



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
PIERCE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
STUDY SESSION MINUTES – DECEMBER 8, 2022**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Jamilyn Penn called to order the study session meeting of the Pierce County Rural Library District Board of Trustees at 3:31 pm. Board members present were Jamilyn Penn, Pat Jenkins, Abby Sloan, Neesha Patel and Pam Duncan. The meeting was conducted in person, with the option of virtual attendance.

Lakewood Library Buildings Advisory Committee Recommendations

Executive Director Caserotti commented on the complicated decision the Board is making and expressed appreciation to the Lakewood Libraries Advisory Committee in providing their recommendations.

Utilizing the Knowledge Based Decision-Making framework, Trustees discussed the following regarding the Downtown Lakewood Library:

Downtown Lakewood Location

What do we know about the stakeholders' needs, wants and preferences?

- The Board understands the library is deeply valued in the Lakewood community as a gathering place, not just for access to books & internet computers. Community members see the library as a safe place for young people.
- There is agreement that the library needs to be located in a highly accessible place by foot and transit not just car.
- The library needs to be designed with flexibility to adapt to future needs.
- Ownership of property is preferred to leasing.
- The City has interest in co-locating a Senior Center while the advisory committee recommends focusing on the library as a priority.
- Lakewood citizens have a need to feel heard and listened to. Many are extremely passionate about the current facility, location and facility itself, sense of ownership and attachment to building.
- Concern about the Big One as a significant, recognizable, cultural artifact, a desire to preserve and keep it in Lakewood.
- Any new library should have "old feel" – a new building could honor the design style and feeling people love about the building.
- Awareness and concern for having a library into the future, not just today. The library buildings will be here long after current members are no longer on the Board.
- The advisory committee composition was representative of diverse community, intentionally selected.

What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamic of our environment that is relevant to this decision?

- There are extensive costs involved in response to restoring the building.

- The importance of ensuring primary use of the library does not fall outside the scope of library services.
- The condition of the facility and the cascading set of circumstances that extends beyond the roof due to the design of the structure has illuminated that it is not a simple fix.
- There are significant concerns about the rainy season as it relates to the roof, reports indicated it would not withstand another significant weather event and is in critical condition.
- The failing elevator brings safety concerns for staff and public
- Lakewood patrons don't have a full service branch which they deserve and the Library needs to move as expeditiously as possible to provide one.

What do we know about capacity and strategic positioning relevant to this decision?

The Board recognizes the importance of its responsibility to lead the charge and provide solid direction to the Library.

Executive Director Caserotti noted costs of renovating exceeds current financial capacity and would require a public funding measure, which requires excessive funding and staff resources to administer. There are also labor, construction and supply chain restraints.

Trustees noted the Library has consistently demonstrated prudent, proactive and collaborative budgeting in its future planning which is of benefit.

What are the ethical implications relevant to this decision?

Executive Director Caserotti noted ethical implications include stakeholder groups that may feel enfranchised or disenfranchised. Additional implications include advocacy or credibility issues with regard to the processes that would result in responding to the situation.

Additional implications included:

- People want to feel heard and be a part of the process
- Lack of social services that people rely on the library to fill
- The diversity of the community with different socio-economic needs
- The unique physical boundaries of the community
- The fiduciary responsibility of the Library as stewards of taxpayer dollars
- The need for equitable access and safety

The question arose how the Lakewood Library was doing prior to the closure as it relates to meeting those needs of the community.

Executive Director Caserotti noted the older facility caused a lot of additional work/resources strains related to repairs and adjusting to how to deliver services. There are a lot of tensions in the community that the library is caught in the crosshairs around social issues. In terms of delivering services, there was much more computer use rather than browsing and picking up holds. Programs were already being given outside of the building and working out in the community, which were expanded upon when the library closed.

Deputy Director Connie Behe noted foot traffic was trending down before the pandemic and has not recovered. There were serious security and safety issues as well as concerns about frequent mechanical and plumbing failures. The staff were beloved by the community and the Library had a good relationship

with the City, however there were a lot of people who were not utilizing the Library any longer. She also noted the Library was not ADA compliant, making equitable access very difficult.

Trustees noted witnessing the difficulty those with disabilities had accessing the Library, adding that safety concerns related to homelessness must be considered. They stressed the importance of partnering with other constituents in the community as it relates to public services.

Trustees also noted the Library was making a good faith effort to provide services and meet the needs of the community, adding that providing a better facility would be the best outcome.

Trustees reviewed the advisory committee's recommendations which were to keep the library at the same location, building a new library on the current site and, if this is not possible, to build a new library in an equally accessible location.

The Board discussed the short term and long-range funding implications for building on the current site versus a new site. Questions arose about demolition costs, including remediation of any potentially contaminated soils. It was asked whether it would be possible to salvage some of the artifacts currently on display at the library to be displayed elsewhere or incorporated into the new building.

Trustees stressed that equitable accessibility is of utmost importance. The current site is not accessible to the whole community. There are many community members who reside on the other side of the town, who may represent a different demographic and may not have reliable transportation, whose voices were possibly not heard of during this process. They added this is an important component needing further discussion.

Executive Director Caserotti noted the City and Library strove to develop an advisory committee that would represent the diverse voices in the community. Concerns were raised at the Joint Meeting about the relative sample in the survey results not including diverse perspectives. She noted that as a part of a new building program the public will be engaged in the design process.

Executive Director Caserotti noted there is a sense of urgency and a need for staff to have direction from the board in January in order to address timelines required by the City and can prepare material to share information with the community on the direction being taken as well as the timelines and costs.

Chair Penn remarked the Board is not in an enviable position as it forms its decision, noting these are significant and challenging decisions. She stressed the significance of making a decision that will leave a legacy and make a great impact in the Lakewood community.

Trustee Patel requested more information on the funding methods. Executive Director Caserotti noted most capital projects would utilize a combination of funding tools, each determined for individual projects. In order to follow the direction of the committee there is a lot of work the Library would need to bring to the Board to help them understand what's possible on the site and how much the project would cost. It would be at that point that the Board would identify which funding options are feasible.

The question was asked whether building new on the current site would meet the site selection criteria the library currently uses when building new facilities. Executive Director Caserotti noted the Library is working with architects now to understand building codes, site development requirements and feasibility

to build on the site. She noted there will be limitations on the size of the building the site can accommodate.

There was further discussion about whether there is a more desirable building site.

Chair Penn asked the Trustees to take time until the next meeting to review the information around the feasibility study and consider the three options: rebuild on the current site, build on a new site, or renovate the current building. She also asked them to come prepared to share with the Library what additional information they may need to make their decision.

Tillicum Location

What do we know about the stakeholders' needs, wants and preferences?

- Awareness of the strong desire from advisory committee to co-locate social services for an impoverished community with extreme needs with lack of services in this geographic area.
- There is a strong desire to continue to support relationships with service providers.

What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamic of our environment that is relevant to this decision?

- The library is cut off geographically from other services in the city.

Trustees noted this location has a large parking area for such a small facility.

Trustees mentioned that the committee had concerns about the lack of sidewalks and proximity to the elementary school as it relates to their recommendation to building on the parcel currently owned by the City. Executive Director Caserotti noted the City would likely cooperate with the Library to install sidewalks.

Questions arose whether it is possible to even renovate the existing building and is there an option to pursue purchasing it. Executive Director Caserotti noted the Library had not been given direction or instruction to pursue purchasing it. Executive Director Caserotti noted when assessing building condition staff was only able to conduct a visual inspection since the Library is only a tenant.

Trustees asked what the trends are of the customers using the Tillicum library. Executive Director Caserotti noted additional data gathering may be needed to understand current use trends and who is leveraging proximity to other service providers.

Chair Penn asked the Trustees to identify additional information needed to aid them in their decision-making process.

Responses included:

- Trends of the current Tillicum library customers
- If the library relocated, would other services move along with the library as well? Executive Director Caserotti noted there may be fiduciary limitations using tax dollars to rent space for private non-library use
- Would the Library lease or purchase the land from the City? Executive Director Caserotti noted the City indicated they would sell it to the Library.

- What is the anticipated outcome if the Library established a new facility – would we lease space to someone else? There is an extreme need in Tillicum – we must continue to support the relationships with the other organizations such as the food bank and the school. Executive Director Caserotti noted getting this information directly from the partners would be challenging but that the Library could do some reasonable speculation.

Chair Penn thanked the Trustees for the discussion. She encouraged them to take under advisement the advisory committee recommendations, their own notes, information they received when out in the community, comments from the public, and from the Library administrators.

The Board agreed to hold additional meetings to further the conversation.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:04 pm on motion by Trustee Duncan, seconded by Trustee Sloan.

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Gretchen Caserotti, Secretary

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Jamilyn Penn, Chair