



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
PIERCE COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES – MAY 11, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Pam Duncan called to order the Special Meeting of the Pierce County Rural Library District Board of Trustees at 2:00 pm. Board members present were Pam Duncan, Neesha Patel, Abby Sloan and Jamilyn Penn. Pat Jenkins was excused. The meeting was conducted in person, with the option of virtual attendance.

Long-Term Plans for Future Lakewood Libraries - Tillicum Location

Executive Director Gretchen Caserotti provided an overview of the materials in the agenda packet, with a focus on the Tillicum Library Facility Summary.

Executive Director Caserotti acknowledged the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and expressed her appreciation for their work, noting the importance of the Tillicum Library to the community and service providers. She restated the Library's commitment to retaining a library building in Tillicum.

Executive Director Caserotti noted the CAC's recommendation for Tillicum was counter to the recommendation for the downtown Lakewood Library with regard to prioritizing community partnerships. She added that while the Library has an awareness of the community partners and the building as a whole, the importance was to focus discussion on the Library itself.

Executive Director Caserotti stated that in an effort to educate herself on current circumstances she had conversations with the Clover Park School District superintendent, City and County Council members, the Lakewood City Manager and the Sr. Vice President of Seamar, which is co-located in the building owned by the Tillicum/Woodbrook Neighborhood Association (Association). She plans to speak with the Association following the study session.

Executive Director Caserotti provided a brief history of the Library which was built in 1995 through the utilization of HUD funds. In 2000, ownership was subsequently transferred to the Tillicum American Lake Gardens (now named the Tillicum/Woodbrook Neighborhood Association). That agreement expires June 30, 2024, which means the Association will no longer be required to adhere to the county's terms and conditions for the building. As the owner of the building, the Association holds responsibility for the building's condition and any improvements. The terms of the Library's lease are in perpetuity and there is no risk to the Library of losing the space.

The CAC's recommendation, made in 2022, was to renovate the existing building or rebuild on the existing site and, if not feasible, to pursue the acquisition of other property near the existing Library or build on the parcel currently owned by the City of Lakewood (City). Executive Director Caserotti provided information on the footprint of the current building, of which the Library occupies only 4%. She shared the details of the building assessment conducted in 2010, which indicated the building was in poor condition and proposed a new building of 7500-8700 sf. She noted the Library has not taken action on the property the City purchased in 2019.

There was discussion on the Library's strong partnerships within the community, including bilingual story times, programs in the parks and more.

Discussion ensued on accessibility, parking and the concerns about the lack of sidewalks and proximity to the school.

Executive Director Caserotti provided an overview of the building assessment conducted by BuildingWork in 2021. The building was noted to be in critical condition and not acceptable for public use. Since that time there have been no major improvements to address the condition of the property, including damage to siding, inadequate HVAC, and inadequate restroom facilities. Repairs that were made were insufficient. The Library installed an AC unit and also made repairs and improvements to the restroom at its own expense. Janitorial services have been managed by the Library although the agreement states it is the responsibility of the Association. When the Library requested an air quality assessment due to moisture concerns, the Association did not respond, causing the Library to hire a vendor to conduct the work itself. BuildingWork estimated building improvements at \$3 million after assessing only the areas used by the Library. They did not have access to the entire building.

In 2022, the Association notified the Library of their intent make improvements to the building. However, the work was not contracted as is appropriate for public works contracts and only cosmetic improvements were made. Structural issues were not addressed. Executive Director Caserotti noted communication with the Association continues to be difficult. She noted there have been leadership transitions since their executive director passed away in 2023.

The Trustees discussed the building's signage and appearance, as well as the impact of its condition on the Library System's reputation. Executive Director Caserotti credited the staff for making the Library space special despite the neglect of the facility.

Executive Director Caserotti stated the Library has significant concerns about the future ability to deliver library services in the current building. She noted it is possible the Library may be in the same situation of having to close a branch as a public safety concern as occurred with the Lakewood Library. She noted Seamar has moved to a month to month lease and that the Library plans to do so as well. The Library has strong concerns that if the building conditions are not addressed, it will be red-tagged.

Executive Director Caserotti noted the Library does not have the funds or authority to rebuild the facility, despite the CAC's recommendations.

She asked the Board for direction on next steps at the conclusion of the session in which discussion would be held on timelines, legal agreements, long range planning, and the risk of waiting longer before taking action.

Trustees discussed the possibility of relocating and concerns about moving farther away from the vicinity of the school and the community center.

Discussion ensued on the possibility of having a stand-alone building and the funding needs to do so. There was discussion about the preference of owning a building if the Library was to

share the space. Business and Compliance Director Cliff Jo noted that based on legal counsel this was not feasible.

Discussion ensued on the possibility of utilizing HUD funding for a new building. Executive Director Caserotti noted the county is prioritizing unincorporated areas of Pierce County. HUD dollars through the county are funneled to the City through Community Development Block Grants and are unlikely to reach an amount sufficient to the Library's needs. She noted she has not received indication there is a municipal desire to use those funds for the Library.

Discussion ensued on the impact to the residents of Tillicum and hearing from the City what else they may be willing to do to help.

Trustees discussed the option of renovation. Executive Director Caserotti stated the Library would expect a space for a meeting room. When asked if there was a possibility of co-location if the City owned the building, she stated she's had no indication from the City that they have interest in owning the building. She added that she could not support and advocate for the Library to take on the expense of renovating the building, noting it would be an irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars. She added that based on the current lack of communication or resolution, it would not be prudent for the Library to continue a relationship with the landlord.

Trustees directed Executive Director Caserotti to inquire of the Association what their timeline and resources are to renovate the building and, if they had no plans to do so, would they entertain an offer to purchase it.

Director Jo noted that bylaws state that ownership would pass to the City. He added the cost to demolish and rebuild are likely prohibitive to the Library and would require bond measures or acquiring debt, plus additional costs for an interim building.

Discussion ensued on an alternative nearby location on the corner of Maple and Union Streets. Executive Director Caserotti proposed engaging a real estate broker to pursue the possibility of ownership or rental of available buildings as close as the City-owned property that included safety elements such as sidewalks.

She stated she could also meet with the City to determine land costs as well as site development costs for a modular building should the Library elect to pursue this option.

Discussion ensued on the current lack of space for staff and the importance of meeting the community demand in an appropriately sized facility.

Executive Director Caserotti proposed meeting with the Tillicum/Woodbrook Association to air concerns and convey what would be needed to remain as tenants.

Discussion ensued on how long the Library could remain in the current facility given its condition. Director Jo noted the City has expressed concern about the building as well, noting the importance of establishing a feasible course of action prior to potential red-tagging by the City. He added that an engineering assessment of the facility would cost approximately \$13,000

and would require approval by the Association. There was concern about the potential of needing to vacate sooner and creating hardship for the residents of the community.

Discussion ensued on estimated costs of a modular building similar to the Interim Lakewood Library. Mr. Jo estimated approximately \$10 million for the entire project.

Discussion ensued around funding options. Executive Director Caserotti expressed concern that a ballot measure would not be feasible given the timeline, and that it offers no guarantees. The 10-year ground lease at the Interim Lakewood Library was meant to allow time for the Library to address these funding issues as currently the Long-term Lakewood Library has no funding means. She noted there are other locations within the Library System that have serious needs as well. This is the reason for the long-range planning and building assessments that are currently underway.

Trustees took a break at 3:14 pm and returned at 3:22 pm.

Chair Duncan stressed that given the compilation of issues at the current location, time was of the essence in identifying the interim measure the Library must take for the Tillicum Library in order to be prepared for what may arise in the future.

Discussion ensued on construction timelines. Executive Director Caserotti noted it was at least a 2-year process to construct a modular building, given her experience with the Interim Lakewood Library. Discussion ensued on tenant improvements and converting a leased space. Director Jo noted it would be less costly but parking would be a challenge. This could take approximately 12 months, not including the permitting process.

Executive Director Caserotti reconfirmed her direction from the Board was to 1) speak with City of Lakewood and inquire about the costs for the site and any improvements; 2) engage a real estate broker to explore lease and purchase options for properties other than the City-owned site; 3) to discuss with the Association the Library's concerns, and learn of any remediation plans they have in place.

Chair Duncan stated it was clear the Library cannot stay in the current building unless the conditions change. The discussion concluded with the awareness of the importance of taking immediate action.


Executive Director Caserotti stated the Library takes its responsibility seriously. She noted staff do amazing work in the community and the community deserves to have a great library. She added that the goal of Library System is to be the core of the community, and Tillicum Library is a model of that.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 pm.

Signed by:

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Gretchen Caserotti, Secretary

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Pamela Duncan, Chair