



# Memo

Pierce County Library District 2356 Tacoma Ave. So. Tacoma, WA 98402 (206) 572-6760

Date: November 13, 1989  
To: Chair Nancy Pearson and Members of the Board  
From: Carolyn Else  
Subject: The Lakewood Library Building

The Friends of the Lakes District Library, through David Kennicott and Tish Andresen who regularly attend their monthly meetings, have asked us to explore with them the possibility of transferring the title of the Lakewood facility to the Pierce County Library District.

You may not remember the background of the Lakewood library situation. Prior to the construction of the first phase of the facility, the branch was similar to others in the county operated by Pierce County Library District. It had no permanent home and moved from one inadequate location to another, finally ending up in the basement of the Park Lodge School on Gravelly Lake Drive. An active friends' group began working on a fund drive for a new facility and in the process, contacted Herman Tenzler. The result was that Mr. Tenzler provided the Friends of the Lakes District Library with a gift of some \$300,000, which was used to construct an 8,000 sq. ft. facility in the current location. The new branch opened in the fall of 1963 (and I was hired as the first professional librarian to manage the branch). In the 1970's, at the time of our planning for a county-wide bond issue, we again contacted Herman Tenzler, primarily for a donation to the bond campaign. When the bond issue failed, Mr. Tenzler continued to be interested in seeing an expanded building. This time the result was an addition of 23,000 sq. ft., for a total of 31,000 sq. ft., at a cost of \$1,300,000. We discussed briefly at the time the possibility of giving the title to the library district, but Mr. Tenzler preferred to leave it in the hands of the volunteer operating board.

One of the problems that plagued the Friends board over the years was the roof and its inappropriate style and improper installation, with the result that it leaked continuously during the rainy season. It was a hard problem for the friends to tackle with their board membership changing each November; the difficulty of raising over \$100,000 for the repair job seemed overwhelming. Herman Tenzler was once again approached and agreed to fund the repair of the roof. Apparently at that time he was in the process of dissolving his foundation and asked that the Tenzler name be removed from the building. In addition to repairing the roof, he also left the friends a major gift, from which major repairs have been made for the past several years.

The Friends now have a reserve fund of approximately \$300,000. It had been their hope to use a good part of that money on a major remodeling of the building. You'll recall that we agreed to help fund such a feasibility study, for which architect Ross Jamieson was hired. In the process of doing the feasibility study, it was discovered that in the second phase construction in the early 1970s, a good deal of asbestos was used in the ceiling area of the new building. The most recent estimates for asbestos removal are about \$100,000.

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We hope that the board will give serious consideration to exploring the possibility of accepting the title to the building. We think there may be some concern on their part that the library district does not want the building. There certainly are pros and cons to its acceptance, but on the whole, the library district, I believe, would benefit if the building belonged to us and were under our control for maintenance purposes.

The reasons for accepting the building have to do with achieving a smoother working relationship with our Friends group by not having to discuss authority and responsibility issues in regard to the building and by allowing them to work at things that are more satisfying to do. As you know, we've had a contract with the Friends for a number of years, which carefully spells out the responsibilities of the Friends and of the library district. By having to maintain a major building, the activities of the Friends have been oriented to facilities maintenance, rather than to programs and to the support of such things as artwork for the building.

Another plus is that ownership of the building will most certainly reduce the time that librarian David Kennicott spends acting as liaison between PCL and the Friends. There is a continual education process that must go on as board members change from year to year. We've gone through periods in the past when it has been difficult for some of the members to understand that the building was not theirs to do as they pleased with it, but in fact was provided as a public library building for the people of the Lakes District area. Finally, major repairs would be dealt with in a more consistent fashion. We already do all janitorial work and also spend about \$43,000 on utilities and maintenance contracts (yard work, elevator, etc.)

The negative aspects of building ownership have, of course, to do with maintenance. We would want to be certain that removal of the asbestos would be paid for from the Friends' money. It would also be helpful to have the needed remodeling done as well. You probably should go out and walk through the building to get a better sense of its size and of its needs. The carpet, while not old, has been somewhat of a disaster and needs replacement once again. That cost will probably be in the neighborhood of \$50,000. The building is showing its age and will continue to need more than usual maintenance. It seems likely that repairs and remodeling of this magnitude would be difficult for this volunteer board. If we were to do them, we would certainly want a good part of their funds to do so.

We might wish to have a contingency written into building acceptance that would allow us to return the building to the Lakewood Friends if Lakewood votes for cityhood and does not agree to contract with the library district for service.

You should know that while the present board may be interested in exploring a title transfer, a number of former board members will most certainly oppose it. If the board votes for a transfer, the vote must be approved by the membership (approximately 300 members). At least two-thirds of the members must vote, and a majority of those voting must say yes.

I strongly recommend that we take a positive approach to this proposal. It has been indeed unique to operate a system with the major branch being under the control of an outside group.

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