

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

March 2003

The month converged around an endless confluence of meetings coursing through landscapes, identified variously as Site D, Site F, Site I, *et al.*, juxtaposed against budget reduction mandates that will most certainly, impact library services over the next several years. Amid the controversy, however, emerged one very positive outcome – City Council’s resounding endorsement of and commitment to public process.

Two topics dominate this month’s board meeting: ballot and budget, equally difficult in very different ways.

The Association of Washington Cities sponsored an informative workshop on winning the local ballot measure. The library sent four people; other attendees included a Council member and the Finance Director. The most sobering session detailed results of current opinion polls of Washington residents. People are cautious; optimism does not characterize the prevailing attitude. The message –ballots can be won but it is imperative to inform and plan.

We have at least a year; the very earliest we would now consider going out is spring, perhaps even later. There are many decision points. Please bring your pencils and date books – we’ll start filling in the calendar from the endpoint and work back. Work from a previous workshop on informed consent may also be relevant; many of the ideas compliment or expand upon the AWC workshop. We will examine strategies, methods, media, and message and begin the process.

The second issue is next year’s budget – a more immediate reality. All departments have been mandated to turn in proposals to reduce the 2004 budget by seven percent. The library’s target is \$205,000. Purportedly, seven percent is worst case and is predicated on the assumption that the EMS levy does not pass. The “best” case, i.e. the levy does pass, would necessitate a four percent reduction or \$117,000. A draft proposal to achieve the seven- percent goal is included in your packet. Ideas not included here are also being explored. Staff has already engaged in vigorous, thoughtful debate.

Basically, library services depend on people, materials and time. This proposal focuses on two areas to achieve the balance required: 1) increased revenues, and 2) reduced services. As the governing board of the library, your approval on any of these measures is required. I know you will exercise great care and discretion in rendering your decisions. Final decisions are not being sought today, but the dialog is critical.

On a positive note, I had a delightful lunch with a potential library benefactor.