

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY  
Advocacy Taskforce Meeting  
September 6, 2016  
Louis Stokes Legacy Room                      Louis Stokes Wing  
3:00 P.M.

Present:        Alesha Washington, Chair, Gretchen Faro, Magda Gomez, Valarie  
                  McCall, John Hairston, Tim Cosgrove

Absent:         None

Ms. Washington called the Advocacy Taskforce Meeting to order at 3:07 p.m.

Ms. Washington opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and stated that each participant has the opportunity to assist the Library in thinking of short and long term about advocacy and policy priorities.

Ms. Washington stated that at the last meeting of the Advocacy Taskforce, detailed financial information was presented. This meeting will allow the members to look at a number of public policy priorities for the Library followed by discussion based on the individual roles of Taskforce members in their respective communities.

Ms. Washington stated that she wanted Taskforce members to understand what the Library does as it relates to government relations support. Because the Library is viewed as a large presence locally and statewide, we are looking at how to work with other metro libraries in Ohio around specific needs that impact urban areas that may be different from some of the smaller library systems. This is a relationship the Cleveland Public Library has entered to support collaboration on state issues including the budget.

Ms. Washington stated that the Ohio Library Council (OLC), which is a membership association, is a resource for all Ohio libraries that include government relations and policy work.

Ms. Washington acknowledged Tim Cosgrove, Partner, Squire Patton Boggs, as the Library's government relations consultant and stated that he is helping the Library by monitoring the political landscape as it relates to the work of the Library. Squire Patton Boggs has been engaged with the Library for some time.

Ms. Washington recapped that Metro Libraries addresses urban issues; Ohio Library Council addresses statewide issues; and our Government Relations Consultant address specific Library issues.

Ms. Washington introduced Director Thomas who gave an overview of 2017-2018 public policy priorities including the levy.

Director Thomas stated that the last library levy was passed in 2013 and we need to go back out before the end of 2018. Initially, it was thought that if we went out in 2017, should the levy not pass, this would give us the opportunity to go out again in 2018.

Director Thomas stated that the past five levies have been renewal levies and the Library has not asked for additional monies. Because of the loss of the Personal Property Tax (PPT), which was approximately \$4 million of the Library's funding, we must decide to maintain or grow. With the loss of the \$4 million, the Library will have to consider cuts to maintain. If the library were to go back out for a levy and additional funds are requested, the political landscape must be considered. The Taskforce is being asked to provide insight on the landscape and recommendations on the direction the Library should consider.

Director Thomas stated that the Cleveland Public Library and the Cuyahoga County Public Library will be working together with Ohio Means Jobs who will send recruiters to the libraries and recruit people for employment. This presents a wonderful opportunity for the State to see that libraries are concerned and involved in workforce development. Although, libraries have provided resources for individuals who are seeking jobs, we have been unable to provide statistics on how many individuals successfully secure employment. By collaborating with Ohio Means Jobs, these statistics will be available. This will be the first example of a library system hosting Ohio Means Jobs. Because of this initiative, this may provide an opportunity for the Library to ask for additional funding from the State.

Director Thomas gave an overview of the Ohio Department of Education Family and Community engagement Pilot Project. The State received funds for community engagement. Libraries were determined as a significant location for community engagement. As a result, libraries in Ohio's 13 poorest communities were selected for the pilot project and each library received \$50,000. Although East Cleveland Public Library was initially considered, Cleveland Public Library was ultimately selected to participate in the pilot project.

Director Thomas stated that because this project required participation of the business, housing, faith-based community partners, the following institutions have agreed to collaborate with the Library: PNC Bank, the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, Olivet Institutional Baptist Church. Four community engagement programs will be held under this initiative. Legislators may see this as an opportunity to pilot other projects that would present possible funding opportunities for the Library.

Ms. Gomez asked if there is was a level of county involvement to assist parents prepare their children for kindergarten.

Director Thomas stated that PRE4CLE and the Transformation Alliance are important in this effort.

Director Thomas stated that the Library has an opportunity to collaborate with existing partners and host night-out programs in venues such as the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Mr. Hairston stated that Cuyahoga County has \$10 million to do a similar project and they should be contacted to participate.

Director Thomas stated that this \$50,000 grant for this project provides a wonderful opportunity to join with Ms. Faro, Executive Director, Friends of the Cleveland Public Library, to build on this foundation and solicit additional funds to leverage support.

Mr. Hairston stated that as the Library participates in National Library Legislative Day in Washington, DC, to meet with Congresswoman Fudge and other legislators, delegates may wish to inquire about the availability of other funding sources that may exist in the US Department of Education.

Director Thomas stated that the \$50,000 that will be given to the 13 libraries is Federal money that has been given to the State. The State is identifying if there are additional federal funds available next year. The Library wants to complete this pilot project by February 2017. The State will use their findings as a result of this project to be incorporated in another request for future funding.

In response to Ms. Gomez' inquiry, Director Thomas confirmed that the \$50,000 for this project has to be spent between now and February 2017. The idea of these four programs would be to introduce parents to things that are important for them to know.

Director Thomas stated that in the past, the State had not allowed any capital funding to go for libraries. Last year, the Chamber in Columbus supported funding for Columbus Metropolitan Library. This may be an opportunity for the Library to investigate similar funding.

Director Thomas stated the Library has partnered with Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, Inc. (CNP) to provide financial literacy counseling for staff. Because the program has been very effective, CNP is proposing that the Library consider to be a partner in a potential joint request to the State for funding to provide phone counseling for the general public.

Ms. Washington stated that she had the opportunity to be at CNP when the Community Financial Centers were launching and has observed the impact on Library staff. This program is based on a unique model in New York and provides the same service that one would get from a financial advisory. The Library was the first to pilot this project with CNP to offer this service to staff. Because of the Library's presence in the community, this could be an interesting opportunity to take these services to everyone.

Ms. McCall asked for an explanation about the artist whose work is displayed on the outside wall of the Rice Branch.

Director Thomas stated that the artist is Donald Black, who has done work with the Library in the past. L.A.N.D Studio asked if this art work could be displayed on the outside wall of the Rice Branch.

Ms. McCall stated that potential partnership opportunities may exist with Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Because art is infused with library spaces, there may be ways to bridge their funding while providing arts and culture within the library.

Director Thomas stated that currently we provide the services for the Ohio Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled for the State of Ohio. The State biennially provides the Library \$2.5 million for the services we provide throughout the State. We also are the Ohio Center for the Book, which is a connector with the Library of Congress. The Library of Congress gives the Library \$2,000 per year for these services.

Director Thomas stated that it is very important to have these services.

In response to Mr. Cosgrove's inquiry, Director Thomas explained in detail some programs offered by the Ohio Center of the Book, such as the Letters About Literature competition, and their significant impact on young people.

Director Thomas reviewed in detail the Public Library Fund Rate Increase chart for attendees and noted that State funding was approximately 40% of the Library's funding. In 2015, there was an increase of 10%, the only increase the Library has had in the past 10 years. The Library had been cut to 1.66% of the General Revenue Fund from 1.7%. In 2016, we have seen a 1.7% in funding. This was a temporary fix. If this is not approved, we will go back to the 1.66%. We would have to decide if we will push for an increase to at least a permanent 1.7%.

Ms. Washington stated that the work kicks off in the State Operating Budget. Conversations are happening now to launch what happens early next year.

Director Thomas stated that legislators are faced with a \$1.3 billion shortfall.

Ms. Washington stated that the State of Ohio had been charging a sales and used tax on managed care organizations that they will no longer be doing at the end of this current budget cycle. This leaves a \$1.3 billion budget hole that needs to be filled. As we think about the next State budget process, legislators will be thinking on how to fill the budget hole while there is a lot of increase and demand for services and request throughout the State.

Mr. Cosgrove clarified that the budget hole is \$1 billion and noted that there is an additional \$300 million for the cost of Ohio's share of Medicare expansion. Between the two, this leaves a shortfall of approximately \$1.3 billion.

Ms. Washington stated that this the Taskforce has the opportunity to think the following questions relative to what is happening in our community now and over the next year as the Library considers either a straight renewal or renewal with an increase:

- Based on the priorities identified, what civic or political context should CPL take into account?
- Who are key political and civic leaders we need to identify as champions?
- What should we be doing between now and the end of the year to advance our priorities?
- Do we need additional capacity to support this work?

Ms. McCall stated that we should keep in mind what is on the ballot this year that may or may not pass. Also, next year is a local municipal election for Cleveland including mayor and city council. Statewide races will be held in 2018. We should identify what levies will appear on the ballot in 2017 and 2018.

Ms. McCall recommended that a “CPL fast facts” be prepared that would include information such as current activities; number of facilities and users; analysis of grow or maintain; funding level options, etc.

Ms. McCall stated that we consider current partnership opportunities and evaluate if we are effectively utilizing them.

Mr. Hairston stated that we should consider establishing partnerships as a result of the RNC and noted that as a Board, passing a resolution to make our facility available as a venue for RNC activities was appropriate.

Mr. Hairston recommended that we ask Cleveland State University do an economic impact study of the Library. The Library has a major impact on the City. Perhaps this could be done pro bono.

Director Thomas stated that a national study was done that indicated that for every \$1.00 that was spent on libraries, \$4.50 was generated in the economy.

Ms. Gomez stated that if Cleveland State University would be unable to do the study, perhaps Case Western Reserve University could assist in this effort. She also stated that we need to remind people about the last time the library has been restored; anticipate questions that the community may have; expand on the rich history of libraries; how libraries assist people find jobs; voter registration; passport applications and more.

Ms. Faro stated that urban libraries perform a social services role that is critical to the well-being of our community.

Ms. McCall stated that many neighborhoods where libraries are located are considered recreational spaces.

Mr. Hairston stated that schools and libraries are the heartbeat of the community and are accessible to all.

Ms. Gomez stated that the Library has evolved from a resource that helps people to read to a community organization that provides many resources that help people find jobs and much more. Messaging and painting the picture is important in helping people see Library's value.

Mr. Cosgrove stated that an economic study is important and can provide a more scholarly look at the impact that Cleveland Public Library has on an urban environment. This study would have the potential to communicate to decision makers on other levels.

Mr. Cosgrove recommended that contact be made with Dr. Ronald V. Anglin, new dean of Cleveland State University's Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, as he is interested in engaging in these kinds of issues.

Ms. McCall stated that Dr. Anglin has a well-rounded background and is a respected authority on community economic development, with more than 25 years of experience spanning the academic, philanthropic and nonprofit sectors.

Mr. Cosgrove stated that creating a report of this type gives us something more to talk about.

Mr. Hairston stated that this study determine where we are and where we need to go.

Ms. Washington stated that this study impacts the preparation for the levy and State budget.

Ms. McCall asked how can we leverage other parts of the Library that do not include books and stated that Lori Stokes has authored a book, *In My Father's Image*, and is doing book signings.

Ms. McCall proposed that City Hall and the Library partner on this effort.

Director Thomas stated that although he initially understood that Ms. Stokes wished to do her book signing at the Library as a part of the formal dedication of the Louis Stokes Legacy Room, he will happy to join in with City Hall.

Ms. McCall stated that she would like to have someone sponsor approximately 100 books so that Ms. Stokes can autograph them for neighborhood children who attend the event. Leveraging relationships can create earned media for the Library.

Ms. McCall stated that the Library may want to be involved in regularly scheduled neighborhood meetings hosted by the Cleveland Police Department and local community development corporations.

Director Thomas stated that since the Library has been helpful to many individuals and organizations, those individuals and organizations may in turn be willing to be helpful to the Library.

Ms. Gomez asked if we have had discussions with faith-based organization about the levy.

Director Thomas stated that those discussions have not happened yet.

Ms. Washington stated that as the impact study and talking points are being completed, we should think about business relationships, first tier contacts, champions and key players who can be influential and helpful.

Ms. McCall stated that the regular library users can be effective as well and recommended letters from children sharing their experiences and requesting support for the Library.

Ms. McCall asked how can CMSD play a supportive role and recommended that we explore possible collaboration between CMSD and the Library on the next wave of school buildings under the Master Facilities Plan.

Ms. Gomez stated that this effort is non-partisan.

Mr. Cosgrove suggested thinking outside of Cleveland and that perhaps the impact study include a section on Cleveland and beyond. In addition, the Library's story is impressive. Given budget challenges, the Library has done more with less.

Ms. Gomez asked if the Library was going to go out for a renewal or a renewal with increase.

Ms. Washington stated that for the next several months, staff will be working on options if we should maintain or growth. Those options will be presented to the Taskforce for consideration and direction.

Ms. McCall stated that looking carefully at the political landscape is very important as endorsements are sought.

Ms. Gomez stated that the use of social media is critical for on-going messaging.

Director Thomas stated that in September 2017, the County will have a Budget Commission meeting with library directors to discuss contract percentages shared among the libraries. Historically, Cleveland Public Library has received the largest share because of the services we provide throughout the state. This has been a contention among the libraries. Every three years, we vote on the same agreement. This could create bad public relations that could negatively affect the Library's efforts for the levy.

Ms. Gomez stated that we should anticipate this and get ahead of it.

Ms. McCall stated that if we get ahead of it, this could possibly be used to the advantage of the Library.

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