

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Advocacy Taskforce Meeting  
February 13, 2017  
Louis Stokes Legacy Room                      Louis Stokes Wing  
3:00 P.M.

Present:            Alesha Washington, Chair, Magda Gomez, John Hairston, Tim Cosgrove

Absent:            Gretchen Faro, Valarie McCall

Ms. Washington called the Advocacy Taskforce Meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

Ms. Washington welcomed attendees and gave a brief overview of the last Advocacy Taskforce Meeting at which discussed the levy as well as advocacy and policy priorities were discussed. As the state budget season approaches, this meeting will provide a context of what is coming that will provide a basis for discussion of opportunities that will identify options and recommendations for the full Board to consider.

FY 2018-19 State Budget Overview

Ms. Washington introduced Tim Cosgrove, Advocacy Taskforce member as well as the Library's government relations consultant, who gave a presentation overview of the FY 2018-19 State Budget.

Mr. Cosgrove stated that the Governor released his budget on January 31, 2017 in the context of a tight fiscal environment for the State where there has been a consistent trend of revenues decreasing.

In response to Mr. Hairston's inquiry, Mr. Cosgrove stated that for the first half of the fiscal year, tax collections are off 2.7 percent or \$296.5 million, totaling \$10.83 billion versus the \$11.12 billion that had been expected.

Mr. Cosgrove stated that Ohio brought in about \$30.9 million less in December compared to the same month a year ago, a 1.6 percent drop. In addition, compared to this point in FY16, state tax collection is 1.3 percent behind the \$10.96 billion collected in the first half of the previous fiscal year.

Mr. Cosgrove continued his presentation by reviewing the composition of the 132<sup>nd</sup> Ohio General Assembly which includes the House of Representatives comprised of 66 Republicans and 33 Democrats and the Ohio Senate comprised of 24 Republicans and 9 Democrats.

Mr. Cosgrove reviewed key committee chair appointments and specifically noted State Representative Marlene Anielski who chairs the House State and Local Authority Committee

and is also a member of the House Finance Committee. Representative Anielski was very helpful to the Library as she was instrumental increasing the Public Library Fund to 1.70 per cent.

Mr. Cosgrove gave the following overview of the Operating Budget timeline:

Administration

- Kasich Administration introduced Biennial Budget on January 31, 2017 to the Ohio General Assembly

House

- House will hold hearings and pass biennial budget bill week of April 23, 2017

Senate

- Senate will hold hearings and work on version of biennial budget from House between May-Mid June

Conference Committee

- House and Senate meet to confer and agree to committee report in June which is sent to the Governor for signature by June 30, 2017 and must be accepted by July 1, 2017.

Mr. Cosgrove shared the following highlights about the FY18-19 Budget:

- All-funds budget is about \$144.3 billion for two years –a 4.4 percent increase from FY17 to FY18 and a 1.8 percent increase from FY18 to FY19;
- Increase state sales tax by ½ percent to 6.25 percent; reduce the state income tax by 17% and reduce the number of state tax brackets from 9 to 5;
- Tax cuts for low and middle income Ohioans by increasing the state income tax personal exemption;
- Maintain Medicaid expansion with limited monthly premiums for those over the poverty level.

Mr. Cosgrove stated that the Public Library Fund will revert back to 1.66%, down from a temporary increase to 1.70%. In the first year, FY2018, there is a two 2% reduction primarily as a result of the timing of the Medicaid sales tax and the fixed quarter. The second year, there is a 3.1% increase.

Funds for the Ohio Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled, in FY2018-19, will not change as they are funded at a flat rate which is \$1, 274,194 .

In response to Mr. Hairston’s inquiry, Mr. Cosgrove stated that he would provide a list of Cuyahoga County Delegation members and their respective committees.

Mr. Cosgrove spoke about the importance of leveraging the significance of CLEVNET in suburban libraries and including those legislators in that discussion can be valuable.

Mr. Cosgrove stated that on the Democrat side Rep. Antonio, Rep. Sweeney and Sen. Williams are critical and can be of help. On the Republican side Sen. Tom Patton is supportive of the Library and can also be helpful.

Director Thomas stated that Senator Patton is from Cleveland and frequented the Lorain Branch as he was growing up.

In addition, Mr. Cosgrove stated that it would be wise to reach out to Rep. Anielski and Sen. Dolan as well.

Mr. Cosgrove reviewed potential budget risks that include: tax proposal, revenue adjustments and time.

Mr. Cosgrove continued his presentation and stated that as we approach the Capital Budget, the Library should recognize these opportunities:

- Work Force Development Opportunities
- Budget Provides Opportunity to Lay Capital Budget Groundwork
- Spring of 2018
- Monthly State, Local and Library Proposal
- Build Local Support
- Telling Our Story

Director Thomas stated that he and Mr. Cosgrove will be meeting with members of the Cuyahoga County Delegation in Columbus on March 28, 2017 to personally share the Library's story.

Mr. Cosgrove recommended that the Advocacy Taskforce consider the following action items:

- Develop Message
  - Collaboration
  - Efficiency
- Outreach – Local and Columbus
- Coordination of Advocacy Efforts
- Capital Budget Initiative
  - Define Ask
  - Local Outreach to Political and Business Leaders
- Leverage Ohio Political Transition

Mr. Hairston stated that the impact study would be helpful for the outreach to political and business leaders.

Mr. Cosgrove stated that we could consider hosting a press event regarding workforce development and libraries which could be held at a branch that might include Attorney General Mike DeWine or Congressman Tim Ryan. This might be worthwhile as a part of the strategy. By July or August a more thoughtful strategy could be developed.

Ms. Gomez asked if hosting library site visits would be part of the strategy.

Mr. Cosgrove stated that it would be beneficial for the Library to identify a priority that matches a state priority such as workforce development or job creation and include it as a part of the strategy.

Ms. Gomez stated that the Library could highlight its programmatic relationship with CMSD and other area school districts as well.

Director Thomas stated that the Library is seen as a significant part of the solution for early childhood education and workforce development.

Ms. Washington thanked Mr. Cosgrove for his presentation and stated that this work will require the appropriate staffing capacity to execute these strategies effectively.

Mr. Hairston stated that the concept of the People's University is more than videos and books.

Discussion continued about the free tax preparation services provided by outside companies and held at the library branches.

Ms. Gomez stated that in addition to tax services, the Library offers a variety of resources such as HEAP applications. Many of these services the general public is unaware of.

#### 2017 CPL Levy Update

Ms. Washington stated that the Library entered into an agreement with Stifel & Nicolaus Inc. for municipal advisory services and to help us think through the structure and options for financial pieces that staff will need relative to the levy campaign.

Director Thomas stated that although we originally considered going out for the levy in 2018, it was determined that it would be advantageous to go out in 2017. Therefore, if the levy did not pass, we would have another chance in 2018. The issues are how does the Library decide to go out and who could assist us in deciding the best route. After considering the needs of the Library, Stifel indicated that at this point, the Library needs a strategist as soon as possible.

Director Thomas stated if the Advocacy Taskforce agreed, a recommendation from the Advocacy Taskforce should be made to the full Board to consider engaging a strategist.

Director Thomas stated that although Burges & Burges Strategists has worked with the Library on several previous campaigns, the Board may choose to consider several strategists before making a selection.

Director Thomas stated that in addition to providing information about the political landscape, the strategist should do initial community surveys that will help provide information about perceptions about the Library and its services.

Director Thomas stated that the strategist will work with Stifel and provide recommendations for the Advocacy Taskforce to consider. The Advocacy Taskforce will then provide the ultimate recommendation to the full Board.

Director Thomas stated that we want to extend the renewal to every five years. If we decided that we wanted to borrow funds from the PLA, we would need an extended 10 or 20 year levy to ensure that the Library could repay those funds.

Director Thomas stated that extensions can either be a determined set of years or continuous.

Mr. Cosgrove stated that the problem with continuous and you change the levy, you lose the rollback so that it becomes a tax increase.

Director Thomas stated that with a renewal, we would be able to take a loan against the PLA and borrow \$25-40 million that would allow us to extend a plan to complete all the maintenance and capital needs on our buildings.

Director Thomas reinforced the need to bring on the strategist as soon as possible to meet the timeline of activities that must be completed.

Director Thomas stated that per the Advocacy Taskforce recommendation, he met with Dean Roland V. Anglin, Maxine Goodman Levine College of Public Affairs, Cleveland State University, to discuss the possibility of conducting an economic impact study on behalf of the Library. During that discussion, Dean Anglin recalled that a impact study was done in 2010 and that Howard Fleeter & Associates had done one for CLEVNET. Dean Anglin expressed that repeating this study at no cost to the Library would neither be beneficial to students performing this work nor be an addition to the overall research.

Ms. Washington asked if there would be a funding partner that would be willing to cover these costs.

Director Thomas stated that considering the timing, there may be creative ways to get the answers that we need by folding some aspects of the work into surveys. Perhaps the Knowledge Office could update some of the numbers provided in the 2010 state survey and the CLEVNET study.

Director Thomas stated that we should also focus on promises made and promises kept.

Ms. Washington asked if there were a motion from the Advocacy Taskforce to recommend to the full Board to engage a strategist to provide the political context behind the levy options.

Mr. Hairston motioned that a recommendation be made to the full Board to engage a strategist. Ms. Gomez seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Ms. Washington asked when the Advocacy Taskforce could expect the strategist and Stifel to come back to the Advocacy Taskforce to present their findings and recommendations.

Director Thomas stated that he will work with staff to begin the work to bring the strategist on board. It is anticipated that the strategist and Stifel will complete this portion of their work together and come to the Advocacy Taskforce in April. A resolution will be prepared for the full Board to consider recommendations in May.

#### Executive Director Update

Director Thomas stated that Ohio Means Jobs will be coming in to begin a pilot program at the Library's Addison and Fleet branches starting next Tuesday. A workforce specialist will be available at the Addison branch on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 A.M.- 6:00 P.M. and at the Fleet branch on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00 A.M.- 6:00 P.M. Fridays will remain flexible providing the opportunity for the specialist to be available at either branch location.

The Library is also working Cuyahoga Community College, who will provide a career specialist to be available on the days that the Ohio Means Jobs specialist is not at the branch. The career specialist will offer additional assistance as well as provide information about what they can do at Tri-C that Ohio Means Jobs will pay for. In addition, Neighborhood Progress will also join in by providing financial literacy support for participants.

Discussion continued about issues regarding the use of the Ohio Means Jobs logo and name on Library literature.

Ms. Gomez recommended that the Library omit the Ohio Means Jobs name and logo and utilize the language of the offered services as the Library markets and does outreach for this important initiative.

Director Thomas stated that although we cannot use the logo, it is advantageous for our branch managers to outreach to their respective communities and neighborhoods via word of mouth marketing.

Director Thomas stated that although Cuyahoga County Public Library started their program two months ago, they have had little success due to the lack of outreach to identify and attract participants.

Discussion continued about the benefits of word of mouth marketing as well as a soft launch for the program.

Director Thomas stated that the State is making it possible for the Library to be a significant part of this initiative. If we are successful, we can have conversations with legislators about our success. This could lead to program expansion as well as additional funding.

Mr. Cosgrove stated that it may be possible to schedule a meeting with the director of the Ohio Means Jobs program when Director Thomas visits Columbus.

Ms. Washington thanked attendees for their participation and adjourned the meeting of the Advocacy Taskforce at 4:15 p.m.