

August 16, 2013 BLT Agenda Item Comments

Comments on Newport Beach Board of Library Trustees Special Meeting agenda items, submitted by:

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Item 4.1.A: Process Regarding Selection of New Library Services Director/City Librarian

1. I think the recently unearthed November 2002 *Memorandum of Understanding* between a former City Manager and a former Board of Library Trustees is an excellent starting point and should be followed.
2. I hope neither the City Manager nor the Board feel a need to rush the recruitment process. The Detroit Suburban Librarians' Roundtable Succession Planning Committee (see below) suggests "*Allow sufficient time to make a thoughtful decision. A 15-week timeline is considered fast. The average board takes about 27 weeks to replace a library director.*"
3. Primarily I think it should be a public process driven and informed by the public's wants and needs, much like a school considering a new principal or a school district considering its choice of a new superintendent. I find it surprising and disappointing that to date those visiting the Newport Beach **Public** Library in person, or visiting the Library website, haven't a clue that a search for a new Director, and with that the possibility of a new direction for the Library, is about to take place.
4. Early in the process, I think the Board needs to do some serious background work to assess the current state of the Library, and areas in which improvement may be needed, including a thorough exit interview with the retiring Director, as well as soliciting the views of some of the rank and file employees (and public) outside the presence of senior management.
5. Additionally, I think the Board should carefully review recent recruitment campaigns by other successful library boards and districts. The wealth of excellent material available on-line is much too great to adequately digest and act upon at today's meeting (see below for a few quickly located examples).

Item 4.1.B: Qualities/Qualifications the Board and Public Hope to See in the Next Library Services Director

1. Beyond the normal managerial skills expected of a good leader, as I have previously communicated to the Trustees, I think the ideal Library Director would be one who understands our public library as something different from our other City departments: namely a somewhat separate public institution, ideally governed by the people through the appointed Board.
2. Given the ever changing information technologies, I would also hope for someone with a mind open enough to think serious consideration needs to be given to the possibility that the library world as we know it needs to be completely reinvented, but also open to the possibility, after thoughtful consideration, that it does not – and willing to revisit their position on that on a periodic basis.

3. I think the quality of the applicants would be enhanced if the recruiting materials included a clear description of the current state of the library, and a clear vision of where the Board (and public) wants it to be in the next 10-20 years. Unfortunately, I'm not sure we currently have the latter.

Item 4.2. Proposed Appointment of Library Services Manager Tim Hetherton as Interim Library Director

1. I'm sure Tim would do an excellent job.
2. However, the Trustees should be aware there may be valid arguments for the superiority of engaging a temporary outside person, such as a retired library director, at approximately the same salary as the current Director, to fill in during the recruitment period. That viewpoint can be found in the Morris article on ProQuest (see #5 below), admittedly written by a retired library director.

Suggested References and Resources

1. Detroit Suburban Librarians' Roundtable Succession Planning Committee (2005). **A Library Board's Practical Guide to Finding the Right Library Director** : <http://www.owlsweb.info/L4L/trustees/GuideToFindingTheRightLibraryDirector.pdf>
(Many thoughtful suggestions, including generic qualities and sample job postings)
2. Washington Secretary of State. **Employing a New Library Director** : <http://www.secstate.wa.gov/library/libraries/libDev/downloads/trustee/11-employingdirector.pdf>
(Specific to state, but includes useful ideas)
3. Examples of recent recruitment materials, note prominence of library's statistics:
Spokane: <http://www.spokanelibrary.org/director/> (includes [PDF brochure](#))
Anchorage: <http://www.muni.org/Departments/library/News/Documents/DirectorRecruit.pdf>
Baton Rouge: http://www.ebrpl.com/lboc/EBRPLDirectorRecruitmentRevised_072312.pdf
4. Library Journal (2012). *America's Star Libraries, 2012: Top-Rated Libraries* : <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/category/managing-libraries/lj-index/class-of-2012/>
(May not be meaningful, but suggests improvement is possible in terms of community relevance as evidenced by visits per capita, and similar objective statistics)
5. Morris, L. R. (2004). **The case for an outside interim director**. *American Libraries*, 35(6), 53-54. Retrieved from : <http://search.proquest.com/docview/197165755?accountid=12708>