

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
PIERCE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
MEETING MINUTES – OCTOBER 21, 2019**



CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rob Allen called to order the special meeting of the Pierce County Rural Library District Board of Trustees at 3:02 pm. Board members present were Daren Jones, Monica Butler, Pat Jenkins and Jamilyn Penn.

FUTURE LIBRARIES ENGAGEMENT REPORT AND DISCUSSION

Brian Murphy and Julia Tesch from BERK Consulting, Inc. presented a report and recommendation on the findings from the public engagement activities that began in March 2019. Engagement methods included surveys, open houses, interactive boards, engagement intercepts and participation at community events outside of libraries. Promotion of these activities took place through social media, direct mail and email marketing, news media and community partners.

Summary of Survey Findings:

Participants self-selected and tended to be library users

Lakewood/Tillicum

943 people responded via online and print surveys

79% of those were Lakewood residents

66% of Lakewood residents responding value libraries for the help they provide in the community

84% of Lakewood residents responding expressed interest in potential new libraries

73% of Lakewood residents responding ranked libraries within the top 4 priorities for investing in the community

Respondents indicated the most important qualities of a library in Lakewood were to be community-focused and convenient, and in Tillicum to be community-focused and welcoming.

Main concerns pertained to cost, accessibility of a new location, and perceived safety due to use of the Library by people experiencing homelessness. Ms. Tesch noted that while persons experiencing homelessness make some respondents feel unsafe, others commented on their appreciation that the Library serves them.

Some respondents expressed interest in the preservation of the Lakewood Library. Others shared concerns about empty buildings in the downtown core and suggested repurposing an existing building. This indicates that more discussion is needed to better understand interest in, and options for, relocating the Library.

Overall, residents responding feel welcome (92%) and safe (82%) at Lakewood. In Tillicum, residents have more concerns but the majority still feel welcome (88%) and safe (76%).

Sumner

882 people responded via online and print surveys

52% of those were Sumner residents

88% of Sumner residents responding expressed interest in a potential new library

92% of Sumner residents responding said they would use the Library the same or more if it was on Main Street by Fred Meyer.

76% of Sumner residents responding ranked libraries within the top 4 priorities for investing in the community

Sumner respondents expressed substantial interest in a new library in both survey and in-person engagements.

Respondents indicated the most important qualities of a library were to be comfortable and welcoming. There was a greater interest by younger adults in the location on Main Street.

Main concerns pertained to site access, parking and potential traffic congestion, and costs. They also mentioned concerns about loitering and the presence of people experiencing homelessness.

Mr. Murphy recommended the Library pay particular attention to parking considerations and access to the new site during a design phase of a building project.

Recommended Next Steps:

As a result of this public engagement, Mr. Murphy recommended the Library continue conversations in both communities with a focus on further understanding their thoughts or questions related to the community priorities and concerns identified. While a majority of residents who participated support new libraries in concept, further discussion with the communities will be needed through a planning phase to further evaluate whether community members as a whole may be willing to support the investment needed to construct new buildings.

The Lakewood conversation will take some time and additional conversation is warranted to further understand resident's interest and readiness. The outcome is perhaps uncertain though there is recognition of the need for further investment in the Tillicum community.

General support seems strong in Sumner, especially with knowledge that the City has purchased property for a new library. Additional conversation should explore interest in a new building and how to mitigate traffic and access concerns.

Additional recommendations for the Lakewood community include:

- Thoughtful consideration to the community concern over cost
- Identify potential new locations and explore options related to the current building vs. repurposing an existing building vs. building a new facility
- Ensure the investment in the Tillicum community is proportionate

Additional recommendations for the Sumner community include:

- Identify ways to ensure older customers maintain access in the new location
- Prioritize ease of access and traffic concerns
- Develop relationships with the business community

Ms. Lomax and the Board thanked BERK for their work on this process.

FUNDING REVIEW

Ms. Lomax reviewed funding methods that may be available for potential capital building projects, including a comparison of district-wide bonds and Library Capital Facility Area (LCFA) bonds. Both are voter approved, requiring 60% approval +1 and 40% validation of voters who voted in the most recent general election.

The Board discussed the difficulty of passing bonds and considered the issue and impacts of a future LCFA bond vs. district-wide. Ms. Lomax said should they decide to move any of the projects to a planning phase, she will need to know which bond option would be used in the future. She reminded the Board that in November they are not deciding whether the Library will seek funding, including a possible bond election, but whether to undertake a planning phase that would inform a future decision on whether and how to fund a new building.

CONSIDERATIONS

Deputy Director Melinda Chesbro presented information on timelines, planning phase cost estimates and next steps of the process. She emphasized the Board is not making a decision in November to go for a bond but authorizing the Library to continue with work to inform its next steps.

The next phase – planning – would include creating a building program, preliminary design work and cost estimates, plus two rounds of community engagement. It would include development of a funding plan and conclude with a decision by the Board on whether to place a funding measure before the voters.

She reviewed the ideal 16-20 month timeline of planning activities and provided a compressed scenario with a decision that would allow for a bond measure in August 2020, and an expanded scenario for a bond in February 2022. The Board discussed ensuring a realistic timeline and project sequence based on the amount of work needed and adequate time for public engagement. The planning phase would further explore questions and concerns identified in the public engagement report and recommendation.

DISCUSSION

The Board discussed their key takeaways, questions raised in the Public Engagement report, and considered the pros and cons of the two bonding approaches and the various timelines and areas where a planning phase would provide more information.

At the November Board meeting, The Barsness Group will share the results of the capital campaign feasibility study to help the Library understand the fundraising potential for potential new libraries in Lakewood, Tillicum and Sumner.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:52 pm on motion by Mr. Jenkins, seconded by Ms. Penn.

Georgia Lomax, Secretary

Rob Allen, Chair