

Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

TO: Chair Deborah Kafoury and County Board of Commissioners (3) pages
FROM: Multnomah County Library Advisory Board
DATE: March 8, 2016
SUBJECT: Library Advisory Board Budget Report & Recommendations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Library Advisory Board feels that Multnomah County Library District's proposed budget will serve the library well. With the library district funding now in its third year, the library continues to make important improvements to better serve the ever-changing needs of our community. The Library Advisory Board is proud to support the library in its efforts to increase security; to plan for the future capital needs of the system; and to expand its staff in a manner that will provide improved patron service throughout the library system. A number of changes recommended by the Library Advisory Board that were included in the Fiscal Year 2016 budget have been well implemented over the past year.

The proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2017 includes a modest increase, which is relatively small compared to significant expansion in Fiscal Year 2016. The additions to the budget proposal have been well thought out and will improve current services, advance equity, and allow the library to plan for the future. There are also a number of changes in the proposed budget which are revenue neutral, but will advance the library's efforts to maintain safe and welcoming public spaces. While we make some recommendations below, we strongly support the proposed budget and the thorough work of the library staff.

PROCESS

In accordance with chapter 19 of the county code, the Library Advisory Board continued to serve as the Citizen Budget Advisory Committee for the library. Your 17-member Library Advisory Board held monthly meetings throughout the year and remained well-educated on library operations, programs, policies, priorities, and the library's budget, as well as issues facing public libraries in general.

The Library Advisory Board's Finance Committee conducted a review of the library's proposed Fiscal Year 2017 budget. The Finance Committee met five times over the winter and has reported to the full Library Advisory Board on its findings. Library Director Vailey Oehlke and Deputy Director Becky Cobb attended these meetings and provided information, reports, and budget briefings for the committee's review.

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In addition, the Finance Committee met with Economist and Interim Budget Director Mike Jaspin to better understand the forecast revenues for the library district. The full Library Advisory Board also met with Library Safety & Security Manager Chris Linn to discuss the library's ongoing work to ensure we provide safe and welcoming facilities. The committee reviewed the Director's priorities, program offers, performance measures, internal service rates, cost center analyses, past budget-to-actual figures by program offer, and information provided by the Central Citizen Budget Advisory Committee. This work has resulted in the Finance Committee's assessment of the proposed library budget.

We have reviewed, approved, and accepted the Finance Committee's recommendations which serve as the basis of this report.

EMERGING ISSUES

As our library system continues to meet the needs of the growing population across Multnomah County, the Library Advisory Board has identified the following emerging issues.

As library services evolve, the need for flexible spaces will be increasingly critical to the library's future. Strategic investment in existing facilities will ensure the long-term relevance of the library's services and the district's fiscal health. A key recommendation in last year's report was to begin a capital planning process for the library district. As a result the Library Advisory Board has created a capital planning committee, and in collaboration with this committee library staff has issued an RFP for capital planning services in the year ahead. The proposed budget includes funds for a project manager to coordinate this process internally. We are pleased to see this effort progressing and look forward to the process and outcome.

Technology and access also continue to be key issues for the library. As the largest provider of free Internet access and media literacy services in the county, the library is uniquely positioned to be a leader in efforts to ensure digital inclusion throughout the region. This year's budget proposal includes an investment in expediting IT contracting and we believe this will continue to be an important issue in future budgets.

Finally, security continues to be a key focus for the library. The Library Board and Staff agree that providing safe and welcoming public spaces is a fundamental responsibility for a library. We are glad to see staff taking steps to improve the security of the library's patrons, staff, collection, and facilities. In this year's budget, the library is creating a new program offer - Safety & Security (80020), which will centralize all current and future security efforts. In addition to existing security work, this program offer contains funding for 4.0 FTE new Library

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Safety Officer positions, which will replace the current contract security officers from DePaul at four neighborhood libraries. The board believes this new classification will serve the library well by allowing staff to focus on the specific and sometimes unique security issues faced by libraries. The library should continue to evaluate and respond to changing security needs in years to come.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that you accept and adopt the proposed budget of \$75.6 million and 532.00 FTE. This modest budget expansion is well within the growth projected at the formation of the library district. We feel the budget allocations to fund the capital planning process, invest in equity and inclusion, and create a system-wide contact center will improve service for library patrons in both the near and long term. These additions have been carefully considered by the library leadership to serve as strategic investments that support the library's mission. We strongly support all of these efforts.

The smaller budget expansion in FY 2017 was expected, and we anticipate that the budget will continue to expand at a similar modest rate in future years unless that district rate is increased. We recommend the district rate is held at \$1.18 for as long as possible, but believe based on the district's long-term forecast that increases will be needed in the future.

The LAB also recommends that the following be considered and reflected in future library budgets:

- Retaining a district rate of \$1.18 for as long as feasible;
- Maintenance of a 10% reserve fund for long-term district stability and sound fiscal policy while protecting core services;
- Continued work on the development and implementation of a long-term capital plan;
- Complementing traditional holdings with innovative materials, programs, and spaces.
- Work with communities to identify needs and help to close opportunity and service gaps.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Library Advisory Board wishes to thank the members of its Finance Committee who led the creation of this report. We also wish to acknowledge the hard work and support of Library Director Vailey Oehlke and Deputy Director Becky Cobb, as well as their staff, who continue to lead a thorough and strategic budgeting process.

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