

Library Advisory Board

Office of Citizen Involvement

To: Chair Deborah Kafoury and County Board of Commissioners 4 pages
FROM: Library Advisory Board
DATE: April 27, 2015
SUBJECT: Library Advisory Board Report & Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

The Multnomah County Library District's proposed budget includes steps that the Library Advisory Board feels will serve the library well in terms of fulfilling the diverse needs of the community. With the library district funding in place, the library is better able to evaluate the needs of its users and go beyond replacing services that were cut in past years. The Library Advisory Board is proud to support the library in its effort to expand its staff in a manner that will provide improved services throughout the library system, increase security, and support library staff to provide information services in this time of rapid technological advances.

A number of changes included in the Fiscal Year 2015 budget were well implemented over the past year. The thorough investigation of IT costs and services has led to the fine-tuning of library costs and needs in that department. The hiring of a security expert has led to the current development of a comprehensive library district security plan, discussed below. As always, we believe the training for library staff and increase in the book budget have greatly benefited library patrons.

The proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2016 includes an expansion of services beyond what has been provided in previous years. These additions have been well thought out and assist in the fulfillment of the library mission statement and director's goals. While we make some recommendations below, please know of our strong support for the budget and the 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.

A subcommittee of the Library Advisory Board, the Finance Committee, conducted an in-depth review of the library's proposed Fiscal Year 2016 budget. The Finance Committee met six times over the winter and has reported to the full Library Advisory Board on a monthly basis. Library Director Vailey Oehlke and Deputy Director Becky Cobb attended these meetings and provided information, reports, and budget briefings for the committee's review.

In addition, the Finance Committee met with Economist and Deputy Budget Director Mike Jaspin to better understand the forecast revenues for the library district. It also met with the Manager of Strategic Planning and Projects Peggidy Yates to learn more about Fiscal Year 2016 facilities rates and to review

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the strategic plans for county facilities. This presentation was particularly relevant in terms of understanding the future capital planning needs for library buildings.

The Finance Committee also attended a presentation by Bob Leek, Multnomah County Deputy CIO to better understand the information technology challenges and support provided to the library. Finally, 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.

MAJOR CHANGES

The library continues current service levels with an eye towards sustained relevance in the proposed Fiscal Year 2016 budget. Major strategic budget moves that the Finance Committee was pleased to see include:

- ✚ Implementation of IS21 (Information Services 21st Century)
- ✚ Continued focus on staff training
- ✚ Security assessment and increase in security capacity
- ✚ Enhanced services to patrons

These initiatives will support continued excellence in patron services and community outreach while positioning the library well for future challenges.

There are approximately \$73.1 million proposed in program offers for Fiscal Year 2016. It is noted that the PERS changes approved by the state legislature two years ago, and the flat health insurance rates were a significant contributor to keeping the current service level budget growth down this year. The LAB notes, however, that the PERS changes may not be final, and that future evaluation of the budget with regard to PERS may be needed.

We find the proposed \$4.1 million in budget additions to be strategic and to meet our goal of keeping the library well positioned for the future. We are glad to see the addition of two dedicated web developers and an internal library IT director. These additions will provide greater responsiveness to meet patron demands for online services.

We are also pleased to see the budget continue to support a new approach for information services - reference delivery to patrons. This includes staff training, a coordinator position, and communications support. As the requirements for providing information to the public continue to evolve along with changes in digital availability, the library needs to be effectively deploying staff and resources. Along with providing good and improving reference services, the budget continues to emphasize shifting relevance of the collection by investing in areas where demand has been increasing.

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We fully support the training programs to ensure the successful transition of staff to the newly created access services assistant position. This will meet the contractual obligation of a \$15/hour minimum wage for all county workers. There will also be additional training for technology skills in order to better assist patrons.

The library continues its efforts to provide safe and welcoming spaces for all library patrons and staff. The hiring of a security manager in the current fiscal year will result in a system wide assessment of potential security improvements and related staffing. The proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2016 includes funding to implement the resulting recommendations from this assessment. We are also pleased to see the addition of a pilot program to include an on-site crisis worker for the library district.

There are a number of additions to the budget that we believe will further provide enhanced services to patrons. At the Rockwood Library, the new MakerSpace will have a creative learning spaces coordinator to facilitate use and development of the space. There is an addition of one FTE to expand Chinese and Spanish speaking services as well as an additional 0.5 FTE to serve the needs of African American teens in our community. We know patrons will be pleased to see shorter wait times for bestsellers and e-books with an increase in the book budget for high demand items.

EMERGING ISSUES

The Library Advisory Board looks forward to working with Library leadership and the Library District Board to develop a long term capital plan for library facilities. 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.

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. We are excited about the library's work around new digital platforms that will enable the discovery of local artists such as authors, and musicians. We believe this will continue to be an important issue in future budgets. The foundations being laid in the Fiscal Year 2016 budget will support these efforts in years to come.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that you accept and adopt the proposed budget of \$73.1 million and 524 FTE of staff. This budget includes a significant growth over previous years, as it continues funding program offers in the Fiscal Year 2015 budget as well as including additions for security, development of technological services, and staff training to stay ahead of changing patron needs. This budget expansion is well within the growth projected at the formation of the library district, especially following several years of lower than expected growth. We feel the budget additions to support the collection budget and the FTE additions have been carefully considered by the Director's Office to serve as strategic investments that support the library's continued relevance in a changing landscape. We strongly support all of these efforts.

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However, we expect that the cost growth proposed for Fiscal Year 2016 is not the rate at which the budget will expand in future years. Moving forward from Fiscal Year 2016, we will anticipate smaller budget increases.

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

- ✦ Efforts to ensure the security of patrons, staff, and the collection;
- ✦ Maintenance of as close to a 10% reserve fund as feasible for long-term district stability and sound fiscal policy while protecting core services;
- ✦ Maintain a district rate of \$1.18 for as long as feasible;
- ✦ Efforts to work closely with County Facilities to develop a long-term capital plan;
- ✦ Continued evaluation of how information services (aka “reference”) are provided, and how they need to change to continue to be relevant in a rapidly evolving digital age;
- ✦ The creation and support of programs that help the underserved and vulnerable segments of the community, and consider the needs of the aging community in the development of additional programming; and
- ✦ Development of platforms and programs to serve as a resource to entrepreneurs and other small business owners as they establish themselves and contribute to the economy in Multnomah County

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