Evanston Public Library
Special Meeting of Board of Trustees
August 4, 2010
6:00 p.m.
Main Library

Members Present: Susan Newman, Lynette Murphy, Gail Bush, Susan Stone, Karen Terry, Gail Bush, Christopher Stewart, Diane Allen-Jacobi, Dona Gerson

Members Absent: Brooke Roothaan

Library Staff Present: Mary Johns, Library Director; Paul Gottschalk, Administrative Services Manager

Guests Present: Alderman Coleen Burris, Alderman Don Wilson, Alderman Ann Rainey, Alderman Mark Tendam, Assistant City Manager Marty Lyons, City Attorney Grant Farrar, Lou Gergits, Trish Stieglitz, Ellen Newcomer, Michael Tannen, Mary Griffin, Lori Keenan, Eb Moran, Jim Hughes, Junad Rizki, Carl Bova, Kevin O’Connor, Mike Vasilko, Bob Seidenberg (Pioneer Press), Jonathan Bullington (Chicago Tribune), Bill Smith (Evanston Now), and others.

Call to Order
Board President Christopher Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and advised all present that the purpose of this special meeting was to discuss the Library Funding Model provided for under the Illinois Library Act and to begin budget planning for the City’s coming fiscal year.

Citizen Comment
Don Wilson said he was not in favor of implementing the Library Fund. Mike Vasilko asked if the City Council would have control over the tax increase. Jim Hughes and Ellen Newcomer spoke in support of a Library Fund.

Discussion of Library Fund funding model
Trustee Gail Bush made a motion that the Evanston Public Library Board of Trustees approve the implementation of the Library Fund model for the Evanston Public Library in accordance with the Illinois Local Library Act, 75 ILCS (Illinois Combined Statutes) 5/1-.01 et seq.

Diane Allen-Jacobi seconded the motion.

Trustee Dona Gerson offered a substitute motion to adopt the Library Funding model for fiscal year 2012. There was no second.

Trustee Gerson said that she felt more time was needed to discuss this issue as she had been unaware of the state statute until this year, and she felt that the community needed more time to understand the implications of this funding
option. She believes that the community needs more time to understand the statute and that the community needs time to discuss its library services needs. Trustee Gerson believes that moving to the Library Fund model may put the Library Board at odds with Evanston city officials as it has in other communities.

Trustee Bush advised that her motion gave no timetable for the transition and agreed that the Board needs to consider various issues relating to the change in funding model and to how the model works.

Trustee Susan Newman advised that she had been on the Library Board Task Force for Sustainable Funding Options. She is respectful of the issues involved in a funding change, but she feels that the Library needs a predictable source of funding so that reasonable planning can be done to provide services to all users. Difficult economic conditions make library services extremely important to the community.

Trustee Karen Terry said that the Library Fund model works well in most communities and asked Trustee Gerson to expand on her remarks that the model causes conflict with city officials.

Trustee Gerson said that she had done some research into how the model worked in other communities. She said that it has worked well in Arlington Heights for the past 20 years and that the library board there had actually decreased the levy amount for fiscal year 2002. She said that Skokie also operated under this model and that it worked well for them. She said that to her way of thinking Des Plaines had experienced some conflict over the model, and she said that the Highland Park Public Library Board proposed to adhere to the State Statute, but the City Manager had challenged it.

Paul Gottschalk gave some figures on funding of library services in some of the surrounding communities: Skokie’s property levy is $172 per capita, Northbrook’s levy is $166 per capita, Des Plaines’s levy is $108 per capita, Champaign’s is $91 per capita and Evanston’s levy would be $51 per capita under the Library Fund model.

Trustee Gerson said that the issue is how we get more funds in a harmonious way.

Trustee Newman reminded the Board that there have been years of struggle in Evanston over how to make ends meet while serving all of Evanston’s varied needs. She appreciates Trustee Gerson’s concerns, but she feels that the community will understand when given enough time. She thinks the Library Fund model is the right thing to do.

Trustee Bush reiterated that the Library Fund model is provided for under the law. The statute stipulates that if a city wants a library, the city is obligated to
follow the law which outlines the permitted tax levy. Evanston is a community proud of its cultural opportunities. Evanston is a social experiment. We have provided library services despite the inability for residents to see how little money is spent on their library services (2.15% of the City’s overall budget). Trustee Bush believes that everyone in the room, regardless of their positions on the issue of funding model, is here to support excellence in library services for the community.

Trustee Terry returned to the issue of conflict in communities using the Library Fund model and said that overall the model seemed very effective. She asked for more information on conflicts and suggested some in-depth dialogue with communities using the model to determine what the issues might be.

Trustee Gerson responded that she felt a move to the Library Fund model is too abrupt. She thinks the Board needs to propose a budget, and she thinks that we will propose a larger budget. She believes that simply because the Board has the legal authority to impose a separate library services levy that does not constitute a mandate to do so.

Trustee Bush argued that changes can be well reasoned.

Trustee Gerson asked proponents of the Funding model that if the motion is passed then would the proposed budget contain funding for both branches.

Christopher Stewart responded that next year’s budget has not yet been proposed. He asked Paul Gottschalk if City’s budget would contain monies for Library services for fiscal year 2011.

Paul Gottschalk said that the General Fund is a large pool funded from various sources to finance many City departments, including library services. In addition, the General Fund contains revenues generated by the Library, e.g. fines and fees. Under a library fund, any additional funding required to provide library services would come from property taxes. If the Library Fund model is adopted, it would not necessarily mean a direct increase in property taxes as the Library’s property tax levy would depend on the budget approved by the Board and the City’s overall levy would depend on the budget adopted by the City Council.

Trustee Gerson said we need more time to make this change.

Trustee Newman added that we have been talking about and exploring funding options for a year. It is important to get those facts out to the community.

Trustee Gerson believes that the community needs to make the decision.

Trustee Bush suggests town hall meetings before the new library budget is proposed. She is deeply concerned about the disinformation campaign being
mounted by some. This tactic is disrespectful of the community. It is imperative that reallocation of monies be made clear. We need to be sure community members understand what is happening.

Trustee Gerson said that we would have more opportunity to let the community understand the transition if we continue the discussion during the next fiscal year.

Trustee Allen-Jacobi expressed displeasure over a suggestion that the Board is pretending there will be no raise in property taxes if the new funding model is implemented. The Board is composed of thoughtful and responsible members of the community. Many members have professional experience in business and library professions that gives them understanding of the relevant issues.

Trustee Bush emphasized that the Board is looking for a more stable infrastructure within which library services can be planned for and provided.

Trustee Lynette Murphy agreed with Trustee Gerson and Trustee Bush. She indicated that she would not approve any increase in taxes, and she believes we need to get the confusion out of the discussion.

Trustee Gerson asked if we approve implementation of the Fund Model during this meeting, she would want to know what the tax levy would be in 2012.

Grant Farrar, City Attorney, indicated that with respect to the Local Library Act, the city’s role in collecting the levy is ministerial, and there is no case law to refute this.

Marty Lyons, Assistant City Manager, said the General Fund is under the purview of the City Council. Library levy and corporate levy are adopted at the same time.

$4.2 million dollars is the Library’s entire budget from the General Fund. Board would work closely with Council on Library budget.

Alderman Rainey said that when the Library budget is presented it must include all expenses. In her opinion this represents a new tax bill.

Trustee Susan Stone suggested that trust is an issue with the City Council. We trust the Council to make appropriate choices for the City. The community must place trust in the Library Board.

A voice vote was called on the motion as presented by Trustee Bush. Voting was as follows: Trustee Murphy-No, Trustee Bush-Yes, Trustee Allen-Jacobi-Yes, Trustee Stewart-Yes, Trustee Newman-Yes, Trustee Terry-Yes, Trustee Stone-Yes, Trustee Gerson-No. The motion was passed.
Identify FY11 Budget Priorities
Board President Christopher Stewart introduced the second topic on the agenda of this special Board meeting: preparation of a proposed budget for the next fiscal year, March through December, 2011. This budget is a ten-month transition budget. 2012 will begin the first full fiscal year based on calendar year.

Discussion of proposed budget focuses on several issues:

1) Restoration of the collections funding equal to fiscal year (FY) 2009/10 level.
2) Full restoration and funding for branch library locations at full FY 2009/10 level, i.e. not reduced hours currently in place.
3) Library operations, i.e. locations, hours of service and collections.

Trustee Bush said that new or relocated branches are a moot issue at this time. Not a discussion for the Board during this meeting.

Trustee Newman suggests that outreach efforts be flexible.

The State of Illinois issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the relocation of Illinois Dept. of Employment Services (IDES) office. State Senator Jeff Schoenberg had proposed that South Branch and IDES share a location. The Board has no knowledge of the extent of the State’s RFP and does not know what is included in that document.

President Christopher Stewart reiterated that the Board is directing the Library staff to prepare a budget for the ten-month FY 2011.

The Board directed library staff to prepare three budgets:

1) One budget draft that provides for full restoration of collections to FY 2009/10 levels and with provision for branches at full operations levels.
2) One budget draft that shows funding for branches at current 4-day level of operations.
3) One budget draft that shows operation of branches for six-months and collections at current reduced level.

The Board acknowledges that costs of a potential relocation of South Branch are unknown at present, so putting branch funding into budget at current levels is a means of having some cost factor reflected in a proposed budget.

Trustee Allen-Jacobi said that the Board will need to know the amount of charge backs that the City would impose during FY 2011. Under the Library Fund model
it is imperative that the Board know all costs involved. Only the City can give those figures.

The Board acknowledges that both the Board and City need to move quickly to gather and to share necessary information for budgeting purposes. A series of town hall meetings will be planned to have a dialogue with the community.

The City’s Economic Development staff and the EPL Friends have reviewed possible new locations for the South Branch, though these have not been joint efforts.

A joint committee of Board members, EPL Friends and members of the Economic Development staff could be formed to review various scenarios and costs.

Trustee Stone moved that the Library staff prepare proposed budgets outlining each of the three budget scenarios discussed. The motion was passed unanimously by voice vote.

Board President Christopher Stewart adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Allen-Jacobi
Secretary