

# MINUTES

## **BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS CITY OF LOS ANGELES**

**JUNE 16, 2010**

### **Special Meeting**

A Special Meeting of the Board of Library Commissioners was held at the Central Library, 630 West Fifth Street, Los Angeles, CA 90071, convening at 11:30 a.m. on the above-written date.

**PRESENT:** VICE PRESIDENT COMMISSIONER  
COMMISSIONER  
COMMISSIONER  
COMMISSIONER

MARSHA HIRANO-NAKANISHI  
ROBERT A. CHICK  
RITA WALTERS  
CARLOS A. SINGER

#### **EXCUSED**

**ABSENT:** PRESIDENT TYREE WIEDER

**ALSO PRESENT:** Martín J. Gómez, City Librarian; Kris Morita, Asst. General Manager; Jacqueline Wagner, Analyst, CAO's Office; Basia Jankowski, Deputy City Attorney; Roy Stone, President, Librarians' Guild; Kenneth S. Brecher, President, Library Foundation of Los Angeles; and staff.

#### **CITY LIBRARIAN'S REPORT**

Recommended Approval of a Ballot Measure  
to be placed in the General Election for an Annual  
Citywide Library Parcel Tax to Fund Library Services

City Librarian Martín J. Gómez recommended placing a ballot measure on the November 2, 2010 State General Election to allow City property owners to vote on a parcel tax in order to maintain and restore Library services and to reduce its dependency on the City's General Fund.

The City Librarian said the parcel tax is necessary because the Charter-required appropriation from the General Fund has proven to be insufficient to maintain service levels at all branches and Central Library. Also, for Fiscal Year 2010-11, 328 full-time equivalent positions were deleted leaving a total count of only 828 positions to provide service citywide. He said further cuts are likely to occur from the projections that the City Administrative Officer has made for Fiscal Year 2011-12 in which the City's deficit could reach \$318.5 million. Reductions are also expected from the CAO's Three-Year Plan to Financial Stability.

The City Librarian stated that if passed, the annual parcel tax of \$39.00 would generate approximately \$30 million in new revenue earmarked for the Los Angeles Public Library to provide six days of service, reading incentive programs, after school homework centers, new books and other library materials. Mr. Gomez introduced Mr. John Fairbank from FM3, a public opinion research firm.

### **Presentation**

Mr. John Fairbank stated that FM3 had conducted a poll of likely voters in the 2010 November State General Election to determine voter support for a library parcel tax. He made a power point presentation detailing the methodology used for surveying potential voters on the Library Measure for an annual parcel tax and how the firm arrived at the proposed amount of \$39.

Mr. Fairbank reported that the poll conducted from May 14 – May 18, 2010 to determine voter support for a library parcel tax and to determine a threshold amount revealed that 68% of likely voters will or probably will vote yes on the measure. He informed the Board that a two-thirds majority vote (66 2/3%) of the electorate is required in order for the special parcel tax to pass.

Mr. Fairbank said that FM3 recommends the ballot be for \$39.00 and a higher amount is not recommended based on the survey conducted for the amounts of \$96, \$77, \$49 and \$39. To be able to meet the two-thirds vote, he advises that \$39 would be the more realistic amount for passage of the measure.

The survey revealed that there is voter willingness to pay for Library Service, program or staff, as part of the parcel tax measure for the following services:

- Maintaining services for the blind and disabled
- Providing programs for children to improve reading skills and encourage a love of books
- Offering reading clubs for children and teens to encourage reading
- Continuing to provide adult literacy programs
- Serving as the school library for K-12 schools that do not have libraries
- Continuing to provide at home Internet access to library resources for those who are unable to come to the library.
- Providing Summer reading programs
- Replacing outdated books and computers
- Increasing after-school tutoring programs
- Keeping qualified librarians
- Providing classes to prepare high school students for their SAT exams
- Adding books
- Increasing job search programs

- Providing homework and tutoring assistance in support of local neighborhood students.

Mr. Fairbank stated that responses were classified by demographic groups (age, ethnicity/race, community, party affiliation, number of library visits, etc). He said that for voters the highest sense of need is for neighborhood libraries, and they feel libraries play a critical role in strengthening education in local public schools; especially, they are seen as a center for the community and of value to their area, which it is very important in getting support for the measure.

Also, Mr. Fairbank referenced that local cities such as Pasadena, Monrovia, South Pasadena and San Francisco have successfully passed library parcel taxes in the last few years and the following library parcel tax ballot measures were approved on June 8, 2010:

Marin County Free Library	\$49/year	74% Approval
North County (Santa Clara) Libraries	\$76/year	76.5% Approval
San Anselmo Library	\$49/year	74.4% Approval
San Rafael Library	\$49/year	69% Approval

### **Board Discussion**

Commissioner Hirano-Nakanishi pointed out that while some cities recently passed a library parcel tax on the June elections, in contrast, the school measure did not pass in Los Angeles. Mr. Fairbanks replied that Northern California voters are very supportive of library measures. He believes the LAUSD school parcel of \$100.00 was too high and it was placed in the June elections, which don't get as much turn out as the General Elections.

Responding to Commissioner Singer's question on what results could be expected for this election, Mr. Fairbanks said that in 2008, 2009, and 2010 elections, most local and state measures passed with over 75%. The differentiation is that in spite of the economic times, voters are unwilling to accept the drop in services to schools and libraries and other city services.

Commissioners Singer and Walters asked how FM3 arrived at the figure of \$39 dollars and if that amount would provide enough funding for the Library. Mr. Fairbanks said that initially FM3 started with \$96 dollars because it would fully fund Library services. The firm suggested starting with the minimum amount needed to deal with the cuts and also this dollar amount on the ballot is what would make it easier to pass. He said the threshold for measures is around \$40 dollars.

The City Librarian clarified that if \$30 million dollars were to be added to the Library's Charter appropriation, it would restore the Library schedule to six full days of service, including evening service, but not a seven-day schedule. He said although \$96.00 is the amount that could restore all services and staff, looking at the reality on how voters responded to this poll, the \$39 dollars was better perceived by the voters.

Commissioners Chick and Singer asked where would the funds come from if the measure passes and how would the funds be controlled and protected. The Librarian responded that it would come from the assessment of residential, commercial, and industrial property from the City of Los Angeles. The tax on each parcel would be \$39 annually, which would result in revenue of approximately \$30 million per year. He said the measure language would include a citizen's advisory oversight committee to ensure public accountability.

Commissioner Walters asked how many years would the parcel tax last. Mr. Fairbank replied that they are testing a variety of different "sunsets" which are needed to pass the measure, and five and seven years were tested.

Commissioner Walters believes the measure should be more specific on what the funds would be spent for, and Vice President Hirano-Nakanishi suggested that the measure states that positions would be restored to be able to provide service.

Commissioner Singer advised that too much detail is probably not necessary in the ballot. Commissioner Chick concurred but said the issue is that there is less resistance to \$39 than \$49. This measure would probably receive significant support from grassroots organizations, Friends, and other supporters of the Library.

Commissioner Singer said he is in favor of some parcel tax and he is interested to hear what kind of campaign is envisioned and who is going to manage it because there are many facets to a campaign.

Commissioner Walters expressed concern that people who are more passionate about the Library cannot advocate for the measure because of the laws that prohibit advocacy by City employees and Commissioners. The City Attorney said information can be obtained from the Elections & Ethics Committee on the guidelines for commissioners and staff involvement in elections.

### **Public Comments**

Roy Stone, President, Librarians' Guild, said the Librarians' Guild would do its part in supporting the measure but would prefer the higher rate of \$49.

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Upon conclusion of a lengthy discussion on whether the fee should be \$39 or \$49, it was determined that \$39 dollars would be the amount to be placed in the ballot.

Thereafter, it was **MOVED** by Commissioner Chick, seconded by Commissioner Singer and unanimously carried that the following resolution be adopted:

LIBRARY RESOLUTION NO. 2010-23 (C-18)

RESOLVED that the Board of Library Commissioners approve the placement of a ballot measure on the November 2, 2010 State General Election for an annual Citywide Library Parcel Tax for a defined period of time to expand Library hours of operation; expand collections, and strengthen library capacity to service children, students, and families; and to reduce its dependency on the City's General Fund; and

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Library Commissioners instructs staff to transmit this request to the Mayor and City Council for consideration and approval.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, the Special Meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

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Marsha Hirano-Nakanishi  
Vice President

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Raquel M. Borden  
Board Executive Assistant

Date to be approved:

July 29, 2010