

# PCLS Lakewood Libraries Feasibility Study

## Advisory Committee Meeting #1- Summary

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**Meeting Details:** Thursday, June 30th, 11 am-1 pm on Zoom

## Purpose

The purpose of this fourth Advisory Work Group Meeting was to:

- Establish a shared understanding of planning purpose, context, process, and desired outcomes
- Lay groundwork for staff and advisory community, and community engagement

## Attendance

### *Advisory Committee*

**Amelia Escobedo**

**Bob Estrada**

**Ron Irwin**

**Lianna Olds**

**Josette Parker**

**Darwin Peters II**

**Ginny Rawlings**

**Timothy Rhee**

**Chelsey Tschosik**

**Bob Warfield**

### *Pierce County Library System (PCLS)*

**Connie Behe**, Deputy Director of Public Services

**Gretchen Caserotti**, Executive Director

**Cliff Jo**, Finance & Business Director

### *City of Lakewood*

**Becky Newton**, City of Lakewood Economic Development Manager

Consultant Team – BERK Consulting

Rebecca Fornaby, Engagement Support

Michelle Ellsworth, Meeting and Engagement Support

## Agenda

- **Item 1: Welcome**
  - Introductions
  - Project Purpose and Process
  - Committee Charge and Ground Rules
- **Item 2: Project Context**
  - PCLS Planning and Community Input
  - Relevant City of Lakewood Plans and Initiatives
  - Building Use and Conditions History and Current State
- **Item 3: Community Engagement Effort**
- **Item 4: Next Steps**

## Discussion Summary

Comments and questions heard during the discussion portion of the meeting are summarized below, followed by project team responses if provided. A general summary of slide content is shared. The [presentation](#) and [agenda with supporting materials](#) referenced during the meeting can be found on the [project website](#) under "Project Documents."

### Item 1

*Introductions. Project Purpose and Process. Committee Charge and Ground Rules*

Pierce County Library System (PCLS) Executive Director Gretchen Caserotti kicked off the first Advisory Committee meeting for the PCLS Lakewood Libraries Feasibility Study. The project team introduced themselves, including those attending from PCLS, the City of Lakewood (the City), and the consultant team. Then, the Advisory Committee members each introduced themselves and shared their name, how long they have lived in Lakewood, their fondest memory, and their biggest hope for the project.

BERK Consulting (BERK) presented on the project purpose and context, including primary goals of the feasibility study, the project schedule, and the expected key topics for the monthly meeting series. BERK then shared the committee's overall role and the committee ground rules, with the presentation deck as a supporting material. The [Advisory Committee Kickoff Presentation](#) can be found online under "Meeting Agendas/Briefing Materials" on the project website.

## Comments / Questions:

- What is the process of reviewing public comments? Is PCLS going to forward public comments to the committee members?
  - *Response:* BERK, Mary, and Becky will follow up with the formal process for reviewing public comments.
- What is the process for getting things on the record versus off the record? What is the opportunity for interchange between meetings, and how can that be addressed during the meeting?
  - *Response:* BERK, Mary, and Becky will follow up with the formal process for communication on- and off-the record, including who best to contact with questions. As a commitment to public transparency, committee communication should ideally be completed in the open, public meetings.
- **Committee Member Recommendation:** At each meeting, the Committee should designate a specific amount of time to either read or address these public comments. Perhaps the public comments can be emailed to the committee members prior to the next meeting. This way, everyone has the opportunity to publicly hear the public comments and the responses for transparency.
  - *Response:* Thank you for that recommendation. The committee can also expect to see broader public input in the form of survey results, which BERK, Mary, and Becky will share with the committee. Due to the high-profile nature of the project and the significant public response, BERK, Mary, and Becky will identify the best way to:
    - A) ensure the committee can easily receive and hear public comment
    - B) make the best use of the Advisory Committee's meeting time
    - C) ensure public comments are collected and made available as part of the public record of this project

## Item 2

### *Project Context*

Connie Behe from PCLS presented highlights on the PCLS Planning and Community Input. Supporting materials are [the meeting's agenda and briefing materials](#), specifically pages 4-5. It includes highlights from the Pierce County Library 2030: Facilities Master Plan Report and the Future Library Engagement conducted in 2019. The committee had the following questions and comments.

## Comments / Questions:

- For clarification, it sounds like relocation of the library has been in the Facilities Master Plan since 2010. Is that correct?
  - *Response:* The 2010 Facilities Master Plan called for relocating the library or replacing the existing building. However, a decision was not made, and further community engagement was intended before making a final recommendation.

- Is PCLS talking about combining the Downtown and Tillicum library branches?
  - *Response:* There continues to remain a need for two separate facilities.
- Following the 2019 engagement, the library system purchased a property for the Tillicum library. Is that correct? If the future findings push for relocation, would it be gifted to the library system?
  - *Response:* The City purchased property for the Tillicum Library. It is holding on to the property to see what the decision will be in terms of moving forward for the Tillicum Library.
- The Tillicum Library location also includes the organization, Sea Mar. Has PCLS talked with Sea Mar to see if it would be willing to contribute money to a new library if it wants to remain connected to the library?
  - *Response:* PCLS and the City have not gotten that far in exploration of the community. It could be a follow-up opportunity to explore.
- It would be interesting to have more information about the site options available and the alternatives. In recognizing the comments from the 2019 survey, some committee members would be interested in achieving the best standards going forwards.
- In looking at the Condition Assessment Report for the PCLS Downtown Library, everything is listed as in fair or poor conditions, but nothing is in critical condition. Why make the decision to close the Lakewood Downtown library in this moment if it is not in critical condition?
  - *Response:* After BUILDINGWORK released its report last October, the PCLS Downtown Library experienced severe problems with the roof. This is not uncommon for this building. Wetherholt Roofing did a full assessment in the spring (see [Lakewood Library Roof Evaluation Report](#)) and concluded that the building has severe exterior and interior problems. This is in addition to [BUILDINGWORK's October report](#), which noted that the building requires additional upgrades to its HVAC, elevator system, doors, windows, and more. The evaluation report recommends a complete removal of part of the roof, along with an architectural redesign and rebuild. The cost would be in the millions, and it would require the library to be closed for several months. While the Lakewood Library is in fine condition right now, it could become waterlogged should the it experience heavy rainfall. Knowing that it takes several months to remove and protect assets and relocate staff, the library decision makers felt the need to close the library to protect the public, the staff, and the assets. It also takes a large investment to repair and/or rebuild the roof. In addition, PCLS could not go out to bid for something at that high of a repair and replacement cost without going to the community to confirm that is what the community wants to invest in.
- If there are more recent reports, please share them with the committee for transparency purposes. If the committee is having to making decisions as big as this and its impact to the community, let's ensure the committee takes full advantage of its time together.
  - *Response:* Yes, BERK, Mary, and Becky will share the recent reports to support the committee in doing its due diligence.

Next, Becky Newton from the City of Lakewood (the City) presented on relevant City of Lakewood Plans and Initiatives. Supporting materials are [the meeting's agenda and briefing materials](#), specifically pages 3-4. The committee had the following questions and comments:

**Comments / Questions:**

- Is it too early to state a facilities and parking requirement as a parameter for relocating either library, and to determine whether such a site exists within the downtown core?
  - *Response:* There will be facility and parking requirements based on the City's municipal code, which Becky is happy to provide. The City had identified some areas within the downtown area that would be feasible to purchase. If the City identifies an area it is interested in purchasing, the City can approach the property owner and negotiate a deal, like what it did for the purchased property in Tillicum.
- The Lakewood Mall has always existed with many empty buildings. Could these spaces accommodate something? If the City owns the buildings, is there an opportunity to use existing buildings rather than build new?
  - *Response:* Thank you for that idea.
  - *Additional Context:* Because the mall is privately owned, it carries additional private rules, requirements, and costs for its tenants. This is an important factor to consider when utilizing the mall spaces.
- Is Sea Mar willing to provide some funding to build a bigger/better multipurpose Tillicum facility? Are there other agencies or public/private partnerships that can be responsible for providing services (like trash pickup) for Tillicum?
  - *Committee Member Response:* This summer, there are contracts to redo the roof, fix the gutters, and repaint the exterior of the Tillicum library. If the community visits now, they will find the Tillicum Library is in better shape in terms of trash pickup. Some areas still have limited use, due to pandemic restrictions.
- Was the community informed of the purchase of land for the Tillicum library?
  - *Response:* The City purchased it through a public process with the City Council. Council approved it in 2019.
- Is the City still pursuing the cultural projects in the City Center, like a museum? If so, how far along in the process are they? Will there be opportunity for partnership with those entities?
  - *Response:* PCLS and the City looked at potential partners for collocation. Since then, the museum has found another location by the Colonial Plaza. PCLS and the City are looking at collocating with the Lakewood Playhouse, as well as the City's Senior Center. Due to the pandemic, PCLS and the City have not moved those options forward.

- There is a distinction between existing and available sites. PCLS and the City should outline a matrix of requirements and potential availability. It does not seem that the existing site can accommodate the future population of Lakewood. How that would be achieved in the downtown core is a mystery to me as a committee member.
  - *Response:* Thank you for that comment. BERK, PCLS, and the City will look into providing an evaluative framework and/or matrix.

Is the Tillicum library building owned by PCLS?

- *Response:* No. The Tillicum Library is a tenant, along with other tenants in the facility.
- The community knows things take a long time in government. But with the library closure, there is an urgency to get something done. Could the committee have the information from PCLS and Lakewood about what has been identified in terms of potential locations? The committee would like to review that before the next meeting. Could the committee take a two-pronged approach and discuss options while actively seeking locations and assessing the pros and cons?
  - *Response:* The City can put together a history of what it has done in the past and put together a matrix about zoning, parking requirements, etc. PCLS and the City are looking at an interim space, as well as the long-term space for the library branches.
- What is the exact scope of the committee's work? Can that be clarified in a future meeting so the committee can make a reasonable recommendation on the path forward?
  - *Response:* Yes, BERK, Mary, and Becky will work to clarify the committee's scope in a future meeting.

Then, Clifford Jo from Pierce County Library System presented on the Building Use and Conditions History and Current State. Supporting materials are [the meeting's agenda and briefing materials](#), the [Condition Assessment Report](#), and the [Roof Evaluation Report](#). The committee members had the following questions and comments:

**Comments / Questions:**

- The Friends of the Lakewood Library (Friends) gave the Lakewood Library to PCLS because the Friends could not maintain repairs. What is troubling to a committee member is that PCLS is closing the library because repairs were not done in a timely manner. PCLS requested the roof be repaired in 2009 with the understanding that it will be in good condition through 2029. How did the roof fall into disrepair?
  - *Additional Related Comment:* if PCLS is trusting companies for these repairs that failed, should the committee be getting a second opinion on the roof right now? Is PCLS repeating past mistakes?
  - *Response:* The building is owned by the public and taxpayer funded. However as a result of the roof's historically poor design (as shown in the [1989 Board of Trustees Memo](#) and [Lakewood Pierce County Library Building Condition Myth and Facts](#)), the library incurred additional damage. This prompted the [Roof Evaluation Report](#). PCLS wants to make sure the library is safe for staff and community in the long term. PCLS can pull all the maintenance reports and provide that data to the committee.

- Libraries, like schools, are not money generating entities. Buildings are expensive to maintain. The community must pass bonds or increase taxes to pay for these things.
- How is the value of the Lakewood Library building determined?
  - *Response:* In 2017, a broker assessed the Lakewood Library building. It assessed about \$3-ish million for the building and the land. The City then hired a more recent broker that PCLS commissioned to do a more extensive evaluation. PCLS and the City gave the broker reports from the architect and Wetherholt. The broker came up with the value stated in the appraisal report of \$1.5-1.6M. But an appraisal is just a data point. Should the committee suggest it be sold, the sale value is different from the appraised value.
- Is there a valuation for the Tillicum library?
  - *Response:* No, since PCLS does not own the building. The library's concern there would be the cost of replacement.
- How does PCLS choose the roofing company or the people who will appraise the Lakewood Library building?
  - *Response:* PCLS and the City did not go out to bid to assess the cost to replace the roof. Wetherholt gave PCLS an order-of-magnitude cost. Once PCLS understood the cost to be approximately \$3.5M, PCLS knew it could not move forward. Should PCLS move forward, PCLS and the City would go out to bid to find an architect. PCLS cannot choose a vendor without going through a public works bidding process. PCLS selected BUILDINGWORK to be its on-call architect. Should PCLS do a larger project, it would go out to bid.
- The numbers that PCLS has is a guesstimate?
  - *Response:* It is a professional estimate.
- Are the same companies always used?
  - *Response:* PCLS goes through a bidding process to select the best company to do the work. PCLS would share with the bidders a cost estimate for the work.
- What's the visibility of giving the Lakewood Library building back to the Friends of the Library?
  - *Response:* These are policy questions that the Board of Trustees and City Council would have to deliberate on. The agreement does not have a return clause built into it.
- A committee member is hearing a connection among businesses, corporations, University Place, PCLS all working together. Are there other grant dollars or corporations willing to help build space? Can they help pay for things? The library is not a money-generating entity. Can PCLS and the City look at other places and spaces that have been able to build and maintain a strong presence in the town center?
  - *Committee Member Response:* That goes back to a committee member's request - what are the alternatives? In a committee member's opinion, it is not responsible to say fix the existing building or move forward with a new building when the committee does not have the full picture, which requires transparency. How do the committee members make an ethical decision that will serve the community in the long term?

- The City told the committee that the City purchased property in Tillicum and that property could be donated to PCLS. What prevents PCLS from accepting the donated property and building a library in Tillicum?
  - *Response:* The Advisory Committee is tasked with making these future recommendations.
- As previously mentioned, a committee member would like a clearer scope and timeline, so the committee knows how the conversation needs to develop to reach a specific outcome. A committee member learned a lot but is confused about what exactly PCLS and the City need from the committee.

## Item 3

### *Community Engagement*

Due to meeting time constraints, the committee was not able to discuss upcoming community engagement. It will be discussed at the next meeting.

## Item 4

### *Next Steps*

The next Advisory Work Group meeting will be at the end of July.

The next meeting will focus on policy evaluation and recommendations. Similar to this meeting, an agenda packet will be shared a week in advance of the meeting. Additional action items include clarifying the committee's scope and timeline, providing necessary documents and reports, and confirming the formal process for reviewing and responding to public comment.

The meeting ended at approximately 1:02pm.