



ALBANY LIBRARY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Albany Library, 1247 Marin Avenue
December 2, 2009 7 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER – L. Flanagan

Board Members present:

Leah Flanagan
Rosalie Gonzales
Karen Leeburg
Robert Lieber
Alan Riffer
Sarah Whitmer
Linda Yamamoto

Alameda County Library Staff Present:

Ronnie Davis, Albany Library Manager
Ann Hammond, Deputy County Librarian
Peggy Watson, Head of Branches
Jean Hofacket, County Librarian

City of Albany Staff Present:

Charles Adams, City of Albany Finance Director
Robin Mariona

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES –September 23, 2009

Motion:

Motion to approve minutes made by Member Yamamoto and seconded by Member Riffer. Motion carried all in favor.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

4. CITY OF ALBANY CONTRACT WITH ALAMEDA COUNTY LIBRARY –Staff Report- C. Adams

City of Albany Finance Director Charles Adams stated that the Board had questions for County Library administrators regarding the amended City Contract. He stated that there were questions about the County's decision to revise the contract leaving the youth and reference librarian positions vacant, questions regarding the overall equity of cost saving decisions County wide, options for cost reductions and the role the Board might play in these decisions. Director Adams had two meetings with County staff to try and answer the questions; one with himself, Albany City Manager Beth Pollard, County Library Administrator Susan Muranishi and County Librarian Jean Hofacket. The other meeting was with County Library Finance Officer Linda Carroll.

Director Adams stated he had been informed that the County had imposed a freeze on staffing, many branches had vacant positions and it was a legitimate management decision on the County level. The County was not dictating that because positions were unfilled, the functions associated with them be eliminated, but reassigned instead.

The County had decided to allocate system wide costs to all the branches two years prior, which explained the increase noted by the Board in budget discussions. This type of allocation had not been done before. Director Adams had reviewed the worksheets describing the criteria for allocation. He was not convinced it was the proper percentage for Albany since he had not had the opportunity to review all costs, or if other branches were absorbing the same amounts. He stated that he had not reached conclusions and it could be investigated further.

Director Adams stated that the Board had made a commitment to the people of Albany to provide increased library hours and the people of Albany had passed a tax to do so. He questioned whether the additional contribution made by Albany would continue to fund that function. The County stated that the budget was not put together that way and funds were not directed to specific programs, hours or staffing.

Director Adams stated that the City believed there was a secured contract with the County at the time that the tax measure and rate were determined, but this had not been the case. He raised concern about the reliability of their future commitments and if it would be possible to obtain early information allowing the Board to have a voice in decisions. He stated his appreciation for the information he had received, which indicated the high probability of reductions in the level of service for the next contract year.

As indicated in his staff report, Director Adams stated that there were three possible options for the Board to take. First would be to take no action and allow the County to do the best they could with cost reductions. Second would be to take a proactive stance in prioritizing reductions and suggesting savings. The last option would be to consider operating independently of the County system. This option would require study and cost analysis. Director Adams had no information that indicated operating independently would be better.

Member Riffer asked the County representatives if they agreed with Director Adams information. Ms Hofacket agreed it was accurate. Member Leeburg asked what would be required and who had the authority to convert the library to independent status. Director Adams stated that the Council would have to budget for it, agreements would have to be made with the County and property taxes could legally be passed to the library.

Member Riffer stated that Albany Library was down 60% of professional librarian staff which seemed like a large reduction. He asked when the freeze started, how long it would last and were there any exceptions. Ms. Hofacket stated that the freeze began about a calendar year ago. There was no relief in sight unless it came from Sacramento and could last anywhere from 2 to 4 years. Exceptions had been made for clerical positions only. In January 2010 work would be done on balancing measures to achieve some equity.

Ms Hofacket stated that the State had informed the County, that local tax dollars would be used to increase State revenue in the next couple of years. A 2% increase for costs would be offset by an of 11% cost of doing business increase, as was the case in many businesses and families in the current economic situation.

Member Riffer stated disappointment that the balancing process hadn't already begun. Ms Hofacket stated that if the County had not chosen to include libraries in the securitization process, layoffs might have already begun. Alameda County Library lost \$20,000,000 in 2009-2010 to the ERAF shift, where the State takes local money from counties, cities and special districts for educational costs. Director Adams stated that lawsuits were currently staving off the loss of further monies.

Member Lieber asked Director Adams if the County numbers for subsidy allocation were satisfactory. Director Adams said yes. Chair Flanagan asked, if the County's goal was to reduce libraries additional costs, were the freezes part of that. Ms. Hofacket stated yes they were.

The Board questioned Ms. Hofacket about costs and revenues to understand the effects of the reductions. She stated that the point was to reduce costs by \$200,000 of the \$800,000 that the library was currently being allocated from other County Library funds and the process had been begun 3 years ago. The \$200,000 would be

reallocated to unincorporated areas. Manager Davis stated that \$200,000 represented about ¼ of staff costs, as an example of the scope of what might be lost as a result of the cost cuts.

Chair Flanagan stated that the Board wanted to be part of the decision making process and should begin in January. Member Riffer stated that services had already suffered particularly children's services. Ms. Hofacket stated that changes were not made without due consideration. Ms. Hammond stated that staff could not be added but duties could be shifted. Member Yamamoto asked if figures would be available in January. Ms. Hofacket stated that it was possible, but the County deadline was not until mid February and final numbers may not be available until June.

Ms. Hofacket stated that the average across the board allocation for all jurisdictions would eventually be \$300-400,000 per jurisdiction. The goal being equity across the entire system, the cap was to be set at \$800,000. The County per capita cost was \$34 per person and Albany was currently at \$120. She stated that the three basic parts of the equation were circulation, population and revenue. Albany's wide circulation could work to the City's benefit in accommodation and adjustment.

Member Riffer stated that the Board's goal should be to determine the best way to deliver services and all options should be considered neutrally. Chair Flanagan thanked the County representatives for the information.

5. CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS FOR THE DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICE IN ALBANY- L. Flanagan.

Member Lieber stated that the Board needed to approach Council to request a feasibility study with regard to operating independently.

Ms Hofacket stated that the County preference would be for Albany to continue in the library system, but if there was interest in investigating other options a feasibility study would give good information. Albany had been independent from 1957 to 1969. She passed out information to the Board about what to look for as an independent library and suggested contacting the State Library for help. She also had suggestions and recommendations for consultants. She stated that 3 to 6 months was a reasonable amount of time for a study to be conducted. The next step after approval would be to issue an RFP. Member Lieber stated that staff could begin investigating costs for the study.

Motion:

Motion to recommend to Council putting together a proposal for the City to; operate as an independent library, operate in conjunction with another Alameda County library or in conjunction with libraries outside Alameda County made by Member Lieber and seconded by Member Riffer. Motion carried all in favor.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS

A. Albany Library Report; Floating Collection Update- R. Davis.

Manager Davis stated that the floating collection was now being called the shared collection and so far Albany was benefiting from a greater selection. Customers were satisfied and the rest of the collection would float beginning January 1st.

Manager Davis reported that business was up by 16% over last year. Thirty to thirty five programs were being offered per month and a new literacy reading club had been added on Thursday mornings. Continuing programs were; photography workshop, evening book group, origami workshop, game day and the brown bag lunch program.

B. Library Board Work Plan-L. Flanagan

The County librarian and staff would attend the January meeting.

C. Library Board Calendar- 2009

Next meeting January 27, 2010.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

8. ADJOURNMENT: 8:53pm