

Meeting with TRL trustees

December 17, 2018

3:02 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Fund, Commissioner Jackson, Timberland Regional Library (TRL) Director Cheryl Heywood, TRL Facilities Manager LG Nelson, TRL Finance Manager Eric Lowell, TRL Trustee Brian Zylstra, TRL Public Services Manager Allison Grubbs, TRL Communications Manager Jeff Kleingartner, TRL Trustee Hal Blanton

Guests: Commissioner-elect Gary Stamper as well as various members of the public and press

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Attendees introduced themselves.

Cheryl Heywood and other representatives of the Timberland Regional Library (TRL) reviewed TRL's budget, which is available online at <https://www.trl.org/budget>. They also reviewed events by audience, door counts and circulation. Cheryl noted that TRL has implemented a soft hiring freeze in response to its budget crunch.

Cheryl said she has worked for TRL for more than 22 years. She discussed the change in administration tiers over the years. Commissioner Fund noted that past practice was to make TRL less top heavy by reducing the number of management-level positions.

Commissioner Fund noted that the TRL's budget includes hefty pay raises, including one totaling more than \$14,000. Cheryl said one the raise was linked to an increase in duties. She said she and TRL Finance Manager Eric Lowell had negotiated his higher wage.

TRL Facilities Manager LG Nelson discussed the cost of the Service Center renovation, which he estimated totaled \$26,000.

Commissioner Jackson said Winlock Mayor Don Bradshaw had indicated that TRL told him it planned to expand its services in Winlock yet Commissioner Fund had heard that TRL planned to reduce staffed hours at Winlock and to instead use keyed entry. Cheryl said TRL is weighing its options regarding Winlock. Commissioner Jackson asked again what the plan for Winlock would be considering the fact that TRL did not include funding for a manager in its 2019 budget. Cheryl and Public Services Manager Allison Grubbs said TRL is discussing the possibility of shared services or continuing the use of an interim director for Winlock, among other options. Cheryl said Winlock no longer is at risk of closure.

Commissioner Fund noted that TRL's Capital Facilities Plan included verbiage indicating that the Benaroya project in Winlock is projected to be completed in 2019. She noted that it would not be completed that soon.

Eric Lowell, the finance manager, said TRL is facing a \$671,000 budget shortfall. Cheryl said TRL is meeting with state representatives regarding state funding for facilities. She discussed the decrease in timber revenue.

The group discussed the proposed (and since abandoned) plan to cut services. TRL Trustee Hal Blanton said TRL is policy and procedure driven, and Cheryl noted that Strategic Planning meetings are planned for April and May.

Commissioner-elect Stamper asked if TRL is changing its policies in response to the backlash it received regarding the potential closure of various sites.

Zora DeGrandpre of Randle asked what other metrics – beyond circulation – to determine library use. Cheryl said TRL also uses online surveys, etc. Zora noted that TRL is supposed to have an emphasis on rural areas.

Judy Bell of Centralia said she has lost faith and trust in TRL.

Commissioner Jackson left at 4:18 p.m.

Judy said Cheryl Heywood should consider resigning or should be fired due to the lack of transparency regarding the proposed library closures.

Commissioner Jackson returned at 4:21 p.m.

Kathy Halsan echoed concerns about TRL's lack of transparency regarding its discussions regarding the possible closure of various library sites.

Marilynn Chintella, president of the Friends of the Chehalis Library, thanked the attendees for their efforts, interest and attention.

Peggy Barth said she, too, is concerned about TRL's lack of transparency. She noted that taxpayers are paying for library services and she questioned the need for the large raises planned for upper administration.

John Squires of Packwood discussed concerns about the decreased number of books in Packwood, and he stressed the need to have someone in charge at each location. He said rural communities have been loud and clear about their desire to have physical locations. He said it's sad that TRL's first response to its budget crisis was to slash 12 employees in Lewis County.

Kelly Walker said Salkum and Winlock received documentation indicating the two sites have been told they will be closed an additional day a week. She also said it appears there are two policies regarding wages because others elsewhere have not been able to negotiate higher starting wages.

Commissioner-elect Stamper asked what's been done to alleviate the transparency disaster earlier in the year. Cheryl said the board of trustees have held several meetings, footage of which is available online. She said an ad hoc committee was formed. She said the board voted to completely abandon the strategic plan discussing the closures.

Allison, the public services manager, said TRL also will meet more often with union members and its front line staff. TRL Communications Manager Jeff Kleingartner said TRL has started an "I love my library" campaign.

Meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.