



Summary

Community Chats

March/April 2011

Welcome

The Community Chats were opened by Mary Frances Cooper, Deputy Director of CLP.

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Update, Mary Frances Cooper, Deputy Director of CLP

In each Chat, Mary Frances Cooper gave a brief presentation in which she reviewed the feedback and outcomes from the 2010 Community Workshops, provided a 2011 funding update, and reported that the CLP Board of Trustees are moving forward with the recommendations from the independent Public Private Task Force on Sustainable Funding.

Mary Frances went into detail outlining the Task Force's multi-pronged approach, explaining that the recommendations fall into two primary strategies: to protect and grow current library funding and to initiate new funding streams. She listed the six recommendations:

1. Improve advocacy and increase individual giving by building a culture of library supporters.
2. Secure annual increases from the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD).
3. Secure increases in corporate contributions.
4. Work with local/state entities to develop tax incentive programs for corporate and individual donors.
5. Provide the citizens of Pittsburgh an opportunity to vote on whether dedicated funding support should be provided to the Library.
6. Launch a library endowment campaign.

Open Discussion/Q & A

After updating the participants, Mary Frances opened up the meetings for discussion.

There were some general questions related to the Library's finances. Mary Frances directed the group to the CLP website which houses the Task Force report and other related finances:

www.carnegielibrary.org/background

Some community members voiced concerns about the success of a referendum, citing an anti-tax culture in Pittsburgh, the opinion that people do not read the way they once did, and a segment of the population that is not targeted by the Library and does not use the Library.



- *“We should expect antagonism for being asked for money. It’s a tough climate and we’d need a good reason [to raise taxes]”*

There were questions raised about how the referendum would work and whether other cities have had success. Mary Frances Cooper explained that we would need to gather approximately 9,000 signatures in order to capture the required 3,000 signatures to get on the ballot in November 2011 (accounting for duplicates). She also mentioned that a few cities in Ohio have had success recently. She explained that CLP is still in the research phase of this process to determine how much money would be needed and how that amount would break down per household. The final decision on the referendum will not be made until the May Board meeting.

Many participants felt that the success of the referendum would be dependent on a significant educational and promotional campaign.

- *“The sheer number of different library services available is how you sell the referendum”*
- *“We’d also need to get the buy in from the city council and mayor”*
- *“More articles by Brian O’Neil!”*
- *“We’d need to promote at the public market and other high traffic places”*
- *“If this referendum goes through, we need to make sure every Friend is register to vote”*
- *“We need to keep it local. To make it about the library in your neighborhood, not the system. That’s what resonates”*

There was discussion in several of the Chats around the other Public/Private Task Force recommendations. One participant asked what the Library was doing to increase advocacy. Mary Frances responded by saying that the Library will continue to have meetings in the community, as well as encouraging people to write to the Republican delegations. Maggie McFalls asked the groups to let her know about community events and meetings in the upcoming months in which the Library could have a presence.

A few participants made some positive observations about the Library’s community process:

- *“I think CLP should be commended for what you’ve done. We’ve been hard on you”*
- *“I think the workshops over the summer went really well and diffused the tension”*

In general, there seemed to be support for the referendum among the groups and a willingness to help. Mary Frances assured all participants that there would be ample training and support for those volunteering to help in the campaign.