

August 26, 2010

Open Letter to Kent County Public Library Patrons and the Kent County Community:

The Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees is keenly aware of the adverse publicity we have received since late June and the extensive coverage of the Library management and finances. We deeply regret the financial situation we are experiencing. We take responsibility for this and we extend sincere apologies to our patrons and the Kent County Community for our failures.

It is time now for the Library Board to comment directly on the situation and actions it has taken since late June.

All of us who use the Library and its branches know that the Library has considerable strengths on the operational side which serve the community well:

- Chestertown's refurbished, pleasant facility.
- Strong, dedicated staff.
- Good technology for client services and web usage.
- High usage.
- Community programs.
- Very good marks on service.

These strengths do not offset the problems which face the Library today. The Trustees acknowledge that the Board has been deficient in two extremely important areas over an extended period which have brought us into the current situation:

- Financial oversight
- Internal board processes

We want to share with you the actions we have taken or are undertaking to address the problems.

1. The following corrective actions have been taken at the Board and Library management levels:

- The Library Executive Director's resignation has been accepted.
- All members of the current Library Board have agreed to present letters of resignation to the Kent County Commissioners, effective December 31, 2010. The delay in replacement of the current Board is intended to allow continuity of operations during an orderly recruitment of new Board members.

2. The following actions have been taken to improve financial controls and decision-making at the Library:

- The Kent County Finance Office has taken over bookkeeping and check-writing functions for the Library. They will also prepare regular financial reports for the Board.
- Future financial reporting will clearly distinguish between restricted grants or capital project funds and general operating funds. This was the central failure which led to the current crisis.
- A consultant will review the KCPL Board bylaws and general Board processes for adequate management controls.

3. The following actions have been or will be taken to restore current and future financial health to the Library:

- The current year's budget is being reviewed for areas of immediate potential savings. Near term cost reductions are painful, but necessary. No reduction in full time staff is contemplated at this point, although the Library Executive Director will not be replaced immediately.
- Beyond the current year's budget, it is clear that the Library operates at a deficit. It has historically and will continue to do so in the future. Additional community support for the Library is urgently needed. The immediate need is as high as \$187,000. This sum is necessary to provide on-going budget relief and pay off accumulated obligations. The Board will organize a campaign to increase community support for the Library to a sustainable level.

There has been much conversation about the Library and many would like to know more. To further communicate with the Kent County community, the Board will host a public meeting at the Library on Wednesday, September 1 at 7:00 PM to answer questions.

The Library is part of what makes our community special. It is a resource, a community meeting place, and an institution for all ages and economic levels. The Trustees understand that we have a duty to protect the resources and to provide sound management of the Library. We pledge to do our very best to reestablish trust in the management and future of the Kent County Public Library.

W. Jackson Stenger
President of the KCPL Board

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