

SAN JUAN ISLAND LIBRARY DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Hybrid & via Zoom, San Juan Island Library
(access information provided at www.sjlib.org)

March 14th, 2024

Special Meeting for the Purposes of Levy Lid Lift Discussion

1) Call to Order: President Boyd Pratt called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm.

Members Present: Boyd Pratt, Barbara Sharp, Karen Vedder

Staff Present: Laurie Orton, Anthony Morris, Kasey Rasmussen

Total Attendance: 19 other (25 total)

2) New Business

a) San Juan Island Library's Operational Levy Lid Lift

Opening Remarks:

Boyd welcomed the public to the meeting and introduced the board members. Barbara introduced the Library staff and Friends of the Library (FOL) members present at the meeting.

Barbara followed the introductions with a brief overview of what the Library's operational budget funds. She explained that the board has chosen to pivot its focus in 2024 from the new building project to a levy lid lift in order to prioritize immediate operational needs.

Boyd shared statistics illustrating the high degree of engagement this community has with the Library. He reported that three out of five community members have a library card, and that out of libraries in Washington, we are ranked, per capita, 7th for annual library visits, 8th for circulation, and 5th for program attendance. We also have the 2nd largest collection per capita in the state.

Boyd gave a brief overview of library finances. Like other junior taxing districts, the Library is funded primarily through property taxes. He noted that approximately 95% of the revenue comes from property taxes, with the remaining 5% coming from the FOL, grants, donations, and other sources.

Boyd reviewed levy basics for junior taxing districts. He explained that once a levy rate is set, junior taxing districts are limited to a 1% annual increase in the amount collected through property taxes in succeeding years. Because the 1% increase does not keep up with inflation, junior taxing districts must periodically ask the public for a levy lid lift.

The Library's last levy lid lift was in 2011, and was planned to last through 2018. Boyd explained how, through careful budgeting, the Library was able to stretch its funds an additional six years. This year, the Library will ask for a levy lid lift in the August 6, 2024

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primary election, lifting the levy rate from its current rate of 25.39 cents per thousand dollars of assessed property value to 41 cents per thousand dollars of assessed property value. The state legal limit for library districts is 50 cents.

Karen spoke about the future of the 660 Spring Street property and the plans for a new library building, which the board is still committed to building. She reported that based on feedback from the public, the board plans to increase the philanthropy portion of the building project funding, and reduce the amount requested in a bond. Karen also noted that the board recognizes the importance of affordable housing projects to the community, and is exploring options for how the future building project might incorporate or support affordable housing. She emphasized that the levy lid lift is for funding the Library's regular operational budget, not for building project expenses, and that passing the levy lid lift will allow the Library to continue to provide library services to the public in its current location.

Boyd wrapped up the opening remarks by explaining where more information will be available on the library website and in person, and opened the meeting up to questions and comments from the public.

Public Comments/Questions/Feedback:

Questions from the public addressed the following themes:

Financial Planning and Timeline

- A question was asked regarding why the board chose to use a ten-year timeline instead of a shorter planning period. Boyd and Laurie responded explaining that the cost behind campaigning for a levy lid lift was a factor, as well as following the current general practice in Washington of libraries using ten-year timelines when planning levy lid lifts.

New Building Project

- Questions were asked regarding the new building project and if the requested levy lid lift and resulting budget would support operations in a new building. Boyd answered that projections when planning the new building project factored in expected reductions in facilities costs and did not include significant staffing increases, so the board does not expect the budget to increase much beyond inflation in the new building.
- A question was asked about a future bond for the new building project. Boyd clarified that a bond would fund the building project and would be separate from the operational budget that this levy lid lift would fund.

Current Facility and Services

- Questions were asked about ownership and maintenance of the current building. Boyd and Laure responded confirming that the Library owns the current building, and that maintenance and improvements in the current building are included in the operational budget.

- Laurie explained that the levy lid lift would allow the Library to maintain operations, keep up with inflation, and allow modest increases in services, but would not allow for major changes or improvements to the current building.

Boyd noted that the board plans to hold additional informational meetings in the coming months, and will announce them when plans are confirmed.

Boyd thanked participants for attending the meeting.

Adjournment: President Boyd Pratt adjourned the meeting at 5:39pm.

Respectfully submitted:

DocuSigned by:

Barbara Sharp

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Board Secretary

Approved:

DocuSigned by:

Boyd Pratt

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Board President