



King County Library System
Board of Trustees Retreat
Service Center (Board Room)
1pm ♦ 12 September 2009

CALL TO ORDER: 1:12pm

Part One: Panel presentation of topics affecting the region

PRESENT

KCLS Board

Jessica Bonebright
Judge Richard Eadie
Lucy Krakowiak
Rob Spitzer
Jim Wigfall

KCLS Staff

Bruce Adams
Randy Barthelman
Kay Johnson
Holly Koelling
Lauren Mikov
Jed Moffitt
Bill Ptacek
Charlene Richards
Bruce Schauer
Greg Smith
Nancy Smith
Julie B. Williams
Jennifer Wiseman

GUESTS

Thomas Bangasser
Jon Fine
Sam Kaplan
Lori Robinson
Yoshiko Saheki

Julie Williams reported that the 1.2 million King County residents that KCLS serves have had to deal with the effects of the economic situation and turned to KCLS in record numbers for information, assistance, ideas and inspiration. Julie introduced Jon Fine, CEO of United Way of King County, and Sam Kaplan, Vice President of the Trade Development Alliance of Greater Seattle, to provide an understanding of the state of the region and its impact on patrons.

Jon Fine - CEO, United Way of King County

Jon Fine mentioned that early learning and ending homelessness are two of the community's most pressing issues that the United Way is especially focused on. The organization has also identified basic human needs as one of its goals, in light of the recession. The United Way of King County is also focused on making an impact in the areas of older adults, children, youth and families, domestic violence and sexual assault, health, job training and employment, and system support. With unemployment and food bank usage increasing, people are struggling and suffering but the United Way has good programs in place to help. Although the region was somewhat insulated for a while, that is no longer the case. Jon cited anecdotal evidence and evidence from grantee agencies that there are no predicted improvements in the near future, although the recession may not get much worse.

The United Way of King County is an organization that supports other nonprofits: up to 140 regular grantees and another 140 one-time grantees for special projects. Jon noted that most of them are struggling to various degrees, and the United Way expects that some will experience mergers in the near future. He said that nonprofits are adaptable and remarkably resilient by their very nature. The recession has caused many of these organizations to refocus their priorities on helping those in immediate need versus providing long-term support. The United Way of King County encourages both. Jon mentioned that issues in the nonprofit sector include limited government subsidy and the fact that private philanthropy is not likely to fill in the gap. However, the United Way has not seen as significant a decline as many nonprofit organizations, which have experienced a 20-30% decline in private giving. He noted that the best support is through a partnership between nonprofits, government and business.

Jon said that volunteerism is a major help to the United Way of King County. Locally, the Day of Caring on September 11 was a huge success. Nationally, one million more people volunteered at the Day of Caring in 2009 than in 2008. The United Way of King County website has seen a 68% increase in volunteer matching requests in the past year. Jon noted that the United Way's experience is an illustration that people can succeed in this difficult economic climate. The organization has adjusted and been able to achieve some of its goals despite the economy. Jon mentioned that he has an abiding belief in the creativity and dynamism of this community and the country, and their ability to succeed in spite of the challenges of the recession.

Rob Spitzer asked what the United Way has found in terms of hunger in this community, given that meeting basic human needs is its newest priority. Jon replied that the organization recently published "Hunger in King County," a report giving the state of the situation and the United Way's plan for dealing with it. In general, food bank lines are lengthening, and of the 1.8 million King County residents, a few hundred thousand use food bank services. About 50,000 residents reported in response to a survey that they had experienced hunger or were in fear of hunger. Jon noted that although not everyone in King County has a problem with hunger, it is more

widespread than expected in light of the wealth of the King County population. The issue of hunger is partially a reflection of the people who have lost jobs having to make difficult choices, such as feeding their children rather than themselves. Jon mentioned that the United Way's focus on basic needs has a large emphasis on hunger and shelter. Part of this includes helping food banks increase their capacity and their outreach. One of the major efforts is helping residents sign up for food stamps, since only one out of three residents who are eligible for food stamps take advantage of the program.

Rob Spitzer asked how big a role the United Way plays in identifying community needs, assessing how local nonprofits address those needs and guiding organizations to eliminate waste and duplication of services. Jon replied that the United Way portion of most grantee budgets is 10%, which is not a trivial amount but is not so consequential that the United Way is able to dictate how the organization runs. However, when the United Way sees waste or redundancy, staff encourages the nonprofits to maximize their resources.

Jessica Bonebright noted that early childhood learning is a goal of both the United Way and KCLS, and asked if there are opportunities for the two organizations to work together for improvement in this area. Jon and Bill Ptacek confirmed that KCLS and the United Way of King County do work together in this area. For example, both organizations participated in a needs assessment for school readiness in a number of King County school districts. Jon mentioned that the United Way is about to launch a major home visiting program for volunteer readers to visit parents and caregivers, and could collaborate with KCLS on that effort. Richard Eadie noted that it is important to acknowledge that many children's primary caregivers are not their natural parents.

Sam Kaplan - Vice President, Trade Alliance of Greater Seattle

Sam Kaplan reported that the Puget Sound area avoided for a time some impacts of the recession that started in December 2007. The recession didn't hit the Puget Sound area until September 2008, when the world economy declined, because this area's economy is so linked to the international economy. One in three jobs in this area is tied to international trade, and the Puget Sound area exports more per capita than any region in the United States. Seattle also has the third largest container complex in the United States, international cargo and passengers at SeaTac Airport, major Seattle-based companies that do a lot of business overseas, and thousands of international students and tourists that bring millions of dollars into the economy. This area is also home to major investment and global development companies. Sam said that although the area's economy was hit hard by the decline of the international economy, the good news is that world trade is starting to recover. Locally, housing prices have begun to stabilize and cargo trade is beginning to improve. Container figures started rebounding in this area and nationally in March and April, but are still down compared to 2008. Employment has had a small bump in Seattle in July, but has shown an upward trend over the past three to four months. Employment in education, healthcare and government has seen small increases.

Sam noted that for a while, many countries were lowering their currency to be able to better trade with the United States. However, many have begun the process of "delinking" from the United States economy. The current economic situation may hasten that delinking, especially since the Chinese economy has been improving while the United States economy has not. This may create more diversity in the world economy. Sam indicated that consumer spending and personal savings as a percentage of disposable income is decreasing. He noted that most world governments funded this economic crisis by creating more debt. Sam said that there are two types of deficits: recessionary deficits, which are driven by less revenue and more stimulus programs, and structural deficits. How governments deal with those types of deficits is going to have a big consequence on recovery going forward. Sam noted that financial crisis-driven recessions are different from cyclical recessions as they last longer and recovery is slower. He said that this is not likely to be a "v-shaped" recession. Sam is pessimistic in the short-term, but optimistic in the long term.

Sam also mentioned that technology is changing faster than people realize. He cited an *Economist* article noting that healthcare and biotechnology are changing more rapidly than ever before. The recession has not affected Moore's law in terms of technology, and with products such as solar panels becoming more efficient and powerful there is hope for energy and climate change. The developing world is also changing rapidly. In the last 20 years, more people were pulled out of poverty than in all of human history. Sam mentioned that one of the challenges of these changes, and something the Library can help with, is that those with a good education and skills will do well as the economy recovers, and those that don't will be in a lot of trouble economically. He concluded that although this area is still in tough times, it will survive and new products such as the Boeing 787 and Microsoft Windows 7 may help boost the local economy.

Lucy Krakowiak noted that in the past, economic stability was based on retail. She asked what the other options are for the economy to recover, if it does not base itself on retail. Lucy noted that there has to be a certain point where the economy shifts away from exponential growth. Sam replied that consumption is a big part of the economy, but the trouble stemmed from consumption spending with money people didn't have. He noted that it is important for people to start saving, but especially to stop spending money they don't have, on things they don't need.

Sam noted that before the recession, people were probably borrowing more frivolously and now might be borrowing for more basic needs. An interesting question is what policies should be in place to help people avoid going into debt for spending on their basic needs. Jon Fine mentioned that some of the solution is regulation to avoid excessive debt and some is education for financial literacy to help people understand the errors they made to get into that situation.

Richard Eadie asked how healthcare reform will affect the economy. Sam replied that although no one knows for sure, there will be unintended consequences, especially on small businesses, which make up 85% of the businesses in the greater Seattle area. Jon Fine also noted that the United Way of King County cares about healthcare reform, and is troubled by the fact that 40 million Americans don't have healthcare and the statistics in King County are similar. For the United Way to make progress in health and human services, those people need to be insured, but the major problem is the escalating cost of healthcare.

Rob Spitzer asked what Sam thinks is going to happen to the housing market since nothing new is being built and the population is not shrinking. Sam replied that although nothing is being built, there is a lot of excess inventory. He noted that housing sales are going up but 50% of sales are foreclosed homes. The housing market needs demand but also needs the wealth to drive that demand. Richard Eadie noted that a major driver of demand for new homes will be new jobs. Sam said that if employment starts improving, that will be a good sign. If the international economy starts recover, many people think that the Puget Sound area's economy will improve as well.

Rob Spitzer asked if there is any talk of combining the Ports of Tacoma, Everett and Seattle and looking at trade from a regional standpoint. Sam replied that this is an interesting time for the Ports. The Ports of Tacoma and Seattle have recently laid off employees and are facing stiff competition. The Trade Alliance is one of the only organizations in which the Ports work together. Since international competition is growing, it may force the Ports to work together.

Part Two: Positioning KCLS to deal with issues and Future Services

Bill Ptacek presented KCLS' mission and vision, and the five Future Services goals. He noted that the Future Services Strategies are intended to focus KCLS on delivering service in the library, beyond the library building and online.

A few of the Future Services goals were met by the Look to Your Library program. In addition to providing valuable support to patrons, the program raised awareness of KCLS' programs, resources and services for both staff and patrons. Staff at the libraries continue to use Look to Your Library signage and materials to help patrons. The online resource created for the program is still available on kcls.org as well. The Look to Your Library website used the innovative Pathfinder format, which will be useful for future online applications. The most long-lasting benefit of the program is the partnerships KCLS developed with community organizations.

Richard Eadie asked how KCLS measures the usage of online resources compared to in-library resources. KCLS uses Google analytics to track how many people have visited the website, where they come from and what they are doing at kcls.org. In addition to the catalog, databases and other online resources available on kcls.org, KCLS staff provides value-added content such as readers' advisory blogs and the "Tell Me a Story" program. One of the goals of the Future Staffing project is to give staff more time to create that online content and connect with patrons in a more personal way. Although KCLS is not a social service agency, the Library System helps people access information and support in an effective way to make a difference in their lives. Additional Future Services programming includes the expansion of Outreach Services with new "Library2Go" bookmobiles and a major push to organize KCLS' volunteers.

KCLS is now involved in turning the Future Services Strategies into the Future Staffing model. The goal of Future Staffing is for the existing staff to do similar work in a different way in order to achieve the Future Services Strategies. The Joint Labor-Management Committee that has been working on Future Staffing has been studying

the needs of library staff and has developed job descriptions and lists of duties to test in a few pilot clusters. Ongoing communication efforts to inform staff about the project include a blog, biweekly email updates and meetings at 34 locations over a two-month period to obtain feedback on the staffing model. Staff feedback will be used to finalize the staffing model before it is tested at pilot locations.

The Joint Labor-Management Committee is now working on selecting the pilot locations and hopes to have them identified by spring 2010. The group is currently exploring an assessment tool for the clusters to complete to gauge staff attitudes regarding the Future Staffing project and the cluster's appropriateness to be a pilot site. Although some staff may be anxious about the transition to the new model, the pilot process will help clarify how staff will transition into new positions. The new job classifications created by the Future Staffing model will likely give staff the opportunity to take on more interesting and fulfilling activities. Helping staff understand the opportunities the Future Staffing model will provide is one of the primary goals of the upcoming meetings. KCLS is committed to move into the new staffing model using the current staffing level, and is working closely with Labor groups in all aspects of the project.

Part Three: Board Discussion

Rob Spitzer asked if KCLS could add another goal to the Future Services Strategies about helping people deal with economic challenges. Staff replied that the Lifelong Learning goal, which focuses on adults, and many outreach and online activities address KCLS' role in helping people deal with the difficult economy. The Future Services Strategies don't focus on specific topics or services intentionally, and are designed to be able to have the flexibility to address a variety of goals and needs. Richard Eadie noted that Future Services involves a groundbreaking effort to move libraries away from being simply a collection of books. He noted that one fundamental element of this will be defining where to stop providing services. Richard also mentioned that because changes in technology mean more people using library services online, KCLS may be at the apex of its need for square footage. Using Future Services, KCLS hopes to streamline what it already does well, traditional in-library service, while expanding online and outreach efforts. The capacity of KCLS' network is being used all the time. For example, overall network usage at the Bellevue Regional Library has doubled in the past five years. Patrons are also interacting with KCLS' online services in a more complex way, which is one of the reasons KCLS is a good candidate for federal broadband stimulus funding. KCLS is currently upgrading its network by a factor of ten, and exploring ways to further streamline the network by managing network traffic and prioritizing various applications. Wireless access at the libraries is very popular, and it is not uncommon for the Bellevue Regional Library to experience 100 wireless connections at a time. Workstation space on PCs at the libraries is dependent on square footage and time limits on workstations vary by location. In order to maximize space at the libraries, KCLS is exploring new ways to make them flexible, such as meeting rooms that flow into the library floor and are open to the public when not in use for meetings.

The Trustees asked about dealing with potential emergencies such as if KCLS libraries are at risk in the Green River floodplain. The Kent Regional and Auburn libraries are in that area, and there is currently a major effort at those libraries to put together information packets and inform the community about available resources and planning efforts. KCLS has prearranged for sandbags to be available at the libraries as well. The Library Connection @ Southcenter is also in the area, but the Westfield Mall is responsible for flood preparations at that location. The Trustees also asked for an update on how KCLS is dealing with swine flu. As in the initial outbreak, KCLS is working closely with King County Public Health. Human Resources will be sending out a notice to all employees as a reminder of how to work with employees and patrons with swine flu symptoms. The Safety Committee is also working on solutions for services such as hand sanitizers in the libraries. The Trustees suggested being more aggressive about providing hand sanitizers and wipes for keyboards and desktops.

Rob Spitzer asked if there are things KCLS is doing now that should be discontinued in order to focus on other programs. Under Future Services, KCLS is adding new programs and putting new emphasis on online and outreach. KCLS has developed the "What Gives?" Committee to explore how to prioritize activities and see if certain efforts can be eliminated, done differently or reduced. One example of this would be stopping staff from creating their own publicity, rather than using the existing channels already established and offered through Community Relations. Another would be staffing the reference and circulation desks at the libraries for a lower level of business rather than the maximum possible level of service that could be required at any given time.

Jessica Bonebright asked if KCLS intends to establish an ongoing annual employee survey. KCLS will provide a report on the Interim Staff Survey Response Plan at the September Board meeting. The System needs time for the Response Plan to take effect before doing another staff survey. Lucy Krakowiak also mentioned that it would be beneficial to develop a survey to measure patron satisfaction. Bill Ptacek replied that KCLS' research firm

could speak to the Planning Committee about patron surveys. The comment card process is also a useful tool to capture patron feedback, and has resulted in services such as Library Express. Staff suggestions for System-wide improvements are also often in response to patron needs.

Rob Spitzer noted that one of the things that make him proud and excited about being on the KCLS Board is that KCLS is not content with the status quo and looks for positive and creative ways to innovate and improve the entire System. He noted that the Evergreen project is a perfect example of that innovation. Rob suggested that a valid, if not directly stated goal for KCLS is to be a national and world leader in terms of delivery of library services and processes. Jessica Bonebright noted that part of the ability to achieve this goal is due to KCLS' size. KCLS' culture of innovation is part of the goal to be "one system" and "make it easy," which are aspects of the vision statement. That dynamic is driven by the community that KCLS serves. KCLS receives national recognition for its efforts, which was evident at the recent American Library Association annual conference. Look to Your Library is a good example of how other Library Systems look to KCLS for new programs and services. Many Systems have built on KCLS' model to provide assistance for patrons dealing with the difficult economy. In October, an entire edition of Public Library Quarterly will be devoted to research that KCLS has done. The Trustees noted that KCLS should be focused on providing great service for local patrons but also be aware of what other Library Systems are doing. In addition to learning from other Library Systems, KCLS has a lot to learn from other disciplines. This is something that KCLS has always been open to, and why partnerships with other organizations have always worked well. Jessica Bonebright asked if KCLS is doing anything innovative in terms of legal services. Richard Eadie noted that KCLS provides excellent legal resources in the libraries. KCLS has also hosted speakers from the King County Bar Speakers Bureau, and one legal service agency has provided scheduled appointments at the Federal Way Regional Library.

Lucy Krakowiak asked how the Redmond Ridge Library Express project is going. The site will likely open in mid-October. Staff will also provide an update on the Greenbridge Library project, which was a new and different effort for KCLS, at an upcoming meeting. Jessica Bonebright asked what KCLS' plans for the Newcastle Library will be if the developer can't find funding. KCLS' options are limited to looking for another developer or reverting to a standalone library project. There is still time for the developer, Mithun, to work on the project and find funding. KCLS is in a similar situation with the Duvall Library. The Duvall Church would like to sell KCLS a piece of property, but is having difficulty getting clearance to do so due to a mortgage on the site.

Bill Ptacek mentioned that there will not be a Finance Committee meeting before the September Board meeting, so that the Board can meet to discuss the Director's performance review. He also announced that KCLS' bond rating was increased to AA. Rob Spitzer said he would be interested to know how that translates into savings for the Library System.

ADJOURNMENT: 4:42pm