



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
PIERCE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES – APRIL 20, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Neesha Patel called to order the Special Meeting of the Pierce County Rural Library District Board of Trustees at 1:32 pm. Board members present were Abby Sloan and Pat Jenkins. Jamilyn Penn joined the meeting at 1:34 pm. Pam Duncan joined the meeting at 1:59 pm. The meeting was conducted in person, with the option of virtual attendance.

Long-Term Plans for Future Lakewood Libraries – Downtown Lakewood Location

Executive Director Gretchen Caserotti provided an overview of the materials in the agenda packet, which included the Lakewood Community Advisory Committee recommendations, the Lakewood Libraries Feasibility Study, Library Building Program and Design Guide, and the Site Selection Criteria. She reminded the Board of the agreement to postpone this discussion because staff's capacity was prioritized to opening an interim Lakewood Library and addressing the City of Lakewood's requirements concerning the existing building. She noted the goal of this study session was to seek direction from the Board and to meet the obligation to discuss options in a transparent way.

Executive Director Caserotti noted that work on the building condition assessments continues, with early drafts of existing facility needs being completed. The Request for Qualifications for consultant services for long range capital planning will be issued by the end of April. The last time this work was done was in 2010.

Discussion ensued on whether there was any reason the Library should not use the existing site on Wildaire Rd. Executive Director Caserotti noted considerations include parking concerns, size constraints, and the lack of ability to co-locate the library with a senior center. The current site could accommodate a site up to an approximately 20,000 square foot building.

Discussion ensued on the projections for use at a new library and whether 20,000 square feet would be adequate to provide the services desired. Executive Director Caserotti noted a common size of a library branch is 15,000-20,000 square feet.

Discussion ensued on parking constraints. Executive Director Caserotti indicated a 15,000 square foot building on the 1.67-acre site could accommodate a 60-70 stall parking lot, but no architectural work has been done to date, that is based on experience with other library building projects. She noted this would limit what programs or services the Library could offer. For large events, there may be a need to seek overflow parking in neighboring businesses.

Executive Director Caserotti noted the City of Lakewood had expressed interest in the past to build a senior center and work with the Library on co-location. To date, she has not heard anything from the City that they are taking active steps to develop such a project. Caserotti reported the City recently passed Ordinance 802, designating the Lakewood Downtown Tax Increment Area, which will freeze property revenue and reallocate funds for growth in two local

parks. Additionally, multi-family housing is in development in the Towne Center on the Barnes and Noble property. Growth in the downtown is anticipated which will increase demand for library services, but the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) will redirect revenue growth toward the repayment of the City's parks. Caserotti will add this to the May meeting agenda for further discussion.

Discussion ensued on safety concerns from the public. Executive Director Caserotti noted all are welcome in the Library and those who are unhoused and needing shelter are free to utilize the library buildings. The Wildaire building was not modernized and there were sightline issues that limited visibility for staff to effectively manage the space. The second story also required additional staff to supervise that area. The concerns of the community regarding safety were incorporated into the design of the interim building.

Discussion ensued on the possibility of lockers on the interim site. Executive Director Caserotti noted there are no lockers planned. It was important to ensure a space for the Friends of the Library. She noted the Library is open to ideas such as this but the expectation of self-management would be required.

Trustees reflected on the survey results, the outreach efforts and the diversity of stakeholders. They discussed the genuine connection of the respondents to the Wildaire property.

Additional discussion ensued on how to effectively separate the youth and teens group spaces, addressing behavior and the expectation is that parents are responsible for the supervision of their children.

Discussion ensued on shared workspaces and dedicated space for staff. Most locations include dedicated restrooms for staff. The Library also includes provisions for wellness/nursing rooms. There is a need for restricted access to staff areas which will be addressed in facility planning.

Trustees discussed the lack of feasible options available for a future Library site, which limits the Board's choices. Executive Director Caserotti offered to explore locations, but noted that financial constraints could prohibit the Library from purchasing property. She also noted that leasing was not available in the privately owned Lakewood Towne Center, as was explored and determined when the Library closed in 2022.

Executive Director Caserotti reminded the Board that the goal of this discussion was to meet the obligation to discuss options in a transparent way and provide staff with direction for future planning.

Next steps include preparation for demolition of the Wildaire building. The intention is to prepare the site and make it build-ready. This includes back filling the site. This work is expected to take throughout the year.

Executive Director Caserotti noted the Library understands it can take years to fund, design and build a project. She reminded the Board that the Library entered into a 10-year ground lease for the interim Library.

Executive Director Caserotti noted she would include the capital funding methods information that was shared with the Board in November 2022 in the agenda packet for review at the upcoming May 11, 2024, study session to discuss the Tillicum Library.

Discussion ensued on long-range capital funding. The Library is faced with funding challenges based on the sustainability fund balances and property tax caps. The long range plan will inform modernizations for the Lakewood building. Initial estimates for the entire project were estimated at \$900 per square foot. Those estimates of \$900 per square foot now cover only construction costs. While there may be reductions in labor costs, bids are coming in at 20% over estimates.

Business and Compliance Director Cliff Jo stated the Library cannot bear the costs without a major influx of funding. Cost-estimates for the 20,000 square foot building in Sumner is approaching \$30 million. He added there would be much more work needed to identify whether the community will support this endeavor.

Discussion ensued on ballot measures and the uncertainty of taxpayer support. It was noted that community outreach, marketing, and communications will be very important. The importance of directing the community to the interim Library as a temporary solution for service needs was also stated.

Discussion ensued on considerations to move toward a framework to inform future Library locations and the importance of distance and travel time considerations. Executive Director Caserotti stated that while that would be difficult to achieve fully, it is important for the Library to find alternate means of providing services to its communities.

Trustees expressed the need to respond to the Lakewood residents and provide direction for the long-term future of the Library as each delay increases prices. Trustees stressed the importance of honoring the community's connection to the Wildaire property, and the need to consider the expression of the heart and what it might mean to rebuild on the current site. Also discussed was the importance of respecting the time the residents took to send their messages through public comment and other engagement activities, and the Board's responsibility to demonstrate responsiveness while being careful stewards of the taxpayers' dollars.

Executive Director Caserotti acknowledged that she understands the impossibility of altering the past. She expressed a commitment to rebuilding community trust by collaborating with the City of Lakewood to retain the Douglas Slice artifact, thus honoring the public's sentiment. Additionally, she acknowledged the presence of voices advocating for a new building instead of renovating the existing one. Caserotti emphasized her aspiration to restore trust by demonstrating a dedication to serving the community through the Interim library.

The conversation then turned to the oversight in adequately preparing the public for the closure of the Library prior to opening another site.

Trustees expressed that what goes on inside library buildings has a greater impact than the building itself.

The consensus of the Board was that the Library rebuilds on the current Wildaire site, although there is concern about a potential lack of available parking.

Executive Director Caserotti stated Library administrators would take that direction and factor into library planning. She noted engaging architects at this time would be premature.

Executive Director Caserotti reiterated the Library would be honoring the passion and recognition of the building's design and history through its work with future architects. Regional Services Manager Elysha Ryan worked closely with the Lakewood Historical Society to preserve additional artifacts. Some artwork will be displayed in the interim library. Other larger pieces will be stored for use in a future building.

Discussion ensued about the importance of preparing the community for the actual demolition, noting the distinction between hearing about and actually witnessing the demolition. Questions arose on what the Library could do to help residents move through their sense of loss and how to honor those sentiments. Executive Director Caserotti expressed that the Library has an obligation to honor the disruption and hurt felt by the Lakewood community. She was hopeful that the community will be excited by the opening of the interim Library, which brings new possibilities and opportunities for healing.

Executive Director Caserotti noted public engagement is an important element in a new building program and will be important to gauge funding support.

The timeline between the opening of the interim Library and the Wildaire demolition is not finalized. The interim Library is anticipated for an August opening.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:42 pm on motion by Trustee Jenkins, seconded by Trustee Sloan.

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Gretchen Caserotti
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Gretchen Caserotti, Secretary

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Pamela E. Duncan
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Pamela Duncan, Chair