

**Minutes  
BOLT Work Day  
Main Library  
January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**Trustees Present:**

Erin Vance Skinner, Chair  
Guy K. Anderson, Vice-Chair  
Tim J. Anderson  
Sybil Ansbacher  
Ronnie King  
Charlie Kleeman  
Joshua R. La Bouef  
Gerald Reid  
Brenda R. Simmons-Hutchins  
Jackie Perry

**Trustees Absent:**

Marc Hardesty

**Foundation:**

Suzanne Hudson-Smith,  
Executive Director  
Ann Harwood-Nuss, Chair

**Facilitator:**

Kelly Mannel, Facilitator, Image  
Partners

**Friends:**

Gail Hunyar (Friends of the Jacksonville Public Library)  
Sandra Brebenel (Murray Hill)  
Roxanne Henkle (Willowbranch)  
Judy Klein (Murray Hill)  
Celia Miller (Dallas Graham)  
John Reazer (Brentwood)

**Staff:**

Barbara A.B. Gubbin, Director  
Mark Merritt, Deputy Director, Administration and  
Finance  
Richard Mott, Manager for Strategic Development  
Kathy Lussier, Manager, Community Relations &  
Marketing  
Eric Lawrence, Assistant Director, Planning and  
Facilities  
Julie McNeil, Assistant Director, Public Services  
Gretchen Mitchell, Assistant Director, Support Services  
Andrew Herron, Executive Assistant to the Director

**Visitor:**

Kevin E. Hyde, Save Our Libraries, Foley & Lardner

Call to Order

Chair Erin Vance Skinner called the meeting to order at 9:03AM and outlined the goal for the day – that by the session's end, each trustee should leave with a personal work plan – a list of commitments for action, both short and long term.

Session Facilitator Kelly Mannel and Strategic Development Manager Richard Mott drew attendees' attention to the usefulness of stories in advocating for Jacksonville Public Library. Mr. Mott shared stories of the library's effects on adults, students, immigrants, homeless individuals attempting to better their condition, and others among the 95% of Americans who agree that library materials and resources play an important role in giving all citizens a chance to succeed.

Next Steps for the Independent District

Kevin E. Hyde, leader of the Save Our Libraries campaign, discussed the recent straw ballot effort which failed narrowly to create a referendum for an Independent Library District. This would have given the library a stable funding source. Some lessons Mr. Hyde drew from the effort:

- a) The campaign relied on a budget of less than \$25,000 but failed by less than two points, indicating considerable voter appeal.
- b) August is a less congenial month for such efforts than November, due to a lack of hotly contested races and a consequently higher likelihood that only one or two districts will decide the vote, districts which may or may not favor the measure.
- c) Honing the message more clearly would be advisable. Independent taxing districts easily arouse anti-tax sentiment, even though this district would not have raised taxes but merely claimed a certain portion of current millage.
- d) Get a Republican champion to complement Democratic champions of the measure who already exist, such as Senator Audrey Gibson.

New attempts to establish an Independent Library District will require either another petition drive or action by the City Council to petition the legislature. A year and a half of effort would be needed to bring a petition drive to fruition. As of July, there will be a new City Council, potentially with new attitudes on the subject.

Trustee Sybil Ansbacher asked if support of the Independent District would be a wise subject on which to query political candidates. Mr. Hyde suggested first inquiring in more general terms about their support of libraries and of a dedicated funding source. Goals and not means should be the avenue of inquiry at this point.

#### Status of Pending Legislation About the Library

Director Barbara Gubbin discussed her and Trustee Guy Anderson's meeting this morning with City Council Member Lori Boyer to discuss the status of legislation to let the library keep fine revenues in a trust fund for capital enhancements. Dedicating them thus would allow the library to address its many capital enhancement needs and emphasize that these funds should not be used for operating costs. The current bill comes from a recommendation of the City's Task Force on Consolidation. Director Gubbin called upon all present to communicate with City Council Members the importance of the bill.

Director Gubbin and Trustee Guy Anderson also discussed with CM Boyer legislation to approve the lease agreements between the library and Learn to Read. CM Boyer is interested in the possibility of using literacy and adult education programs of the library to help the unemployed and underemployed qualify for and find jobs. More dialogue with her office will follow.

#### Prospects for Future Budgets

Mark Merritt, Deputy Director for Administration and Finance, reviewed the 45% reduction the library's budget has suffered over the last decade and clarified the calendar for the FY2016 budgeting process. Fiscal challenges with Police and Fire pension expenses will place downward pressure on the city's budget in FY 2016.

#### The Foundation and the Friends

Suzanne Hudson-Smith, Executive Director of the Jacksonville Public Library Foundation, discussed the Foundation's recent efforts at fund raising and relationship building. She

also discussed the much appreciated fund raising efforts of the Friends groups, some of whose efforts are dedicated to a particular branch and some to the system as a whole.

### Trustee Effectiveness

Facilitator Mannel enjoined participants to brainstorm ways the Board could increase its effectiveness in five areas: Knowledge, Relationships, Funding, Strategy, and Community Engagement. Collecting the ideas of various work groups, trustees reported the following proposals, which Facilitator Mannel invited them to include in their personal work plans and to champion at future Board meetings themselves.

1. Knowledge (reported by Trustee Ronnie King)
  - a. Rotate participation on library committees, giving Board members a chance to sit in on each.
  - b. Visit every local branch.
  - c. Study laws that impact libraries.
  - d. Meet with Friends groups, attending their meetings as they attend ours.
  - e. Visit or research Library Boards from surrounding counties for ideas.
  - f. Stay abreast of trends and national library statistics.
  - g. Understand the Sunshine Law.
  - h. Understand pressures on City leaders as they formulate budgets.
  - i. Read best-practices literature.
2. Strategy (reported by Trustee Sybil Ansbacher)
  - a. Seek visibility and input from the community to promote understanding and dispel myths.
  - b. Form more ad hoc committees.
  - c. Read and listen closely to reports from staff.
  - d. Involve one's self in civic organizations.
  - e. Engage in more dialogue with the School Board.
3. Relationships (reported by Trustee Gerald Reid)
  - a. Give community officials a tour of their library branch(es).
  - b. Know other library branches as well, perhaps requesting a tour.
  - c. Use the library and attend programs.
  - d. Invite City Council Members to library events.
  - e. Reach out to candidates with one's story.
  - f. Develop relationships with City Council assistants.
  - g. Send thank yous and personal communications to visiting community leaders.
  - h. Be consistent – don't just contact community leaders when you need them.
  - i. Attend Library Day in Tallahassee.
  - j. Broaden the focus to include other elected officials such as the Sheriff.
  - k. Dedicate books to City Officials who have served the library well, implicitly making the point that support of the library is valued.
4. Community Engagement (reported by Trustee Brenda Simmons-Hutchins)
  - a. Strengthen relationships with post-secondary institutions.
  - b. Collaborate with social services agencies, as the library is doing with the Friends of Hemming Park.

- c. Create a deck of palm notes that trustees can carry to communicate with community leaders.
  - d. Attend Friends events.
  - e. Remember religious and civic leaders as well as City leaders.
5. Proposed Legislation to let the Library Keep Money from Fines (reported by Trustee Tim Anderson)
- a. Communicate carefully to the Council how the funds will be used.
  - b. Express that taxpayers care but do not know that this money does not come to the library.
  - c. Be prepared to answer why the library is different from other departments which might request the ability to keep such monies, perhaps by focusing on the goal and not the means.
  - d. Count likely yes votes to determine if it is indeed in the library's best interest to have the legislation voted upon at all.
  - e. Be prepared to continue advocating, after passage, that the City Council not confuse these funds with the operating budget.
6. Next Steps for the Independent Library District (reported by Trustee Joshua La Bouef)
- a. Draft a resolution from trustees in favor of the district.
  - b. Work to get GOP support.
  - c. Work to enlist the School Board.
  - d. Work to enlist a corporate champion.
  - e. Communicate carefully with Friends to coordinate efforts and assignments.
  - f. Be versed in success stories of other Independent Districts, to share with City Council members and to dispel fears.
7. Partnering with the Foundation (reported by Trustee Guy Anderson)
- a. Enlist friends and family.
  - b. Join local Friends groups.
  - c. Recommend monied connections to the Foundation or at least facilitate the introduction.
8. Operating Budget (reported by Trustee Jackie Perry)
- a. Be more focused in requests. Don't put forward a laundry list, just two things – increased service hours and materials.
  - b. Be specific regarding dollar amounts.
  - c. Look for ways that the creation of a new fund for capital enhancements (from fines) could offer the Foundation new opportunities for matching grants.

#### Work Plans

Trustees formulated individual work plans for themselves, incorporating the ideas above. Chair Skinner invited the group to formulate a good accountability system of how to review these plans at Board meetings. It was decided that, going forward, there will be a spot on the Agenda for trustees to share their progress on their work plans. There also, per Director Gubbin, is the possibility of Board members evaluating their own effectiveness on a yearly basis.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20PM.

Erin V. Skinner 2/11/15

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Jenny 2/11/15

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