

May 20, 2009

To the WCCLS Executive Board and the WCCLS Policy Group:

At the March 11<sup>th</sup> joint meeting of the WCCLS Executive Board and the WCCLS Policy Group it was suggested that a small group of participants meet to follow-up on issues identified during the meeting and to outline desired next steps for the strategic planning process. To assist the Consensus consultants in preparing the final reports, I convened this small group. The Working Group included:

- Sherilyn Lombos, Tualatin City Manager and Executive Board Chair
- Robert Davis, Washington County Administrator
- Rob Massar, Assistant County Administrator and Executive Board member
- Dave Waffle, Cornelius City Manager and Executive Board member
- Janice Deardorff, Assistant to the Beaverton Mayor
- Peter Leonard, Cedar Mill Community Library Director, Executive Board and Policy Group member
- Mike Smith, Hillsboro Library Director and Policy Group Chair, and
- Eva Calcagno, WCCLS Manager.

The Working Group concurred that there is no consensus among member libraries about pursuing a change in governance at this time. It was acknowledged that there are merits in making a governance change to a district structure, but that WCCLS is not yet at a tipping point that would require a change at this time. The Working Group recognized that significant changes in funding over the near or long term may compel a change, but that current circumstances do not require such a move. Four possible tipping points were identified: failure of the 2010 WCCLS levy, reductions in County General fund support, significant reductions in city funding for local library operations, or some combination of the above.

As was noted in multiple meetings, the current cooperative, federation model is not broken and has worked well for members over the past 33 years. However, there are opportunities to improve the current system. Issues that should be addressed include:

- Service to and funding for the unincorporated areas of the county
- Competition between libraries (both real and perceived)
- Variability of standards between libraries that effect customer experience
- Addressing disparities in the funding formula that may lead to haves and have nots
- Correcting imbalances in service levels and funding
- Identifying a method for determining where libraries are needed now or ought to be located to address future population growth
- Fostering greater cooperation and support for the system and among member libraries (think *We* not *They*)

As the strategic planning process draws to a conclusion, the Working Group felt it was important to remind participants why WCCLS launched this discussion. I have included text from the Request for Quotations that outlines the needs and desired outcomes for the project:

*Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) is seeking a consultant to lead a strategic planning process to guide the Cooperative in planning and delivering service to all county residents, and to recommend options for long term, stable funding. The consultant will work with WCCLS Administration, the WCCLS Executive Board and the Policy Group to develop a strategic, long-range service plan. In addition, the consultant will research, review and recommend options for governance and funding models that may help WCCLS achieve long-term stable funding in the future.*

***Why are we doing a strategic plan now?***

*Traditionally, WCCLS has developed long range service plans in-house, usually for five year periods. The current plan runs through 2009 and focuses primarily on central support services. No countywide strategic plan has been conducted by an outside consultant since the 1980's. So, it's time. Moreover, with stable funding secured for the next few years, we have the opportunity to take a big-picture look at countywide library service and options for funding and governance when we are not in crisis mode and can consider and plan for long-term changes.*

*We are seeking an outside consultant to lead the membership through this planning process so that as we plan for the next levy funding cycle, we may benefit from his/her professional expertise and base our service plan on a new strategic plan for countywide services.*

***We have three guiding principals for this plan:***

- 1) Stay cooperative – libraries will continue to cooperate and share resources to serve all residents,***
- 2) Find a stable, long-term funding model, and***
- 3) Address countywide service options.***

On behalf of the Working Group and WCCLS, thank you for the energy, enthusiasm and thoughtful consideration you have given to this effort. The Cooperative is better for it. Consensus has prepared two final reports for the project, a summary report on the governance and funding discussion, and a summary report on the strategic service plan.

Sincerely,

Eva Calcagno, Manager  
Cooperative Library Services