig who were in attendance as representatives of ACT.

Ms. Quinn-Carey provided a power point presentation to illustrate what the bigger picture challenge is stating our target is a 21% reduction in our County allocation. She went over revenue and expenditure pictures. She informed trustees this year the Board approved using 1.2 million dollars from fund balance to cover an existing gap in the budget from the fallout of not receiving an interfund transfer back in 2008 explaining for 2011 the Library is facing not just the 21% reduction, but closer to just over 25% of our overall budget. To paint a picture, she explained if this were applied over the base of just labor, it is 33% of our labor which equals about 145 FTE employees. She reviewed the budget timeline explaining the County Executive will present his budget to the legislature on or about October 1<sup>st</sup>; it then goes to the legislature for review; the Library gets to make a presentation; they do public hearings; then wraps up in November or December when we receive the Library's final budget.

Trustees Wisbaum and Leary arrived at 3:09 p.m. and 3:11 p.m. respectively.

As was discussed at the last Budget and Finance Committee meeting and what Ms. Quinn-Carey has heard subsequently regarding advocacy and public education, is that the System Board, ACT group, CML boards, and Foundation need to work and come together with a message that reflects a System value and a System approach – speaking with one voice.

She asked trustees for guidance in what the Library's goals will be for making these very difficult decisions, both short-term and long-term. Ms. Quinn-Carey commented we have received a lot of staff feedback with ideas on Ning; unfortunately, if you put these all together it will not come up to \$7 million dollars.

Trustee Mansouri arrived at approximately 3:20 p.m.

Ms. Quinn-Carey shared ideas and potential options to explore dealing with staffing, utilities, collection development, floating collections, serial collection reductions, vending units for materials, and mobile units. In addition, criteria needs to be established if it becomes necessary to close locations; staff feedback requested new criteria from that used for the 2005 library closings.

She pointed out the importance of long-term strategies so the Library does not have to deal with cuts every year adding this is a horrible position to be in and does not enable the Library to plan effectively with unknown funding fluctuations. It is impossible to be strategic and good stewards of an investment. She announced a long-term goal being discussed is changing the structure of the System. The Planning Committee is looking into several options and the plan is to have someone come in October to discuss these options in more detail. Ms. Quinn-Carey voiced she was in favor of fully consolidating the Library System.

Discussion ensued on how the Library can sustain itself over time if it is tied to a process where it is at the mercy for funding by public service municipalities that handle it. Special Library districts were discussed. Ms. Quinn-Carey feels we need to begin exploring these options and see if they are viable for this community. Options for more stable funding from the County can be considered.

To summarize, Ms. Quinn-Carey noted the education campaign is in the planning stages; reduction scenarios that deal with all these things need to be worked on; what is our philosophical approach; how do we address staff and other reduction challenges; and we need to establish criteria for facility reviews.

Before we can proceed any further she asked for thoughts and guidance from the Board on how to pull this together and what alternatives should be explored. She inquired what information the Board needs from staff to make more informed decisions on where the Library is going.

In response to questions by Trustee Wisbaum, Ms. Quinn-Carey stated other cultural deals dealing with cuts have not been approached at this time as the staff needs direction from the Board on what the Library's message will be; currently there is no consensus on what that message will be. Ms. Thomas reiterated the importance of speaking with one voice before anyone is approached. This meeting is an opportunity to do the brainstorming. Committees have been meeting, however, now we must push these issues forward faster than planned looking at short-term goals and making sure these fit into the Library's long-term plan. Ms. Leary, Advocacy and Development Committee Chair, added we need to do research to back up and show that what we are protecting is the right size/right services for this population. This crisis has brought something we were planning on doing to the forefront. Deputy Director Stanton

Hudson noted he and Ms. Quinn-Carey are meeting with Kate Foster, Director of UB's Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth, next week. Ms. Leary shared the Planning Committee has already begun looking at three different restructuring scenarios and must now speed this up. Discussion regarding partnering with other entities facing cuts was discussed as was the Library's uniqueness to other entities.

Chair Thomas opened the floor for discussion and encouraged anyone from the audience to speak.

In response to a question by Trustee Mansouri, there was brief discussion regarding the Library's fund balance.

Ms. Leary voiced before the Library can go out and do advocacy there needs to be concise plans and feels we need to change the archaic system with all the CML libraries and need to be one system with one voice. Trustee Panty expressed everyone involved needs to work together; the System Board, CML boards, staff and unions. Ms. Quinn-Carey updated trustees that a meeting has been set up with the heads of the units that represent library workers and has received communication that they are very open to talk.

Mr. Lewis expressed the Library needs to keep a firm grasp that the circumstances causing this situation are the circumstances the area as a whole are in, have been for many years and likely will be in for many years to come. We need to recognize the area is getting smaller and poorer and we should focus efforts on things that will enable the Library to survive and thrive in that environment. We should not be focusing on advocacy but consolidation; the whole process of finding the right size, the right governance and source of future funding so we are not necessarily tied to circumstances that the larger entity falls under. This will bring true stability and deliver quality library service for years to come. He pointed out in spite of outstanding management and heroic effort, the current Library structure does not maximize efficiency. He expressed that if we can deliver better or equivalent services and spend less, this should be the goal as it will sustain the Library in the future.

Ms. Quinn-Carey noted there is no model nor measure that exists to say how many libraries there should be/how far apart they should be/etc. based on such things as population. In having the regional institute in on this, perhaps they can create a national model as so many library systems are going through this same conundrum. She pointed out there are a lot of different matrixes that can be looked at and there are many models throughout the country which may have some helpful guidelines.

Mr. Berlow agreed we need to do our homework before we change the whole structure/the whole funding system so we have better control. Ms. Quinn-Carey noted

our library staff has been compiling information about what other library systems are going through.

Ms. Thomas asked Suzanne Jacobs, ACT President, if she heard of any concerns. She said she knows of conversation from an individual library regarding restructuring, governance and inquiring about becoming a district library. Ms. Jacobs agreed with the need to speak with one voice and do what is best for the whole System.

Mr. Gist initiated discussion about the possibility of having an outside consultant come in to get a better picture of the whole situation. Ms. Quinn-Carey noted we have some people coming in as part of the Central Library Use Analysis for re-envisioning what the Central Library is and thinks we can draw upon their skills to help create a model for what the Library System needs to be and what we envision it to be in the future.

Ms. Leary recommended a meeting be planned soon with ACT to discuss what they envision for one system to have one voice and have leverage in the community.

Ms. Jacobs inquired how far the Planning Committee had advanced towards consolidation. Ms. Leary noted they have begun exploring this but now must accomplish in a very short time what they had planned to do over two years. Ms. Quinn-Carey remarked the Library has engaged Attorney Ellen Bach from Albany who is an expert in library legislation and NYS law for libraries regarding special library districts, school library districts and other options as well as civil service and collective bargaining. Copies of charters, CML contracts, and other files related to how the Library is structured and operates have been sent to her for review in light of what the guidelines need to be for either consolidating or adjusting our contractual relationships, becoming independent, what are our options are for funding, how this affects our relationships with our collective bargaining units and civil service. It is a very complex set of issues in moving forward with this. Ms. Bach is taking time to carefully review these and is planning on coming in early October; originally the thought was for her to meet with the Planning Committee, however, we will want to expand that.

Mr. Michaels agreed with Mr. Lewis' view and reiterated on the poor economic conditions communicating advocacy won't do anything but hold off the inevitable and feels staff should come up with a plan to address these budget cuts, reorganize the system so it works efficiently within the WNY reality and go forward although it may be painful. He expressed the Library is not the only one dealing with this; it is a statewide/national problem.

Ms. Thomas summarized the comments of the meeting, noting a meeting needs to be set up with ACT to talk with heads of all CML libraries to see what their thinking is, expand the October meeting with Attorney Ellen Bach so everyone can hear an expert

talk about possibilities, and have the Committees continue to meet and work on things they are presently working on. Ms. Quinn-Carey will meet with union representatives, meet with staff internally, will work with library staff on potential scenarios with detailed cost saving estimates to bring for discussion at the next September Board meeting as well as come up with a sample list of new criteria for facility reviews based on feedback from colleagues.

Mr. Buck exited the meeting at approximately 4:32 p.m.

Ms. Leary, Chair of the Development Committee, expressed when the Library begins to draw up long-term plans, we need to think about more development staff as more private funds will need to be raised.

Dr. Paul Wietig, ACT Vice President, commended Ms. Quinn-Carey and Mr. Hudson for meeting with Kate Foster as he believes she will bring the research piece that allows us to be different and move forward. He believes the Board of Regents should be included in this process. Ms. Leary commended Dr. Wietig as he was the one who gave them the idea.

It was decided the Board would meet next at its regularly scheduled Board meeting September 16<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m. This meeting was scheduled to be at the Aurora Town Public Library but it was decided to bring the meeting back to the Central Library in the Central Meeting Room as a large audience is anticipated. Scenarios of looking at cutting FTE's, libraries and certain services/programming would be looked into and reported on at that meeting. Dr. Wietig requested we keep in mind any accreditations as a library system that would be jeopardized as they come up with these scenarios.

It was decided a joint meeting of ACT and the B&ECPL Board of Trustees would take place at 5 p.m., September 16<sup>th</sup>, in the Central Library - Central Meeting Room following the regularly scheduled 4 p.m. B&ECPL Board of Trustees meeting.

There being no further business, on motion by Ms. Panty and a second by Ms. Horton, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Gist  
Secretary