

JACKSON COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT BOARD MEETING
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING
AUGUST 14, 2014

The Jackson County Library District Special Meeting was opened by President Jill Turner on Thursday, August 14 at 9:00 a.m. in the Adams Room of the Medford Library, 205 S. Central Avenue, Medford, Oregon. Those present were:

Board Director Carol Doty
Board Director Susan Kiefer
Board Director Maureen Swift
Board President Jill Turner
Board Vice President Monica Weyhe
Jackson County Library Business Manager Lisa Garcia
Jackson County Library Director Kim Wolfe
District Counsel Mark Bartholomew
Recording Secretary Betsy Randolph
Members of the Public and Press

1. Library Permanent Rate Tax Reconsideration

President Turner proposed that the Library District approve a tax at 52 cents for a period of time and then borrow, either by a line of credit or a tax anticipatory note, to make up the cash flow shortage yearly until the time property taxes could be collected. The expenditures for fiscal year 2014-15 would stay the same, as discussed in the July 17 meeting. By June 30, 2015 the fund balance would be greatly reduced, leaving the District without enough money to fund the libraries from June 30 to November 2015 when taxes would next be collected. However, with short-term financing, with the promise to pay back at the time property taxes are collected, the District would have enough money to continue to operate the system.

Ms. Turner explained that a loan would not be needed this current year, because the county will up-front the money, to be paid back in December after property taxes are collected. But the following year, as the District strives to become independent, there would still be a cash flow need. Ms. Turner considered, but rejected the idea of taxing the first year at 60 cents and then dropping it to 52 cents because of the yo-yo effect on the tax rate. This proposal is a way of stabilizing the tax rate, but she cautioned that “We cannot predict, nor will we know for sure what that levy is for the following year.”

Director Carol Doty moved to approve President Turner’s proposal. It was seconded by Vice President Monica Weyhe.

President Turner explained in further detail her proposal covering operating costs, projected revenues, and how the short-term financing would help to reach the District’s fund goal objective of fund stability by the third year. If the rate was left at 52 cents, most likely it would take several years of borrowing, but Ms. Turner said that it would not be the board’s intent to do so each year, but to work its way slowly out of its cash flow deficit.

“After many hours of running numbers, I am convinced that this is a doable plan and by having contingency and some leeway on how much enhanced hours and services we implement at what point of time throughout the year, ...that this would work at 52 cents...,” stated Vice President Weyhe.

President Turner invited the public to comment on the subject of the tax proposal.

Betty Kazmin of Medford, who said she is a loyal library supporter, commended the board for reconsidering decisions she believed were made too hurriedly. She expressed interest in the number of people “you have been consulting with other than your \$200 an hour lawyer and was wondering why you did not start out first getting free legal advise before hiring your lawyer.” She read from a letter she recently published in the *Mail Tribune* questioning the County’s decision not to release money she felt was previously earmarked for the library system.

Eagle Point’s Pat Ashley also commended the group on reconsidering the 60 cent levy. She would like the board to reconsider hours as quickly as possible, not only in her area but throughout the county and to consider a more equal distribution of those hours.

Wright Kieran of Ruch said he was happy that the board was responsive to the citizenry by calling the special meeting and reconsidering the rate. He suggested that as a new board “starting from ground zero” in terms of cash flow, it would make more sense to “learn first how to run the basic operation” before extending beyond what was formerly the County’s supplied hours for each library. He feels there is “some reverse Robin Hood scheme going on” where libraries that formerly got extra funding from their local area for additional hours are now going to get those extra hours paid for by the Library board. If those additional hours are part of the 52-cent rate, then he is against even that level. His main message to the board was “walk before you run.”

Joel Marks of Medford said he was glad about the deliberative process the board has taken and taking the public comment before a decision is made. He said he is concerned about the budget, and suggested that the board view everything with a ‘Do we need this; do we need that’ attitude. He questioned the current number of branch libraries. “Do we need 15 libraries? I’d like to hear the arguments about that. I personally don’t think we do.” He said that he was grateful the board has reconsidered its decision, saying, “You have a great opportunity to right a wrong....”

Michelle Atkinson of Medford reflected “What an amazing thing is that we’re all here and that almost all of us in this room had something to do keeping the libraries open. We could have been in a situation that would have been very sad.” She would like to see more hours. “If it’s 60 cents, I would expect more services, more hours,” and she would be willing to pay it.

Chris Durham of Medford appreciated the board’s decision to rethink what he considered a gross error. “I’m here to campaign against even a 52 cent rate,” he said, “and I’m suggesting to you that allocating funds for additional library hours to Ashland and a few other libraries without considering the entire county’s needs is unconscionable.” He pointed out that, as the levy is paid by all taxpayers, then all communities, including Medford, should have a right to their share of an allocation of any additional money earmarked to expand hours. He said he felt that there was no justification to increase the originally funded number of County hours or to use tax revenue to replace former local contributions for additional hours before the needs of each branch library could be analyzed. If funds became available, that analysis would help provide equal distribution of them. He reminded the board that their campaign slogan was “*Libraries for All*, not plus special treatment for some.”

Maria Vaughn, who said she is a long-time member of the Friends of the Central Point Library as well as a resident of Medford, also thanked board for reconsidering the tax rate. She wanted to clear up a misconception held by some members of the public that the board members were being paid or drew a salary. They are not. She suggested that the Board “keep the status quo” for one year and study the needs and use of the branches and their client base. She says both the Central Point and Medford libraries are crowded everyday and they need more hours.

Cathy Shaw of Ashland said she felt the animosity that exists due to geographical location is unfounded. She said that the Ashland city council, mayor, and administration was more than willing to pick up the

additional hours and that money was established for those additional hours in Ashland. But, once another funding mechanism passed, that money went away. She said that leaves the library board with a very difficult decision in terms of how to make up some hours but not others. "I've heard people say we need to leave everything as it is, and that's exactly what the board has done—left things as they are," Ms. Shaw said. She said it wasn't that Ashland has so more money to pay for the additional hours, but that they chose to. She went on to cite statistics that point out "some of the poorest neighborhoods in the county are in Ashland." She also stated that all advertising during the campaign listed 60 cents as the level of funding.

Finally, Brad Inman of Medford admonished the district that they not borrow money unnecessarily. He urged them to take the time and opportunity to stabilize the library system.

"It's high on our list that libraries across the county get equal treatment, and I think we can get a good start on that with the 52 cents" said Director Susan Kiefer.

Director Maureen Swift agreed, saying that she thinks that it is a good start for the board to be relooking at this rate with a little more clarity and precision. She expects that the board's ability to be more precise will be enhanced in the future.

2. Resolution 2014-003

Director Doty called for the question that they accept President Turner's proposal as stated.

Roll call vote: Vice President Weyhe, yes; Director Swift, yes; Director Kiefer, yes; President Turner, yes; Director Doty, yes. The motion passed unanimously.

Director Doty moved that President Turner execute resolution 2014-003 with a tax rate of 52 cents, repealing the earlier tax rate of 60 cents. Director Weyhe seconded. There being no discussion, President Turner called for a roll call vote: Vice President Weyhe, yes; Director Swift, yes; Director Kiefer, yes; President Turner, yes; Director Doty, yes. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Adjourn

President Turner adjourned the meeting at 9:48 a.m.

The next meeting of the Jackson County Library District board will be a special meeting on Wednesday, August 27 at 3:00 p.m. at the Central Point Branch Library, 115 S. Third Street. Earlier in the day, board members will be touring some branch libraries.

The next regular business meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 4 at 9:00 a.m. in the Adams Room of the Medford Library.