

## Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

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TO: Multnomah County Library District Board (3) pages

FROM: Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

DATE: April 18, 2018

SUBJECT: Library Advisory Board Budget Report & Recommendations

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Library Advisory Board (LAB) fully supports the Multnomah County Library (MCL)'s proposed budget, which we believe will allow MCL to serve the community well. We support the proposed increase in the property tax rate from \$1.18 to \$1.20. We also support in particular the thoughtful additions to the library's budget, particularly concerning safety/security and technology improvements. In the longer term, the LAB understands the library's need to expand into 21st-century library spaces, and we strongly support the space planning efforts needed to make this a reality. While we appreciate the prudence reflected in the proposed budget, the LAB is well aware that, as for the county as a whole, MCL's costs are rising much faster than property tax revenues can sustain, and we are concerned about what that may mean in the years to come. Overall, the LAB is proud to support the library in its continuing efforts to meet ever evolving community needs, produce innovative programming, and focus its work on equity. We appreciate the thorough work of library staff in preparing this budget, and we encourage the Library District Board to adopt the budget as presented.

### PROCESS

In accordance with Chapter 19 of the County Code, the Library Advisory Board continues to serve as the Citizen Budget Advisory Committee for the library. The 17-member Library Advisory Board holds monthly meetings throughout the year and is kept up to date on library operations, programs, policies, priorities, and budget.

The Finance Committee of the Library Advisory Board conducted a review of the library's proposed Fiscal Year 2019 budget. The Finance Committee met five times in January and February and has reported to the full Library Advisory Board on its findings. Library Director Vailey Oehlke and Director of Operations Don Allgeier attended these meetings and provided information, reports, and budget briefings for the committee's review. In addition, the committee received a Library District Revenue

**Library Advisory Board Members:** Elizabeth Hawthorne\* – Chair, Jack MacNichol\* – Vice-Chair, Marc Alifanz, Chester Ching, Erin Cooper, Thomas Dwyer\*, Rob Edmiston\*, Alisa Folen\*, Lois Leveen, Lizzie Martinez, P.K. Runkles Pearson, Mardy Stevens, Cynthia Tseng, Clare Wilkinson\*, Brian Wilson, Elliot Zais (\*Finance Committee Members) **Library Staff:** Vailey Oehlke – Director of Libraries, Don Allgeier – Director of Operations

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Forecast from Principal Budget Analyst Jeff Renfro. The Library Advisory Board has reviewed, approved, and accepted the Finance Committee's recommendations, which serve as the basis of this report.

## **EMERGING ISSUES & CHANGES**

For the first time since the creation of the Multnomah County Library District in 2012, the proposed budget increases the property tax rate from \$1.18 to \$1.20. This new rate is still less than the \$1.24 maximum district rate approved by the voters. This increase is in line with the financial models created when the library district was formed, and the LAB feels this is a prudent choice. We are aware, however, that increases in this tax rate are limited, and that increasing the rate will not provide long-term financial stability. Like the county as a whole, the library sees its expenses continue to grow faster than current property tax revenues can sustain.

Ensuring the safety of patrons, staff, and volunteers as well as the security of buildings and property continues to be a significant issue for the Library. This year's budget reflects a 20% increase in security-related expenses. The LAB strongly supports the library leadership's commitment to making public spaces safe and accessible for all. We anticipate that this will continue to be a significant issue for several years to come, and we hope that the library can find ways to meet its safety and security needs without dramatic increases in spending.

Another significant change in the proposed Library budget is the introduction of a new Integrated Library System (ILS). This database is the operational backbone of the library and is used to buy materials, maintain the catalog, register patrons, manage holds, and check out materials. While the move to this new system will lead to some one-time cost increases related to implementation and training, the new subscription will cost less annually and provide better value than the current product. The new ILS offers many opportunities to improve efficiencies and services for library patrons including stronger data security, better integration with other products, mobile services for staff and patrons, and the ability to serve patrons in multiple languages.

Looking beyond the current budget, planning for the Library's future facility needs is critically important to the institution's success. With the adoption of the [Framework for Future Library Spaces](#) in June 2017, MCL and the County now have a pathway for how to move this work forward. The framework calls for bold changes and expansions to the physical spaces the library occupies. These changes are essential for the library to meet the evolving needs of our rapidly growing community. These initiatives will alter some operating costs over the long-term, but will also allow for improvements and efficiencies that are impossible in the library's currently limited footprint. The LAB looks forward to partnering with library leadership, the District Board, and community partners to help realize the vision for 21st century library spaces as outlined in the framework.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

**We recommend that the Library District Board adopt the proposed budget of \$83.3 million and 539.20 FTE.** This budget expansion is modest and the LAB feels the proposed changes and expansions to the budget are well-considered and appropriately focused on supporting ongoing operational stability. We appreciate the library leadership's thoughtful attention to the sustainability of the institution and their commitment to modest growth within the constraints of the district's property tax rate limitation. We also strongly recommend that the Library move forward quickly but prudently to enact the recommendations adopted in the [Framework for Future Library Spaces](#).

## 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 work of Library staff and particularly Director of Operations Don Allgeier, who has adeptly supported our work.

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