

**FORT VANCOUVER REGIONAL LIBRARY DISTRICT
Board of Trustees Public Meeting**

February 10, 2010 Special meeting

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bill Yee called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. at the Cascade Park Community Library.

2. PRESENT

Chair Bill Yee presiding. Other Board members: Jane Higgins, Merle Koplan (participating via conference phone), Karen Peterson, Bonnie Reynolds and Rose Smith. Brian Carrico attended via conference phone during the vote. Administrative Team members attending included: Bruce Ziegman, Executive Director; Patty Duitman, Operations Director; Mary Devlin, Community Libraries Director; Melinda Chesbro, Content Management Director; Sue Vanlaanen, Communications Director; Kwang Kye, Technology Director; Karin Ford, Vancouver Community Librarian; and Doreen Turpen, Special Projects Director. Becky Pettigrew, recording.

Other staff and citizens attending: Anna Cross, Megan Dugan, Debbie Hose, Rita Levesque, Rick Smithrud, Dennis Sword, Linda Thomas and Howard Buck.

3. AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

4. LEVY LID LIFT

Background summary and latest local area election results

Ziegman shared the election results for local school levies, all of which were passing:

- Vancouver School District, 68% yes
- Evergreen School District 62% yes
- Washougal School District, 58% yes
- Camas School District, 59% yes (Ziegman noted that this is important to us because the school district includes the unincorporated area around the City of Camas that resides in FVRL's service area)
- Battle Ground Schools, 52% yes
- Ridgefield School District, 68% yes
- La Center School District, 53% yes
- Woodland School District, 59% yes
- White Salmon School District, 52% yes
- Schools in other areas of Klickitat Counties – the results ranged from 64-75% yes

Ziegman then compared these percentages to a professional survey conducted by Conkling Fiskum & McCormick for Citizens for Better Libraries. Participants in the survey were asked whether or not they would support an operating levy measure on the August 2010 ballot to keep libraries open longer and to buy more books. Participants were then given more information about the library and asked the question again. Ziegman explained the

survey responses to both questions, comparing them by geographic area to the preliminary results of the school levies:

- In Vancouver and Hazel Dell, 70% said yes to the first question and 74% to the second
- In the Evergreen School District area, 59% said yes to the first question and 67% to the second
- In Battle Ground, 54% said yes to the first question and 61% to the second
- Upriver, 48% said yes to the first question and 58% to the second

Overall, Ziegman said it seemed there was a correlation in the level of support for school levies and the library as seen in the Citizens for Better Libraries survey. Ziegman said the Board has reviewed survey data and had a discussion about it at the regular meeting on Feb. 8. He said the Board also received a special presentation from Bart Phillips, President of Columbia River Economic Development Council, who gave an economic forecast.

Duitman said she has looked at the 2009 approximate year end fund balance. Staff has been scrimping and being very careful of spending as we looked at what we could afford. If we don't go out for a levy lid lift or if we do and lose in August, she said we could still open the new Vancouver library for the same amount of hours it's currently open. There would be no funds for an increase in the materials budget. We would be able to add some staffing to Battle Ground and Cascade Park this year.

Citizen comments

Yee asked if there were any comments from citizens attending and there were none.

Board discussion and decision

Higgins asked when union negotiations would be opened. Duitman said they will open this summer and noted that any compensation adjustments would not come out of the levy lid lift. Higgins asked if that could be part of our message and Duitman said it could. Reynolds asked Duitman how she could assure the Board of that and Duitman said in looking at the budget going forward, an annual increase of 1% in revenue as provided by Initiative 747 should allow room to consider a wage increase. Duitman said we have made significant budget cuts and are able to live within those cuts, saving enough to safely say we wouldn't need to use lid lift money for compensation increases.

Yee asked if the lid lift funds are restricted in any way and Duitman said they are not. Duitman stressed that pay increases for union staff are subject to union negotiations and a decision by the Board. Higgins asked if Duitman anticipated the union would wait until after the lid lift to finalize anything and Duitman said we typically do not enter compensation discussions until August or September; prior to then, discussions focus on contract language. Yee asked when the first funding from a successful August 2010 lid lift would be seen and Duitman said it would not be until April 2011. Yee asked when the Union contract expires and Duitman responded that it would expire on August 31, 2010. Changes to compensation resulting from Union negotiations generally go into effect the following January 1. Duitman said she did not see this as a factor to consider, since compensation would not be included in these discussions in the lid lift.

Higgins noted that the technology levy in La Center was failing. Yee said the King County Library System levy is very close and asked if there was an update on the preliminary

results. Duitman said that as of 10 p.m. yesterday, only 28% of the votes were counted and it was 50.1% yes. Ziegman said it was a surprise to see that all the school levies passed in a time when these things are not wholly predictable.

Smith asked the FVRL Foundation to share its view. Foundation Board Chair Linda Thomas said they have some decisions to make. Their concern is with their donor dollars. If they approve money for the election campaign, what's the chance the levy will succeed? She said they don't want to put \$100,000 or some other amount toward it without some assurance it will pass. She said they are concerned with the state of the economy. Are people going to say we just approved schools, now libraries are asking money again when we approved 43 million in 2006? She was not sure what the Foundation decision would be. She added that she wants to make sure if we move forward that the Library Board is in agreement.

Yee and Smith thanked Thomas for sharing these comments. Peterson said there's a difference between the bonds that were approved and the levy lid lift, which would be district-wide. The bonds were a Library Capital Facility Area sub-district and were done for specific projects. When we go for a lid lift, it funds district-wide services and includes a much wider voter pool. The services covered in the lid lift would enhance services across the district. She stressed that there is a significant difference between those decisions voted on a couple years ago to what's ahead of us now. Peterson said this is a decision to be made by the people impacted in this: by the voters across the district. Smith agreed and said she took a mini-poll of her clients, who all said they deserve the right to vote. Smith said if we don't let people vote we're taking away free speech. With the economy where it is, people are using libraries more. Smith said some people resent that we did the bonds and buildings are going up but there are not enough books; they want us to be able to complete it by adding those books. She said people can register to vote and they can say what they want to do with their tax dollars. We shouldn't say what is best for these families; they need the right to vote.

Koplan said she was more negative last night before seeing the preliminary results of the school levies. She said it is important to have the right campaign. If it is going to be a grassroots campaign where the Friends of the Library groups know the details and are campaigning and telling their neighbors and friends about it and explaining the needs, then she thinks she could vote in favor of placing a measure on the ballot. Smith said library usage is going up tremendously. People are using libraries more. For some people, the library is their entertainment. The amount we'd ask for in the lid lift for one year would be about what it would cost most people to go out to the movies one time.

Koplan said it's important to have the input from the trustees and the FVRL Foundation Board who are in touch with the community to help with the strategy or message we're going to send and how we're going to conduct it. She said many library users in Cascade Park were not registered to vote when the last bond measure was done. Koplan said there are things we can do to help the campaign be successful. Smith agreed and said it's a wonderful idea to encourage library users to register to vote. Koplan said the message that the schools focused on was, "restore." She said we want to restore our funding to the 50 cents per thousand that the law allows.

Yee said that Board member Brian Carrico was unable to attend the meeting in person, but emailed a statement on this issue. Yee read Carrico's statement aloud for the record:

Based on the newspaper this morning it appears that all of the local school levies are passing. Although funding for schools and libraries are within different categories it does give us an indication that the citizens are willing to approve taxes where they perceive a benefit.

Clearly the district has seen reduced revenues and has had to make tough choices to reduce staffing levels, service hours and book purchases. At the same time we have seen an increase in the use of our services. This paints a compelling picture for the need for additional revenue and a clear path for how the revenue would be spent. Based on this I am in support of presenting a request for a levy lid lift.

I do have two concerns that would affect my decision. The levy lid lift needs to stand alone and not be connected to capital improvement, be it the new libraries or the demand for improvements to our administrative facilities. There also needs to be support from advocacy groups and individuals outside the library. Without this support the chances for success are significantly less.

Yee said Carrico would be called when it was time to vote, so he could participate.

Reynolds said that in talking with people in White Salmon, they haven't felt the impact of FVRL's cutbacks so much, as the White Salmon library only lost one person and there was no reduction in hours. However, they've never had open hours on Mondays and they'd certainly love to have it. Reynolds said they wouldn't want to see us engaging in anything new, just going back to previous levels of service and at some time they'd like us to consider offering Monday hours, too.

Higgins said she has struggled with this. If the election were imminent, we wouldn't have a problem. She expressed concern about where the voters will be in August. By the time we get to August, there may be others asking for money and saying it's only a few cents more. She said the Columbian has editorials on it chiding legislature for talking about taxes. She was concerned about spending this much money on a chance, but knows if we don't try we won't have a chance at all. Using the money to increase the book budget has to be a must if we do this; Higgins said it can't be something that gets deferred since we've reduced the collection and it's very noticeable. Higgins also said we have to restore hours. She said these can't be campaign promises that do not happen or only happen partially. Higgins said she is not sure how to assure herself of that.

Yee said he was encouraged by preliminary results for the school levies in Clark County, although he was worried about the results in Battle Ground. He didn't expect the library would get the same kind of response as the schools. Yee said if the levies were all passing at about 50 %, he would be worried. He anticipates the Washington legislature will vote 960 out and that will cause Tim Eyman and others to become more active. But right now, Yee said he is encouraged and feels this is something we have to do.

Peterson referred to Higgins' comments and said she does not understand the concern about the use of the money. She said it is the Board's promise and responsibility to see that the money is used to fulfill the promises, as the Board oversees it and it is a commitment entrusted to us. If we're going to ask for it, we're responsible for seeing it gets done. Also, Peterson said we cannot know what will happen in August. Campaigns

are short term and can be adjusted and adapted. If a campaign needs to be modified to give clarifying information, a good campaign will be able to adjust and work with that. She said there's a smart enough group of people here that can launch something that will, as best as possible, account for some of those changes that will happen.

Yee said it sounded like everyone had shared their thoughts and the time had come for a vote. Carrico joined the meeting via conference phone.

MOTION: Karen Peterson moved that the Board declare its intent to place a levy lid lift on the August 2010 ballot to increase its operational revenue, primarily to restore library hours and purchase additional books and other library materials. Bonnie Reynolds seconded the motion.

Yee noted that he had read Carrico's written statement earlier. He then asked for a roll-call vote and said Board members could also make a comment with their vote.

VOTE:

- Jane Higgins – Yes. She said she votes yes reservedly, as she has doubts.
- Bonnie Reynolds – Yes.
- Rose Smith – Yes. She said she's ready to get started on it.
- Karen Peterson – Yes.
- Brian Carrico – Yes.
- Merle Koplan – Yes. She said her vote comes with the caveat that we all work very hard to make this happen; we cannot rest on any laurels of the past or what the schools just did. She said we have to work hard to convince the voters.
- Bill Yee - Yes.

The motion carried unanimously.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

These minutes were approved at the March 8, 2010 meeting