



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UPDATE:

BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

"We are committed to serving the residents of Erie County with the resources and services they expect from this Library System," stated Sharon Thomas, board chair of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library System during the Executive Committee meeting held late yesterday afternoon.

During the meeting, which was open to the public, Trustees reviewed the steps taken in recent months to prepare the 37-member libraries for a sustainable future in the wake of projected budget cuts and increased costs. The Library's Executive Committee was updated on several behind-the-scenes budget meetings that have taken place between trustees, administration and elected officials from both parties.

Since November, the Library System has prepared scenarios for reduced spending which include reduction in library hours, reduction in programming and services and a reduction in staffing.

While it was noted that the System has taken a "fact-based educational" approach to the budget situation, Library Director Bridget Quinn-Carey and Board Chair Thomas have provided more than a dozen ongoing updates to the media, employees and member libraries and their boards with the hopes of speaking with one voice while working together to defend the Library System and secure a financially stable Library System.

Long-range actions taken include:

- Contracting with UB's Regional Institute to conduct an analysis of creating a special library district in which libraries would be funded by voters rather than the current system of annual budget allocations determined by elected officials. The Library is also working with legal counsel experienced in library district law.
- Kicking off the Re-Imagine Campaign in November with three public meetings, three focus groups and a series of one-on-one meetings. An online survey provided an additional outlet for the community to provide opinions about the library of the future that will not only accommodate the types of library services that are so heavily used currently but one that will satisfy the needs of our users for innovative services in the years ahead.
- Increasing fundraising. The Development Committee of the board is moving forward with plans for the 175th Anniversary of the Library System. A major, volunteer driven, fundraising event is planned for 2011 along with an online book auction. Additionally, a 100,000 piece yearend appeal letter has been sent requesting donations.

Comparing the type of public advocacy that took place in 2005 during the red-green budget crisis which resulted in the permanent closing of 15 libraries to the current educational approach that was used this year, trustees agreed that the community has again shown an overwhelming outpouring of support for the library's cause.

The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System serves more than 4 million users annually. In 2009, more than 8 million items were borrowed by library patrons. The Board of Trustees are unpaid, political appointees as dictated by New York State law.

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