

**Minutes
Board of Library Trustees
Main Library
Thursday, March 6, 2014
Independent Library Taxing District Workshop**

Board Members Present:

Brenda Simmons-Hutchins, Chair
Erin Vance Skinner, Vice-Chair
Gerald Reid
Guy Anderson
Jackie Perry
Jim Selzer
Ronnie King

Board Members Absent:

Christina Stallings, Secretary
Marc Hardesty
Mark Wood
Sybil Ansbacher
Bill Gulliford, Council President, Ex-officio
Greg Anderson, Councilmember, Ex-officio
Kimberly Davis, DCPS Representative, Ex-officio

Others Present:

Barbara Gubbin, Director
Carolyn Williams, Deputy Director
Mark Merritt, Deputy Director
Gretchen Mitchell, Assistant Director
for Support Services
Julie McNeil, Assistant Director for
Public Services
Kathy Lussier, Manager of Community
Relations and Marketing
Richard Mott, Manager of Strategic
Initiatives
Eric Lawrence, Assistant Director
Of Facilities
Karen Walker, Manager for E-Services
And Digital Access
Kimberly Keen, Administrative Aide
Lisa Peterson, Technology Systems
Administrator

John Sawyer, Office of the General Counsel
Mitesh Sangani, Conference Center Manager
Bill Brinton, Presenter
Roxanne Henkle, Friends of the Willowbranch
Library
Missy Jackson, Friends of Murray Hill
Branch Library
Florence Rush-White, Friends of the Brentwood
Branch Library
Suzanne Hudson-Smith, Executive Director of
Jacksonville Public Library Foundation
Ann Harwood-Nuss, Jacksonville Public Library
Foundation
Joy Korman

Call to Order

Chair Brenda Simmons-Hutchins called the meeting to order at 12:12pm. She welcomed attendees and reviewed the agenda for the day. Attendees included Trustees, senior staff, Friends groups' representatives and Foundation representatives.

Introductions of Guests

There were no guests wishing to make comments.

Director Gubbin advised the group that a Fund the Future handout had been placed in each packet and had also been emailed electronically. Please let staff know if more handouts are needed. She stated that if staff were needed to attend meetings with public officials, please let her know. Director Gubbin also advised that an email had been sent to the Trustees regarding organizations that had previously used

meeting space in the branch library meeting rooms. She advised that there was a list of over 1000 potential contacts. She noted that the list is sorted by location and since the list was so large, she asked that the trustees let her know how they would like to receive this information. It can be made available on the Board Resource Page on the JPL website as well.

Environmental Scan

Chair Simmons-Hutchins reviewed the handout - *Environmental Scan: A Summary of Developments* with a bearing on the establishment of an Independent Library District in Duval County. This handout provided information regarding the petition drive which achieved 25,931 signatures to place a Straw Ballot on the ballot for August 26th. This scan also gave information regarding the drafting of the J-Bill by Senator Gibson. The scan included a copy of the memorandum from Council Auditor Sherman with his questions raised by the bill as well as a copy of the written responses from Bill Brinton, representing the petitioners' committee. Mr. Brinton met with Mr. Sherman to discuss them. Despite the answers provided by Mr. Brinton, Mr. Sherman's questions raised sufficient concern with Council members that they decided not to vote on the ordinance endorsing the J-Bill and defer action until they had the opportunity for more consideration.

Mr. Brinton gave an update on why the resolution was derailed when the auditor circulated his questions. Some of the auditor's questions were informational and easily addressed. Some of these questions cannot be answered since they require the governing board of the library district to make decisions. One of Mr. Sherman's questions was in regards to citizen representation, another questioned if the City could audit the library district. Mr. Brinton also explained that most of the proposal was based on information gathered from the Orange and Alachua County districts. Mr. Brinton stated that it is critical that elected officials and the community be educated on the district assuring decision makers that this is not political.

Lack of a City Council resolution notwithstanding, Senator Gibson filed a J-Bill (SB 1548) on February 28th to create the Duval County Library District to provide public library services in the county. The creation of the district is contingent on two outcomes: approval of the straw ballot by a majority of Duval County voters on August 26th; and approval of a corresponding referendum to be held in conjunction with the March 24, 2015 election. State Representative Reggie Fullwood filed similar legislation in the House (HB 1341).

Chair Simmons-Hutchins asked Trustee Anderson to report on the Consolidation Review Task Force. Trustee Anderson reported that the question of the taxing district has been discussed by the task force. The subcommittee is recommending to the task force that the idea of a special taxing district is a specific act of de-consolidation and they will not support it. Mr. Brinton stated that our charter does allow for restructure. Chair Simmons-Hutchins completed the Environmental Scan noting the impact of the recommendations of the Jacksonville Retirement Reform Task Force and the Jacksonville Children's Commission's desire to seek an alternate revenue source. The Retirement Task Force has recommended either an increase in property tax or an increase in sales tax. Tax increases can sway citizens one way or another; the words tax increase may scare people.

Bill Brinton gave an overview of his original presentation given at the Board Work Day. He advised that the True Commission took a vote on February 2nd; they voted 10 to nothing against the J-Bill. He discussed the JCCI study, and reminded everyone that the straw ballot is only asking if the people should be given a choice of how their public library should be funded. It is not about raising taxes.

Language added to the J-Bill draft includes:

- The Jacksonville City Council is empowered to set the term of the length of service of appointees.
- The City can levy no more than a ceiling of a 20mill to include one mill for the library.
- The City of Jacksonville shall continue to own all real and personal property that is currently owned and shall be responsible for any associated debt for such owned assets unless and until the same are transferred by sale, lease or otherwise to the library district. Director Gubbin asked if this means that the debt stays with the city as long the city owns the buildings. Mr. Brinton advised yes.
- The library district may use any of the services available through the City of Jacksonville, but is not required to do so.
- The library district shall use the legal services of the OGC.
- The City of Jacksonville and the Office of the General Council shall have the right to audit the library district for any purpose without restriction.

Chair Simmons-Hutchins asked for input from the group as to the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) of the J-Bill.

Strengths

- August vote is during the budget battle
- Voter Choice
- We have the J-Bill drafted
- Grassroots campaign for straw ballot
- People love their libraries and resent that they and services are less accessible
- Support from the Times Union Editorial Board
- JCCI Study
- Capacity Plan

Weaknesses

- Complexity involved
- If J-Bill passes Senate and House, the Governor has a say on it, danger of veto
- Will have to continue to educate the community and leaders
- Inability of City of Jacksonville to plan long term
- No top leadership champion
- No City Council sponsorship
- Grassroots support needs further organization and funding
- How to get "Love our Library" momentum

Opportunities

- Craft the right message
- Past budget cuts –stresses need
- Educate
- Not about raising taxes but a different way of funding
- Short list of influentials to serve as public voice

- Group to support the public voice
- Local elections – educate candidates early
- Get School Board involved

Threats

- Bad PR – anti tax
- Pension Reform
- Consolidated Task Force – if message is against independent tax districts
- Sustainable funding
- Erosion of budget (visual/pictorial representation)

Mr. Brinton suggested that the Board of Trustees take the position of waiting until after the straw ballot to weigh in. Wait and see if the voters want a choice.

Ann Harwood-Nuss stated that we need to drill the fact that this is not about raising taxes, but about how the funding occurs.

Roxanne Henkle stated that we need to package the education so the public would understand the message.

Trustee Perry commented that the strength was the voter's choice

Trustee Selzer commented on not having a champion with public recognition; he feels this is a significant need.

Director Gubbin suggested if the binding vote happens in March, there may be an opportunity to approach the candidates running for office for support. Joy Korman commented that the March elections being a primary could be challenge or a weakness. Kathy Lussier commented that the candidates will have the money and opportunity to support, but if they send the wrong message, it could be difficult to counter. Candidates would need to be educated on the bill. Trustee Anderson advised we need to talk to the candidates early, and if they don't support the J-Bill, they need to be convinced to not talk about it at all.

Trustees Skinner and Selzer agreed with Mr. Brinton's suggestion that the Board wait until after the straw ballot and determine what the voters have to say before the Board makes a public stand. Director Gubbin asked for clarification if a trustee is asked where they stand, how it should be answered. Chair Simmons-Hutchins advised that they should answer that citizens should have the opportunity to vote.

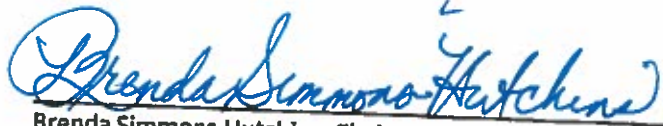
Joy Korman commented that the Board of Trustees is not alone; there is an effort in the community to educate and start a process to figure out how to make a favorable vote happen.

Suzanne Hudson-Smith advised that we do need a champion to get it done; we need to make sure we have a number of players with the strength to move the process forward.

Director Gubbin advised we have a huge support system; we have to find a way to organize that support, such as the rejuvenated Friends groups.

Chair Simmons-Hutchins said the immediate focus is the 2015 budget and we support the community's right to choose.

Chair Simmons-Hutchins brought the workshop to a close at 2:10pm.



Brenda Simmons-Hutchins, Chair, Board of Library Trustees



Christina Stallings, Secretary, Board of Library Trustees

April 10, 2014

Date Approved by the Board of Library Trustees

