



UMATILLA COUNTY SPECIAL LIBRARY DISTRICT

Strengthening our community libraries

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Minutes

Special Meeting - Board Retreat - Information Sharing - No Decisions

March 18, 2021 at 5:30pm
via Zoom [Pendleton, Oregon]

ATTENDANCE BOARD:

Caty Clifton (via Zoom)
Nick Nash, President (via Zoom)
Hilary Stoupa (via Zoom)
John Thomas, Vice President (via Zoom)

ATTENDANCE STAFF:

Erin McCusker, District Director (via Zoom)
Dea Nowell, Technical Services Manager (via Zoom)

ATTENDANCE - VISITORS:

Ruth Metz, Consultant & Facilitator of Distribution Review (via Zoom)

CALL TO ORDER:

Board President Nick Nash called the Board Retreat to order at 5:31 pm.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Erin McCusker welcomed Ruth Metz and the Board.

OVERVIEW OF THE MEETING:

Erin McCusker led the overview by reminding everyone of what the Ground Rules for the review process were and then reviewed the process. Part of the process was a review of the District purpose and the responsibility of the Board, which we came back to, from the language on the ballot when the District was formed.

Using the collective of revenue obtained through a District tax, help fund library services for the residents of the District, using resources to equalize as much as possible residents' access to information and services.

*From the order creating the District - "The purpose of the Umatilla County Special Library District shall be to provide library and information services to persons within the district."

*The UCSLD "shall be a municipal corporation and shall have perpetual succession, and shall, in its own name, exercise and carry out the powers and objects provided for by Oregon Statutes governing library districts."

And a review of what criteria and values, which were set out by the Board, guided the tax revenue distribution formula development:

- An objective and impartial formula to ensure library service for the residents of the District including the unincorporated populations
- A clear, uncomplicated, concrete mathematical formula, that is easily understood, reviewed, and readily administered
- Contributes an amount of money to help member libraries be able to offer a threshold of service
- Recognizes and adjusts for changes and shifts in population over time

As well as a review of the timeline as it occurred and what is yet to be done in the process.

EVALUATION OF THE TAX DISTRIBUTION FORMULA REVIEW PROCESS:

- What has worked well?
- What would you change?
- What did you learn?
- Other comments

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was able to move to an understanding of the math • Regardless of all of the challenges that were out of our control, we did the best we could with what we provided and entertained • We had a process, we followed the process: informational, transparent, invited feedback, well facilitated • We did it! • Got through it with minimal heartache • Was, and will be handled, to the best of our ability as professionally and business-like as possible • Much worked well - better than earlier processes • Board maintained a whole county vision for the Library District which was very good and lucky to do that • Took the public input and the various visions very seriously and utilized many of the presented concepts • Clear that the Board was the final authority on this decision • Majority of libraries support this formula and process • Learned a lot - Board, process, background, history, community • Dea's research and pulling of history • Good solid process - proof of that is that we got through it, the Board is intact, all survived • Stellar - The Board has the product they asked for • Have a formula that is more defensible / makes more sense than what we had before - went back to statutory language - what was the purpose of the District and authority of the Board • Learned what is the role of the Board (District level services), what is the purpose of the District - and Board kept that focus • Kept on course with a focus on District residents and are they getting the best possible library services? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process was interrupted by the COVID pandemic - shifted to other priorities • Perhaps not as well communicated about the stopping of the process • The pause was inevitable and managed pretty well • Stakeholder anxieties because of environmental and pandemic issues out of our control • Stakeholders were very narrowly focused on their own municipalities' well-being • Hard to have people be involved in something and then not have them feel that they had an influence • Inevitable that some would be unhappy - there are 12 very different communities and populations - oppositional perspectives expected as they were looking at the issue with very different prisms • Discussions of money do not bring

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So lucky to have a Library District with an elected, governing, policy-setting Board and fiduciary authority • Board was beneficent and respectful throughout the process • Fair • Board was extremely tolerant even when there was a lack of respect of the District's position • The review of establishment documents was very clear on the Board's authority and what the voters wanted from the establishment of the District • Board and UCSLD staff and process were transparent - and available for comments, etc. • Carefully thought through process • Result aligns with the purpose of the District • People were given the opportunity to be heard • Reiterated the benefit of having a District!!!! • The Board and District and Consultant kept in mind the whole and focused on who we are responsible to - the taxpayers of the UCSLD • Zip code population an important shift • The two-part formula is clear, mathematically sound and the distribution percentages can be created mathematically • The formula is as fair and equitable as possible - and will be reviewed and can be updated by future Boards to reflect the changes in threshold costs and changes in population • It also allows for differentiation of member libraries and the contracting partner library • Synthetization of proposal ideas 	<p>out the best in people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Times of dis-respect of the board's authority and Erin's position
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Other comments:

- Was the interruption an issue? A bit and there was nothing we could do about it
- Flooding - COVID - contested national election - all of these overlapping. We asked people to go into a process where they feared they might lose money
- Did we give people the wrong impression with our questions? Could there have been a way to frame what we were asking of people as regards input, so they understood how their input would impact the process and that they did not have the control/authority that our questions and requests may have made it seem like they did?
- Could it have been an outgrowth of the age of social media culture?
- Some things out of the realm of possibility
- Wanted to come to the end of the process with people feeling that they could express themselves as the process was happening
- Felt that if one of the libraries had had more impact/leverage than others, the process could have gone in a more negative way
- There was no way that we were going to get through the process without some people being unhappy. People are people.
- Would you have done anything differently?
 - COVID interruption

- 2nd part of process seemed to bring up a lot more anger/tension/conflict/fear of the unknown – because the numbers got a bit more real, the feelings were more intense about their bottom line
- Learned a lot – history of the organization
- Municipalities have their idea of what they think the UCSLD is – revenue that they are entitled to in order to run their libraries (feel this is entitled); but a different model could be chosen by the Board in order to meet the request of the voters – to provide library service district-wide
- Different perspectives: Board/District & municipalities/libraries
- Time will shift the mindsets to the fact that there is a District-wide sense of library services
- The UCSLD Board needs to keep correcting any notion that the stakeholders are the Board or have the Board’s authority
- There may be things that need to be done that are important to the District residents, but the needs are not being addressed in the current model, so a change may need to be made.
- State of Washington – have municipal libraries and library districts (which in statutes are called junior taxing authority – do not have the authority of a library district in Oregon)
- Oregon statutes require that special districts be accountable to the taxpayers/voters (and are like a city or county in the kind of authority given by the statutes)
- Anytime it gets confusing go back to the statement in your formation, as it is a pivot place on that statutory authority
- Going forward – need to advocate for ourselves (UCSLD advocacy). Our system is confusing to the public and we need get a clear message out and educate our community
- Explain why it is important to have a District vision for library services
- Tied to – must do:
 - *From the order creating the District – “The purpose of the Umatilla County Special Library District shall be to provide library and information services to persons within the district.”
 - *The UCSLD “shall be a municipal corporation and shall have perpetual succession, and shall, in its own name, exercise and carry out the powers and objects provided for by Oregon Statutes governing library districts.”
- Best way to combat/counter hyperbole is through reality/fact

DISCUSSION OF TAX DISTRIBUTION FORMULA REVIEW FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:
 Population updates: Latest word, census numbers will not be available until September.

Population shifts that affect the formula: Erin explained that our math advisor, Gary Parker, is just finishing up the community college term and going on vacation, so she did not contact him yet. She will check with Gary to find out where the

Hermiston City status: Erin met with Mark Rose on Tuesday so that Mark could share his concerns with Erin. Mark noted that he likes the formula and thinks it is sound. He feels it is an issue that Hermiston Public Library will only be funded through the population portion of the new funding formula and not the threshold portion. He feels that this is a charge to Hermiston for District services, or the cost of Hermiston’s participation in the District. He feels that the District is penalizing or charging Hermiston because they are not part of the District. He does not think that it was done in a calculable manner that assesses the value of District services. He feels that

other cities feel that they get a benefit from being a member of the District and that Hermiston is getting that benefit without paying.

Erin noted that Hermiston, who did not vote to join the UCSLD, has received money from the UCSLD for many years and the District has worked in partnership to ensure seamless, easily accessible service to all residents of the District, including the rural Hermiston residents who do pay into the District. It is a benefit to all residents of Umatilla County, including the Hermiston City residents, to have Hermiston involved with service discussions and countywide programs and services; to have the Hermiston staff participate in training with the rest of the UCSLD member libraries' staff members; and to collaborate on Sage and courier costs and services. Erin further stated it has been, and hopes it will continue to be, a good partnership which is not a one way street – Hermiston City residents benefit from the partnership with the UCSLD. And, yet, Hermiston is not a member of the UCSLD. The threshold element acknowledges the member jurisdictions that opted to be in the District and that the District contributes to member libraries' threshold criteria and it is reasonable and fair that we do not do so for Hermiston. We do pay the rural population portion of the Sage membership bill for Hermiston and we pay the 3rd day courier bill for the rural population, as well as providing funding based on the rural Hermiston population. The funding formula that the Board has voted into effect 7/1/2022, acknowledges that funding is different for members (city residents pay tax into the UCSLD) of the District compared to a contracting partner (Hermiston) with the District.

Caty Clifton asked if Mark feels they should get the full amount. Erin stated he thinks that we should run the Hermiston rural population through the full funding formula and then bill them for District services. Part of the question is how to differentiate in the agreement. Erin also noted she mentioned to Mark that Sage has changed library services through allowing any Sage member libraries patrons to use another Sage member library. We need to get the word out to cities, etc., and explain how and why Hermiston is treated differently.

Erin focused on and Ruth brought this out as well – that we all need to work so that libraries in this County and District stay whole through the end of this pandemic, and any other crises that arise. In the future we are going to have to work together and stand together. Erin noted that we have already hit a bit of compression in tax funding. She is not sure how much that will impact us moving forward, however it is a reality.

It was noted that in working with the Hermiston City Manager on the revised agreement that there are some is education opportunity there. Some of the opportunities: what do you get from us? what do you get in being a part of this service? Ruth reminded the Board that this tension exists, however it is not our responsibility/role to solve it – it is however important to communicate.

OVERVIEW OF UPCOMING ACTIVITIES BEFORE JUNE 30, 2021:

- FY 2021-2022 Budget – no changes in distribution percentages
- Strategic Plan Update – May 1, 2021
- District-City Agreements Reviewed, Updated and Approved by the Board by June 30, 2021
- District-City Agreements out to the cities/school district by December 15, 2021 – to be returned by May 1, 2022 to take effect by July 1, 2022
- Next year:
 - Community needs assessment and new strategic plan

- Marketing Project – Passport project (part of summer reading program)

NEXT STEPS, INCLUDING NEXT BOARD MINI-RETREAT AND TOPICS TO DISCUSS:
Due to the time this will be discussed at the Board meeting next week.

REVIEW - + / Δ:

All the Board members thought it was helpful and felt that Ruth made some excellent points that we need to carry forward.

ADJOURN:

Board President Nick Nash adjourned the Board Retreat at 7:29 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Dea Nowell