

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

**October 28, 2008
Special meeting – Board workshop**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Karen Peterson called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m. at Vancouver Community Library in Library Hall.

2. PRESENT

Chair Karen Peterson presiding. Other Board members: Jack Burkman, Jerry King, Merle Koplan, Rose Smith and Bill Yee. Administrative Team members attending included: Bruce Ziegman, Executive Director; Patty Duitman, Operations Director; Mary Devlin, Community Libraries Director; Melinda Chesbro, Content Management Director; Kwang Kye, Technology Director; Doreen Turpen, Special Projects Director; Sue Vanlaanen, Communications Director; and Karin Ford, Vancouver Community Librarian. Becky Pettigrew, recording.

Other staff and citizens attending: Alan Dickerson, Ann O'Reilly, Anna Cross, Ashlee Stewart, Bonnie L'Amoreaux, Brent Campbell, Connie Behe, Cynthia Ernst, Donna Jones, Donna McGrew, Ed Rosen, Erica Rhodes, Gail Durance, Howard Buck, Jacquelyn Keith, Jan Johnston, Jeanne Heikkinen, Jennifer Studebaker, Jessica Widmer, Joe Bond, Joseph Esch, Judy Fick, June McKellar, Justin Keeler, Lance Thompson, Lee-Anne Flandreau, Paul Clare, Rachel Ernst, Renny Troupe, Robin Karionen, Sarah Nelsen, Sheri Feinstein, Sherry Braga, Tiffany Amend, Tina Smith, Valentina Landolfi, Wayne L'Amoreaux and Zea Ewart-Bean.

3. AGENDA

Peterson recommended including a citizen comment period in the agenda.

MOTION: Jack Burkman moved and Rose Smith seconded approving the agenda as presented, with one change: including a citizen comment period in the 2009 budget discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. 2009 BUDGET DISCUSSION

Peterson noted that this is a workshop for the board to discuss and look over 2009 budget information. She said it is the first time most of the board has seen some of this material.

Ziegman provided an overview of the budget situation. He said this is not the best of times for any of us; everyone has been reading headlines in the papers and virtually every day there is news about one place or another having difficulties. This includes businesses, organizations like Clark College and WSU Vancouver, local government such as Clark County, and many others. Since the government agencies get funding from the same sources, it's no surprise FVRL is having difficulties too. Regardless of the cuts we have to make, Ziegman said he wants everyone to know our primary responsibility is to provide excellent library service. He said he couldn't be more proud of our staff as he's sent

information to them. He's proud of their reaction to what they've heard and their continued professional attitude to provide excellent service. The purpose of the meeting today is not to take action, but to discuss the options and consider what we need to do to balance the budget in 2009. Action will wait until the Nov. 10 regular meeting.

Two reports were provided, including:

- Library visitors by branch by day of the week
- Circulation (checkouts) by branch by hour

These reports were provided because options that are being considered include closing a branch or cutting a day's worth of hours at most libraries, or other similar scenarios. Ziegman said the reports were just finished today and staff has not had a lot of time to review or analyze them yet.

Three maps were also displayed in the meeting room depicting service area populations and a radius around each existing library. One map depicted the effective service area of the new Main library. National data and trends indicate that a main library has a service area of approximately a 10 miles radius. Two others showed a four mile radius around each library branch. One of the two did not include the Mall library's radius, so that the geographic coverage could be seen more clearly if the Mall library were to close. Ziegman again emphasized that no decision on these issues would be made this afternoon; this is instead an opportunity to discuss the options.

Ziegman summarized the details from his written report, which is attached. He said we have had some good years: 2004-2007 were excellent, for us and most businesses and other entities. We had some budget surpluses that enabled us to do some interesting things. It came to a halt just within the last couple months. He described what caused this:

- We knew our new construction revenue (which allows us to give raises and keep up with inflation) was going to be cut from \$700,000 to about \$300,000. If that was the only thing, we might have been okay.
- In 2006, we received \$389,000 in timber harvest revenue. That's been consistent for several years. Instead of \$350,000 budgeted for 2008, it came in at \$52,000 this year; we found this out two weeks ago.
- We had budgeted a 95% fill rate on personnel, expecting the usual attrition rate. We're currently at 98% and don't expect it go down. Every 1% increase in personnel amounts to approximately \$130,000. We were watching it and expected it to follow its normal trend and it hasn't.

We realized we had an immediate problem in 2008 and took action. We froze six positions that were vacant and put into place a hiring slowdown (lengthening the gap between when positions are vacated and when they are posted for hiring). We froze training and most travel. The revenue decline means we're about \$435,000 in arrears, so our fund balance carried into 2009 is that much lower: \$4.8 million at the end of this year instead of the expected \$5.2 million. This funding has to last us until we collect taxes again in April. We spend about \$1.5 million a month, so by the end of March we'll be down to a few hundred thousand dollars, which Ziegman said is marginal.

Ziegman said he and other staff have been working on the 2009 budget as usual beginning this past summer. Cuts have been made in it along the way. The substitute budget has been reduced by \$150,000, travel and training was reduced by nearly \$100,000, we eliminated capital expenses and will continue with frozen positions from 2008. In addition, Duitman came up with \$53,000 in miscellaneous cuts that are a variety of things we can get by without for 2009. This came to \$558,000 in cuts already instituted. It leaves an estimated gap of \$850,000. We can consider a number of options, but any cuts not made by January 1 won't see a full year's worth of savings, which we would need to factor in. We want to make sure we think our cuts through carefully.

Ziegman drew attention to the choices listed on the second page of his staff report. He said these are all very hard choices. One is to close the Mall library. There are reasons this is on the table. The mall management has extensive plans to remodel. Within those plans is the mandate that the library must remodel its space, which would cost us about \$500,000. Six months ago we had it figured out; we had enough for the Battle Ground project and the Vancouver Mall remodel and a decent fund balance. The economic situation has changed this for us and we can't afford it now; we will continue to negotiate with the mall to get that changed. It costs \$750,000 to run the Mall library and our lease is up in January 2010. A 50% increase in rent was negotiated. It's not a huge sum and we'd negotiated it down, but it's still part of the overall cost. The other reason is what the maps show – the overlap of our service areas from among the branches and the fact that we are building three larger new libraries surrounding the mall. That makes this discussable. If we were to close the Mall library, he suggested moving 3.6 positions to the new Cascade Park library, as they will soon go from a library size of 2,400 square feet to 24,000 square feet. Moving that many staff to Cascade Park would place it's staffing at levels similar to the Three Creeks and Battle Ground libraries, both of which have smaller buildings.

Alternatively, we could close a number of branches for at least a day each. The mall management may not allow us to have reduced hours. Branches that are open seven days a week would go to six; those with six days would go to five. We would try not to cut hours for any libraries currently at or below 5 days. This is why data on circulation by location, day and hour was provided. Again, Ziegman recommended using some of the savings to fund a few positions for the new Cascade Park library.

Ziegman said he has identified some additional cuts in support positions and would not want to report which those are since it has not been discussed with incumbents. These are non-public service positions.

Bookmobiles were included on the list; this is another service dear to the hearts of many who work here and use the services. The Clark County bookmobile dollar amount includes other outreach services by vans to nursing homes.

A consultant is working on two studies: one on books-by-mail and another on overdue fines. FVRL has offered free books-by-mail to anyone who wants it for a long time; Ziegman said we are speculating that those days might be over. We are waiting to get the results of the study to determine savings. For books-by-mail, it contemplates eliminating the service with exceptions for homebound or those living far from libraries. We would charge for or eliminate the service for anyone else. The issue of overdue fines is more

difficult, Ziegman said; he is reluctant to institute fines and the study will show whether or not it should be considered more seriously.

Ziegman said he is also reluctant to have cuts in the materials and information technology equipment budgets. Our materials budget is about \$2 million, which is about 10% of our entire budget. He said this is very low for a public library of our size. Part of the reason it is so low is due to our physical locations being far smaller than the state average, which will change. We currently have no place to put a lot more books, so we weed more heavily than those with bigger buildings. We could go from a four year replacement cycle on computers to five years; this could provide some savings for one year, but it has its risks.

Board discussion and questions

Peterson asked the board if they had questions for Ziegman. Koplan said she's concerned about eliminating capital expenditures. What if we have a serious issue such as the heating going out in one of our buildings? Do we have an emergency fund for facilities maintenance? Duitman said we have retained \$100,000 for facilities emergencies.

Burkman asked what is retained in the 2009 budget for training and Ziegman replied that its \$79,000, of which \$36,000 is mileage reimbursement for employee in-district travel. We are cancelling most conference attendance. That leaves \$32,000 for training. Ziegman said this budget had reached about \$200,000 one year and for 2009 is down to \$79,000. We may still look at that as a further place to cut. Peterson asked about the mileage reimbursement rate. Duitman said we are now providing 29 cents per mile instead of the IRS rate of 58.5 cents. Ziegman said as fuel prices have gone up the mileage rate has gone way up; it includes depreciation on a vehicle. We assessed the cost to run library-owned vehicles not including depreciation – so the 29 cents per mile includes gas and maintenance. We encourage staff to use library vehicle.

Smith asked about the bookmobiles. Are we suggesting cutting all or some? Ziegman said his report shows the amounts for the full service, which includes three bookmobiles plus outreach vans from Clark County. There is one item we can't delete: the Yale Valley Library District won its election several years ago and they contract with us for services. They pay their fair share and essentially get bookmobile service. Unless we suggest they get services from somewhere else, we'd have to provide that at a minimum.

Burkman asked if we are likely to have any more shortfalls in revenue between now and the end of the year, and Ziegman said property tax is locked in and certified. Timber tax is already really small. Uncollected taxes are something he said he'd not yet mentioned. Those tend to come in during the subsequent year. This year we were several percent lower on tax receipts based on uncollected taxes. It is possible we could go a bit lower than anticipated this year. Duitman said looking at where we are today with revenue collected through October 16, we will be close to the \$4.8 million fund balance that was mentioned for the end of the year. Burkman clarified what was meant by uncollected taxes: this means if someone's house is in foreclosure, they didn't pay taxes. Ziegman agreed that is the main reason for it. Peterson asked if there are other cuts to consider for the 2009 budget. Duitman said there could be some adjustments, but at this point after having gone through the non-personnel budget for 2009, she cannot see any further non-personnel cuts. She said we have taken out all building improvements and cut supply budgets. We might be able to reduce program costs some, but that would not create much

savings – only a few thousand dollars. Burkman said he's hearing we need to plan for \$1,050,000 in cuts, but that's still optimistic. He questioned whether there is an even greater shortfall that we should plan for and Ziegman said there is potential for that. We revised our 2009 timber tax estimate based on this year's news. An unknown shortfall could occur in uncollected taxes. Duitman said we're running about ½ to 1% under certified and we're certified at \$13 million for our property tax collection in 2008. She projects we will be about the same in 2009. Burkman said if we get another 1% in uncollected taxes we could see another \$130,000 in shortfall. Duitman agreed. Burkman said he believes the economy won't turn around quickly. He asked what the new construction estimate is for 2009 and Ziegman said it's \$333,000; it was \$370,000 this year. Burkman said there's another \$130,000-260,000 in potential shortfall. Duitman said for new construction, we've already considered more reductions; we have not done so for uncollected taxes.

Burkman said our only option is to draw out of reserve when there's a shortfall; when we do that it means we risk running out of money and having to borrow. Borrowing is a terrible way for a public agency to do business and is something we want to avoid. He asked Duitman if there is another alternative and Duitman said not at this point. She said she is hoping on Nov. 10 to give better projection. Koplan said it would be unrealistic of the board to think it will be any better, and we should factor in another \$400,000 decrease in revenue for new construction and uncollected taxes. King agreed it seems reasonable to do this. He said he thinks the report from staff is realistic, and appreciates that the staff have taken some steps already to cut in 2008. King said training and travel are the lifeblood of the library, but he understands that we have to reduce it. We've reduced until the capital expenses are a trivial amount now and you've indicated that there are frozen positions and other cuts. The choices on the second page of Ziegman's report are tough ones to make, King said, and everyone here needs to understand that this is something everyone in the nation is seeing as well. King said it's hard because real people will be affected by the board's decisions.

Burkman said if we assume we will have 1% in uncollected taxes and new construction is off by 2%, then next year will be closer to what we saw in our last quarter. He estimated our shortfall to be \$1.4 million for 2009. Duitman clarified that our new construction revenue is based on construction that occurred August 1, 2007 – July 31, 2008; it is new construction that is already completed. Burkman said it sounds like we'll have this shortfall and more in 2010 relative to 2008-2009 new construction. He said we should then plan for a \$1.2 million shortfall for 2009 and will know that we'll need to maintain the new level of reduction in 2010. There was agreement to set the estimated shortfall at this level.

Koplan said we're suffering from running a lean organization. Since our last shortfall in 2003, we have been making cuts and trimming our budget. That's why we have no easy places to make these cuts. Yee said from this discussion, it sounds to him like the choices are not really choices; what option do we have but to take the whole thing? He said let's start with closing the Mall library. When you close it, you close it forever. Does that mean that on January 1 there would be no service from that location? Ziegman said we have to give four months notice according to our contract. If there's a drop in our tax revenue then we have the right to give four months notice. We would be obligated through February if we gave notice November 1. Ziegman agreed that the likelihood of putting

another branch into the mall in the future would be small; however, he said we could institute a new branch in a strategic location where there's growth in Vancouver at some point in the future.

Burkman expressed his thoughts about the options. He said books-by-mail changes are a given. He was skeptical about charging overdue fines as a way to get enough funding. He didn't feel we should touch the bookmobile services as it would leave a huge hole for people we're serving. The other items on the list we could do, but we still won't reach a \$1.2 million reduction. Ziegman said we'd tried to visualize the hours reduction and Mall library closure as two different choices. If we are aiming for a \$1.2 million reduction, then we could close the Mall library, do the other staffing reductions and make changes to the books-by-mail service; this would put us at a \$1.1 million reduction, which is close. Alternatively, if we don't close the Mall and instead reduce hours at most libraries, plus the other reductions already mentioned, this would get us to a \$653,000 reduction. Burkman asked if the second scenario means we would need to double the closures everywhere and Ziegman said it could. Ziegman said we could look at other places to cut staffing. Burkman said the act of cutting staff is the act of cutting hours; he said he couldn't support putting this on the back of staff by reducing the number of employees but not reducing hours. Peterson said we need to consider cuts that we can maintain in future years as the economic situation will continue for a while. If we don't cut enough, then we'll be back here again making more cuts later on. Yee questioned whether support staff cuts affect hours at the branches. Ziegman said that while directly it does not, at some point it hurts what can be accomplished in the branches. Everything we do ultimately affects public services. Cutting staff means making the workload greater for those who remain.

Koplan mentioned what she observed in California in the early 1980s, when they had to reduce hours of libraries due to budget problems. They had a lot of libraries open half days. It was confusing to the public; it made planning visits difficult. Koplan said half days just don't cut it. She said she looked at the options and doesn't see we have a choice other than to make a major cut somewhere. As she looks at the concentric circles, the mall neighborhood area is covered by all the other libraries. In looking at it the only other library to question cutting would be Ridgefield, because it has some overlap in service area to La Center and Woodland and is also near Three Creeks. However, closing the Ridgefield library would not bring about the kind of savings needed. But she said it could be considered in the future if we continue to have these kinds of budget cuts and if we can't come up with other income for the library beyond tax revenue. She said we have to start looking to our Friends of the Library groups and other sources for income beyond our tax revenue.

Yee said if we try to save the Mall library, we'll put off an expense that's big. We will still have to negotiate a contract for 2010, and we would not be negotiating from the best position if you've set on saving it. Renovating the front of the Mall library is a half million dollar capital expense we can't afford. Yee said he didn't see how we could get out of closing the Mall library. Peterson said we would be using tax money to do the remodel and if we do have to close it, there's no way to recoup that expense since we don't own the space. Ziegman said we had hoped to hear, before now, from the mall leasing agent as to whether they would waive the remodeling fee. If we don't hear soon, that will make the choice for us; we don't have the money to remodel it. He thinks there is a good likelihood that they will continue to require the remodel. If there is a chance they will waive it, then

you're still facing these numbers. Yee assumed other tenants will push to delay remodeling for several years since they are likely in the same position as us. Smith noted that there is a lot of empty space in the mall.

Burkman said it's required of this body to make the tough choices. He doesn't want to shut any branch; however, at same time we're required to give great service that's viable over a period of time. Cutting the service throughout the whole area is teaching the public that we're only open only some of time; this is too impactful. Burkman said it's a tough choice and when considering closing the Mall branch it seems manageable and more preferable when looking at the service area maps. Yee said the Mall branch is one of our busiest libraries; where will those people go? Or will their use just disappear?

King said we have to make these decisions carefully. He asked if there was any way we could push harder to find out from mall management whether the hours could be maintained at a different level. Are there other things we could do that would allow us to keep it open for a year or two? The whole future of the library district is so important. If we let the Mall library close it's going to change the whole demographics of that area; it makes the mall that much less a part of the city. King said the mall was the main reason the city annexed that area. King strongly urged Ziegman to see if we can save the Mall library and develop it as the best we can. He said he understands if we have to make a compromise.

Peterson said she doesn't that know the packaging of the options has to stay the same way. We could look at a piece of the hours reductions instead of the whole thing, or some but not all changes to books-by-mail. There may be more details beneath these options and we could consider pieces of them. Smith agreed and said she'd like to see the breakdown. For example, the Clark County Bookmobile visits the Fruit Valley School, which is pretty near a library. Smith asked to see a list of locations that the bookmobiles visit. Koplán asked Turpen about the demographics of the people that use the Mall library. Turpen said we have a lot of data. One of the things we look at is where people check out by service area populations. A lot of people who live in close proximity to the mall make extensive use of the Main library. Those percentages are in areas like along the Mill Plain corridor through Interstate 205; over 60% of their checkout occurs at the Main library, not the mall. Other areas close to the mall still check out 40-50% of their materials at the Main library. Turpen said the Mall library is like a "mini-main library" as it's not necessarily targeting its own neighborhood but is used by people all across the district. The mall is another place people can get to even if they don't live nearby, thanks to the traffic patterns and convenience. Peterson said if a decision is made to close Mall library, then the type of use there could help inform us about what we might put back into that area and what its service model might look like.

Burkman speculated about where people would go if the Mall library closed. Libraries they might use would be the Main library, Cascade Park and Battle Ground. Anecdotally he knows people use the Mall library for convenience – they are going to the mall and use the library while they're there. For their holds they might use something more local. Are people going to the Mall library to use its onsite resources, or are its highest uses in checkouts or check-in rates? Smith said mothers use the library a lot as a place to go and meet and then have lunch afterward. Ziegman said the Mall library ties for third (along with Battle Ground and Cascade Park) in its number of checkouts, following Vancouver

and Three Creeks. Yee asked if we closed the mall and then in several years our budget situation improved, could we renegotiate some space there. Burkman said when you look at the service radius, it's more compelling to put a branch in where there is growth a little further out. Yee said if we were a business, the goodwill of doing business at the mall will have been lost; blue sky is worth something.

Ziegman spoke to King's remarks about delaying a Mall library closure and reducing hours to save money. In other instances Ziegman said it would be a logical way to proceed. However, we've had difficult negotiations with mall management who appear to be not fully decided on where they are going with the mall. So we'd have to get permission from them to waive the remodel and be open significantly less hours than the other tenants, which they've been very reluctant to allow in the past. We've already had a long and difficult negotiation; if we try further and don't succeed we will have lost several months of potential savings. Yee said he is surprised they treat us like a business and make us be open the same hours. He has seen license renewal locations inside malls that were open fewer hours. He said if we do negotiate further with them we really should push for fewer hours. Burkman remarked on the length of time we had been in negotiations; it's been more than a year. King agreed they appear to be on their own time and don't appear worried if it's inconvenient to us. We could let them know that there is a timeline here and it's put pressure on taxpayers and those who need decisions right away. We may eventually have to propose that we make a decision right away and if they don't like it then we can tell public we did everything we could to make a compromise. King said if they looked at it, they should be able to see that the library is a good draw to the mall. He's visited there Saturday mornings and there are always a lot of people with kids using the library. King said we shouldn't be apologetic about it; we're not the same as businesses and we bring them things no one else does.

Burkman reminded everyone that a decision needs to be made at the November board meeting. He said the board could adopt in theory a budget but not know how we'd manage expenses -- but he didn't think that was the responsible way.

Koplan and Smith said they were ready to hear from the public. Those in the audience included both staff and citizens. Ziegman noted that the staff members that were attending in the audience were there on their own time. Burkman thanked everyone who was here for coming.

Citizen comments

Donna McGrew said a whole demographic that uses the Mall library has not been considered. She lives near the mall and goes there all the time. The Mall library is full of seniors using it whenever she's there. There are school age children using it too. The demographic of that area includes a lot of single family dwellings; these are families with young children. There are schools nearby and busses that stop there. Retirement centers are nearby. Many of these people cannot afford to go to bookstores. It's not just moms with babies using it. Many of these people wait a long time to get books on hold. They're at the library all the time for magazines and books. She urged the board to consider the demographics of that neighborhood again.

June McKellar said she is President of the Friends of Vancouver Mall Library, and she thanked Ziegman for calling her the previous night to inform her about today's meeting.

She said the Vancouver Mall library is popular and people are usually waiting outside the library for it to open in the morning. It serves as an entrance to the library system. Many seniors use it. It's on a bus connection, which is important because many seniors are not able to drive. She said she didn't think the new Main library was on a bus line, and so there would be a big decrease in accessibility for those not able to drive. McKellar said it provides a valuable service for mothers with young children; there are always lots of strollers in the library. She said the Cascade Park library is hard to get to as traffic on Mill Plain is horrendous going that direction. McKellar said she understands the budget situation and the mall management's demand puts us in a difficult decision. Ziegman corrected her statement about the bus stop at the new Main library; he said there is one right across from where the new library will be. McKellar said there is a good connection at the mall. She said the Fred Meyer store moved to Grand Central Station and thought their customers would follow, but they haven't due to its accessibility not being as good.

Ed Rosen said he's with Washington Public Employees Association and is there to express the concerns of union staff members who might potentially lose their jobs. He said he appreciates the dire situation. One attraction of closing the Mall library is that it's a quick fix; you get a lot of money one shot. He said that would be foolish not to consider. People he represents note the growth and support structure for the new library projects. They see that an Annex was added and there are more people in the office. Staff he represents appreciates what these employees do, but at the same time feel that their own jobs involve public service while these project jobs do not. He encouraged the board to consider this, and again said he knows this is a very difficult decision. Rosen said he also appreciates that the board is speaking with the public.

Erica Rhodes said she's a full time Library Assistant IV at the Mall library. She drew attention to the map with the four mile radius circles around the libraries. She said the maps do not take into account how many rural patrons this branch serves from outlying areas. She said she would like to get those percentages. She also said that when you compare the Mall library's circulation to its hours open, they have a higher circulation than Three Creek and Battle Ground in conjunction with their hours open.

Rachel Ernst said she works at the Cascade Park library. She explained some of the other uses of the Mall library not yet mentioned. This included that it's a convenient place to stop in and hang out; many teens use it; it's a popular location for internet usage; their high number of reference questions at the desk mean their desk is always staffed. She said there will be a great impact on the rest of the libraries if the Mall library closes. It will take time to complete the new Cascade Park library, and right now she said she just didn't see how the current one has the space or manpower to take on all the people who will come their way. She said she doesn't think it would be shameful to go out to the community and say, "Help! We're here for you and now you can be here for us." She said there must be some kind of fundraising that could be done. She appreciates the taxes we receive for library services, but we need help.

Bonnie L'Amoreaux said she's a member of the Friends of Vancouver Mall library and a retired teacher from California; she moved here in 2002. L'Amoreaux said she was amazed when she came here to find a library in a mall. It provides fantastic services. She said reading is most important thing and children are important too. Closing means taking a resource away from the future. She's a senior and she said seniors are important too, but

she encouraged the board to think of our children. The Friends group has provided thousands of dollars to the library through book sales. Their funding goes right into the library. She said she has a problem with closing a library; she thinks it's wrong. She helped to pass the bond measure. Only a certain amount of people are being taxed for that bond. She said it bothers some people tremendously that only a few are paying for new libraries, when the main library could have stayed at its current location. She said she knows you couldn't stay at the current Cascade Park site – it's too tiny. She's also astounded you're mailing books out for free. She picks up hers at the Cascade Park branch. L'Amoreaux said we could have people delivering books to seniors who are homebound. She personally knows some young people that brag about getting their books mailed for free. L'Amoreaux also stated that she didn't think you'd ever be able to reopen a library if you close it.

Judy Fick said she is part of book club that the Mall library provides. Her group considers that branch very important. She noted that there were four members of the book group here for this meeting.

Gail Durance said she has worked at the Mall library since 1999. The mall has changed a lot over the years; it's not as fancy and emptier of retail outlets. However, the people that come to the mall changed as well. There are much more diverse ethnic groupings of people than she sees anywhere else in the city and certainly in any of the other branches. They come to mall because that's what you do – you go to the mall. Then they find the library. Some are familiar with libraries and some know very little about them; some are hesitant or apologetic about their ability to even write their names. These are very different groupings of people. She said she feels sad that people finding their way in our community and being able to feel comfortable to use library may not get that opportunity. While she is sensitive to the decisions the board has to make, she feels it's important to see the variety of Mall library users. They get a lot of people new to town too. People want help getting a library card, they want community information and they want to find out about other libraries in the area. Durance said there's something strategic they provide that other branches don't necessarily provide. She suggested looking at statistics on their library card applications compared to other libraries.

Renny Troupe asked if the district plans to continue forward with opening a new Battle Ground library. Peterson said yes. Troupe said she finds it difficult to open a new library in Battle Ground; at the last board meeting we transferred a lot of money to help Battle Ground. She feels bad that we did that for one branch in taking money from the district and now we're discussing closing another. Ziegman said once you make a commitment, you're hard-pressed to take that commitment back and not finish a project. People in Battle Ground have been working on that library for over twenty years including two attempts to pass a bond measure. The board and library district made a commitment to them to get the project finished. If we held back that money, we'd end up with an empty building that the city and the citizens had been working on so hard. We made a decision to support it and the board took action. At the time we had the money for both Battle Ground and the Mall and felt comfortable doing it. Now we don't. You can always look back and second-guess. But to stop the Battle Ground project in order to stay open somewhere else is a decision the board would be hard-pressed to take. Koplan said if you look at the area where the new Battle Ground library is going to be, there is nothing around that area that people would be able to go to. It's a long drive even from Battle Ground to Vancouver

Mall. King said he's had a lot of questions about the whole endeavor. Knowing where we are today and the future of Battle Ground and that whole area, and all the hard work done by people out there, there's no way to further second-guess the situation. We should be proud these folks in Battle Ground will have a new library. No one ever told them it would be easy and they'd get it at no cost. We've got a responsibility now to do this in the most equitable and strategic way and continue to make use of contributions.

Burkman said the hardest job as a board is to cut services and lay off people. We'd been through it before. It's what we have to do. He said he appreciates the comments about Battle Ground. What we don't know right now is what the mall management is willing to do. Burkman agreed with Ziegman's statement that we could not stop the opening of the new Battle Ground library. Burkman said he wants to know by November 10 whether the mall management will allow us to reduce hours, before we take action. He thinks it's a straightforward answer. Then it's all or nothing.

Smith mentioned an article that appeared in *The Columbian* that morning. She received many calls from people she knows when they read it. They asked her if the library employees would take a cut in their pay to keep the Mall library open, or reduce hours so it could stay open. At her daughters' work they reduced hours one day a way and took away the 5% increase they were planning to give in wages.

Peterson said the board oversees the library district. Each of our libraries was funded (built) in different ways – some are leased, some funded by fundraising, some by bond money. In Battle Ground it was partly through fundraising.

Anna Cross said she is from Battle Ground, and their community raised a significant amount for the new building. The library will be paid for when it's open. They had an agreement with the board that the Friends would meet their obligation. If there was a delay or changes were made, the obligation would still be met. Cross said not to open the Battle Ground library would be a terrible thing as so many people have worked too long and hard. She also said the branch serves all of north Clark County. They send a lot of people to the Mall library because they don't have enough room to shoe horn them into the branch. When new library opens there will be space. Troupe thanked Cross for addressing this and said that for someone not knowing the details, it looked odd.

Board discussion

Burkman commented on the impact of Initiative 747 with its 1% cap on annual tax revenue increases, plus new construction. This causes our annual levy to decline. The maximum we are allowed by state law is 50 cents per thousand of assessed valuation and our current rate is 32 cents. We need to go back to the public for a levy lid lift. The problem is that it takes a while to get it together for the ballot, but this is something to consider for our future.

Ziegman asked the board for direction. He said he heard you want to know by Nov. 10 whether mall management is willing to waive the remodel and allow us to reduce hours. If we can get those agreements, then we could look at more reductions in other areas. There was agreement with this direction. Yee said as long as you're asking questions, to ask mall management about further negotiations on the lease in future years. We only have 1 year

left; what will future years cost us? Smith asked if we could find out what the foot traffic is for the whole mall.

Other direction Peterson made clear was that staff should provide a budget breakdown on the bookmobiles, especially in Clark County. She said to split apart the savings with books-by-mail and overdue fines (Duitman said she didn't know that this would be available from the consultant by Nov. 10). Koplman suggested getting creative with library hours by having those close together open for half days; staff could work a half day at one and then go to the other.

It was also clarified that the goal is to reach a reduction of \$1.2 million.

Peterson asked whether it was possible to do a 3% cut in non-personnel expenses in all departments. Ziegman said the budget has already been trimmed pretty far. An additional cut would be taking training to zero, not maintaining the vehicles and so forth. King said he thought we should leave those expenses as they are for now.

Smith said she'd be interested in seeing if the union would be willing to do something instead of laying off people. Rosen said they are looking at ways to save jobs and set priorities for the union. Those hired in the last six months would most likely be the first to go. He knows staff won't get an across-the-board increase and is hard-pressed to agree to a reduction as the cost of living is going up. Burkman said he thinks we should add it to the list as an option of something we've looked at. Smith agreed and said we have people asking us about it. Rosen said to keep it in mind as an item that would go into negotiation. Rosen said he talked to Duitman earlier about what would be saved if the union gave up the step increases, and Rosen said it was a small percent of what is needed.

Peterson thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She said you can continue to provide suggestions to the Executive Director or his assistant. McKellar asked Ziegman to let the Friends of Vancouver Mall Library know if there's anything they can do, as they will all be concerned.

It was noted that the next meeting is Nov. 10, 2:00 p.m. at Ridgefield Community Center.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:31 p.m.

These minutes were approved at the Nov. 10, 2008 meeting