

# Appendix M

## Community Feedback on Shaker Library's Facility Options Study

Presented to the Shaker Heights Public Library Board of Trustees

December 14, 2016

Shaker Library has shared information about the Facility Options Study and solicited feedback from the community in a variety of ways.

### Summary of Feedback

The library held community feedback forums on November 12, November 13, and November 17. The library presented the facility recommendation to city council on December 5 and to the school board on December 13. The library also participated in a League of Women Voters Forum with the city and schools on December 8.

Most respondents from the community indicated support for the library's recommendation or requested more information about the options. A minority expressed a strong preference for the library to pursue inclusion with Cuyahoga County Public Library.

Mayor Leiken has reiterated his position that the Shaker Library should pursue the option of inclusion in the County library system. Members of City Council have expressed concern about taxes and Shaker's long-term sustainability, and have emphasized the need to find less expensive ways to provide services.

There is general consensus among the library, the schools, and the city that collaboration and partnerships to address tax issues in Shaker are important.

### Community Feedback Forums

Two community forum events were held at the Main Library and one was held at Bertram Woods. Each offered a short presentation on the Facility Options Study and the Board of Trustees' recommendation, followed by time for community questions and comments.

#### Saturday, November 12 at Bertram Woods Branch

Of those who expressed an opinion on the Board's recommendation to pursue the Upgrade option:

- Five supported it, saying that they "totally agree with," "support" or "commend" the plan.
- One person stated a preference for the Replace option.
- One expressed support for pursuing a Joint/Co-locate option with the middle school.

On the topic of Option 7 (Inclusion) several people expressed disapproval of that option, and none expressed support. One person stated that the new South Euclid and Warrensville Heights branches are beautiful and asked how we could bring the Main Library up to that level, but another disagreed, saying that she disliked those buildings.

Several people expressed concerns about funding, such as:

- The impact of cuts in state funding
- The timing of a ballot issue in relation to the schools going on the ballot
- The public needing information about the fact that the library does not own the Moreland School building and if it is vacated, Shaker taxpayers will be responsible for it
- The possibility of "marketing" against a ballot issue by the Mayor's Task Force

Other ideas and suggestions from the audience included:

- Consider staff when making decisions and hire for full-time positions with benefits
- Consider building at the Woods location, or some other central location such as the newly-developing Van Aken area
- Consider how the library can work with the schools
- Consider geothermal and solar energy options and the possibility of green energy credits

#### Sunday, November 13 at Main Library

- One attendee voiced concern about the current configuration of the Main Library which makes it difficult to work in quiet in the Computer Center, while kids played games on the computers and made a lot of noise
- One attendee suggested we look into alternative sources of funding and work together with the schools

#### Thursday, November 17 at Main Library

A range of opinions and concerns were represented at this event. Of the attendees who spoke, some asked informational questions, such as:

- How much do we pay to CLEVNET?
- How do you define "uniquely Shaker"?
- What % of the tax bill is actually being collected?
- What will happen if the levy fails?

Three people spoke to express concerns about the property tax level in Shaker and support for the idea of joining the County library system. Representative comments include:

- Why aren't you talking about regionalization?

- We assume that Shaker is “different” and has to have different services. We need to think about if that’s true. All communities are different.
- Why didn’t the Triad survey ask questions about joining County? We could decrease taxes by 1.5 mills by going with County. The school and library levies would put the taxes over 5%. I don’t use Shaker Library. My daughter got all of her college textbooks from County through OhioLink.
- At some point economics have to come into the decision, be more economically responsible or pretty soon we’re going to be East Cleveland.
- The Homestead Exemption won’t apply to new levies; seniors will have to pay more.

Six attendees spoke in favor of Shaker Library remaining independent and upgrading the buildings. Representative comments include:

- It’s unfair to lay the tax burden on the library.
- We [the Shaker community] are different.
- I commend you for looking at the data.
- I wrote a letter to the Board that was very emotional. As a former educator, I find the amazing, embracing environment of the children’s rooms invaluable. I sometimes go to Beachwood and another County branch; their children’s services can’t hold a candle to Main and Woods.
- I moved here from NY, and I’m renting in Shaker because of the library. If we go with County, we will lose programs, they won’t make neighborhood-appropriate decisions.
- You have to keep up, you have to have up-to-date electronics like the schools, and teens should have their own space.
- The library is a community hub; residents can walk here, have community, or just hang out. Regionalism is a good solution where it makes sense. Shaker residents choose to live here despite high taxes. We’re here for something more, something we don’t see elsewhere. This building speaks to the history that makes the neighborhood unique. The special history is important to Shaker as a whole. We love OUR library—beyond monetary issues.
- We would lose a lot by giving up control to County. [From a resident who is also a library staff member.]
- I moved here from Parma. The quality of life is so much better here. Taxes are part of quality of life. [From a resident who is also a library staff member.]

Other ideas and suggestions from the audience included:

- A member of the Mayor’s Financial Task Force who was present suggested we write a Letter of Intent to CCPL so they would begin their due diligence study, in the hope that they would answer our questions about how they would serve Shaker Heights, and then we could back out if we were not happy with the answers. An attendee who said he has been involved in such studies, the cost of which is

in 6 figures, asked who would pay for that. It made sense that CCPL would only pay for it once Shaker was committed.

- Look at energy recovery. Cuyahoga County Energy Hub makes loans based on energy savings.
- Pay attention to needs beyond the collection and borrowing of materials; consider community-building, participation in amenities, especially for youth.
- Consider using library space for revenue building, such as by use of space by other organizations when the library is not open.
- The library should increase marketing.

## Public Presentation at City Council Meeting

On December 5, Amy Switzer and Chad Anderson gave an informational presentation to City Council followed by time for questions and comments.

Before the presentation, Mayor Leiken restated the recommendation of the Mayor's Financial Task Force that the library commence discussions with Cuyahoga County Public Library with a view to inclusion, citing the fact that the library will need further funding, and CCPL has no immediate plans to increase their tax rate. He emphasized that the future is all about collaboration and working with other entities to provide services, and that he is not saying that Shaker Library is not currently doing a good job.

After the informational presentation by the library, Council members expressed appreciation that the library came and shared information, and complimented the depth and research level of the Facility Options Study. They asked several questions:

- What is the value of Clevnet? (How does CLEVNET benefit Shaker financially? Would we lose CLEVNET that if we joined CCPL?)
- Did you explore the Joint/Co-Locate option and why is it not recommended?
- Is the decrease in tax revenue from 2005-2014 that you cited due to property reappraisal following your 2009 tax replacement? Are you subject to HB920?
- To what do you attribute Shaker residents' attachments to old buildings like Main Library and the Woods Branch?

## League of Women Voters Forum

*Building Shaker's Future: Q & A, Comments, and Dialogue*, sponsored by the League of Women Voters, was held on December 8. The Mayor and two representatives each of the city, the schools, and the library, were invited to speak and answer questions from the audience.

Mayor Leiken reiterated his concern about taxes, the loss of population in Shaker, and Shaker's long-term sustainability.

Representing the library, Amy Switzer and Chad Anderson gave a short presentation about the facility option study and recommendations for the future.

The President of the Board of Education gave a presentation about happenings in the schools and their facility plans.

City Council members emphasized the need for a shared vision for Shaker's future, finding less expensive ways to provide services, and collaborative planning by all of Shaker's institutions, rather than each institution operating in its own separate silo. They stressed that Shaker must keep its tax burden low to compete with other cities and keep the city economically viable, and suggested that Shaker needs to do a better job surveying its residents' needs and wants, and should perhaps have a joint planning process to consider tax increase requests before they are placed in front of Shaker voters. They envision each organization acting as a "brake" on the others, keeping "wants" from turning into "needs," and preventing "tax grabs" from escalating to the point that we become "agents of our own demise."

Questions from the audience that involved the library included:

- Did Shaker Library investigate joining the County library? Can we get answers from CCPL about how they would provide service in Shaker, and then be able to say no if we chose?
- The Library did its due diligence and its conclusions differ from the Mayor's Financial Task Force. Shouldn't residents be given the opportunity to decide?
- The City's representatives spoke differently about Shaker and its tax burden while it was asking residents to support its tax increase in 2012. Isn't it disingenuous to criticize the schools and library now, after the city's income tax increase passed?
- Is the City willing to share the revenue from its 2012 increase with the other institutions, or offer credits or some kind of offset?
- Cleveland Heights passed levies to rebuild their libraries – are we going to let Cleveland Heights pass us by?
- What assurances did Shaker Library get from the County Library? How many libraries would Shaker have? Would the County Library absorb Shaker Library's costs? What are the disadvantages of joining?

Suggestions from attendees after the forum:

- Can we get historic preservation credits or funding for renovations to the Main Library?
- If possible, we should wait to go on the ballot. If we go on the same year as the schools, "they will kill you."

## Public Presentation at Board of Education Meeting

Amy Switzer and Carmella Williams gave an informational presentation to the Board of Education at their December 13 meeting. After the presentation, Board members expressed appreciation that conversations are happening between organizations, and had questions about

- When the library reviews its costs, will it be presenting the public with different cost estimates for different tax levels?
- Will the library include trade off questions, like keeping one building or two, in its next poll?
- How were the evaluation criteria developed? Are there other criteria that the library should have incorporated into its evaluation and should it have asked residents about the criteria it used?

### Director's meetings with individual elected and appointed officials

In November and early December, Library Director Amy Switzer met individually with Mayor Leiken, all City Council members, the superintendent, and almost all members of the Board of Education.

### Comments/questions received from library customers

Library staff have recorded customers' comments on the facility issue and the Board's recommendation.

In September, after Cleveland.com and the Sun Press ran articles regarding the recommendation of the Mayor's Financial Task Force that the Library Board consider joining Cuyahoga County Public Library, staff recorded 15 comments.

Of these:

- Three were supportive of the idea of joining CCPL.
- Five were asking for information about the subject and did not express a clear preference.
- Seven expressed a preference for Shaker Library to not join CCPL and stay independent, some very strongly.

After the Facility Study draft was completed and a recommendation made by the Library Board, staff recorded 12 more comments.

- One was primarily concerned with keeping both buildings open.
- Two supported upgrading the two existing buildings.
- Three were primarily asking for information.
- Six primarily expressed opposition to the idea of joining CCPL.

A resident wrote a letter to library board president Chad Anderson, school board president William Clawson, and Mayor Earl Leiken. Her letter said in part, "A new library should be built first...The City needs to view and treat the residents' library as a resource equal to their schools...[I]... see the advantage of a single - if not new - building in the Lee Road area...We need to build a library for the future."