



November 18, 2009

Dear Representative Wagner, City Council President Shields, Councilwoman Kail-Smith, Councilman Motznik, Councilman Peduto and Councilwoman-elect Rudiak;

We received your letter dated November 12, 2009. The allegations that Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh has failed to operate transparently are unfounded. The Trustees of Carnegie Library are community volunteers who have spent countless hours engaging the community in resolving the Library's current challenges. The foremost concern of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Board of Trustees and staff is to provide for the best possible Library service to the Pittsburgh region – in the present and well into the future.

As you are fully aware, throughout this entire year, Library representatives visited public and elected officials and community leaders to advise them of our projected deficit. In addition, all 36 Board members, including those 12 who are public Trustees and/or elected officials, received detailed information and were encouraged to attend any and all of the meetings leading up to the Board's Action Plan, which was approved on October 5, 2009. We rely on the Library's public Trustees to attend Board meetings and participate on committees so that they can represent their constituents' concerns and be aware of pending issues that may affect the communities and constituents they represent.

There was not, and is not, anything hidden with respect to our process and actions. We have repeatedly stated that without increased funding, the Board of Trustees would need to make painful decisions, and that although closing libraries was an option of last resort, it was a real possibility. The potential outcomes were completely transparent and widely discussed.

The Board and the staff also held public meetings to increase awareness and to ascertain public sentiment on the issues. These meetings were attended by approximately 400 individuals, and among those, 96, representing all neighborhoods and age ranges, commented publicly. Further, both our funding crisis and our community processes have been heavily covered by the local media.

With respect to the requests raised in your correspondence, we submit the following:

1. In response to placing “a moratorium on the proposed branch closures”:

The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh system has been struggling financially for years with revenues that do not keep up with increasing expenses. We have been cutting costs and creating operating efficiencies on an ongoing basis. The economic crisis of the past year accelerated the Library's need to take action. As a conscientious Board of Trustees, we have been working diligently to ensure the short- and long-term viability of the Carnegie Library system, and this has required us to make some very difficult choices to accomplish that mission.

Our Board has stated many times that the decisions made on October 5, 2009 were the result of several years of study and analysis. It was only when there were no alternatives that the Board decided to take immediate action to balance our current and future budgets. The Board is very willing to listen to any definitive proposals for both short-term funding commitments and long-term sustainable funding. Placing any moratorium on proposed branch closures and any delay in the implementation of the Action Plan, would be contingent on funding commitments and would need to be approved by the entire Board of Trustees at the meeting scheduled for December 14, 2009.

Director's Office

4400 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
P 412.622.3137
F 412.622.6278
www.carnegielibrary.org

2. In response to providing “constituents a collective forum to communicate with the board”:

Our Board continues to be committed to listening to the communities that are affected by the planned closures and other branch cost containment measures indicated by our Action Plan. We believe that the combination of the forums, meetings and public outreach that has taken place this year, combined with the future meetings described below, not only demonstrates our willingness to listen and present options for public dialogue, but also demonstrates our compassion and transparency about the implications of our Action Plan.

Please remember that members of the Board of Trustees of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh are community volunteers who are actively balancing the demands for continuous Library meetings to the best of their ability. The Library staff is accountable to the Board of Trustees to ensure the appropriate and responsible operation of the Library, including participating in the public debate of our funding issues. Nevertheless the Library has been both responsive to meeting requests and proactive in arranging additional meetings. For example, during the months of October and November, CLP representatives met with residents from Beechview, Hazelwood, Lawrenceville and Mount Washington. Additional meetings are scheduled in each of these neighborhoods. As of this writing, they include the following neighborhoods and times:

- December 2, 6:30 p.m., **Hazelwood**
Location: Keystone Church, 161 Hazelwood Avenue, 15207
- December 3, 7:00 p.m., **Beechview**
Location: Beechview United Presbyterian Church, 1621 Broadway Avenue, 15216
- December 7, 6:30 p.m., **Lawrenceville**
Location: CLP-Lawrenceville, 279 Fisk Street, 15201
- December 8, 6:30 p.m., **West End**
Location: CLP-West End, 47 Wabash Avenue, 15220

3. In response to providing “elected officials with a forum to communicate with the board”:

Elected officials have always had a forum to communicate with the Board. In fact, there are currently twelve public Trustees representing the City, County, School and State serving on the Library's Board of Trustees. These elected and appointed officials represent the public on our Board. They have the opportunity to cast their vote on every action taken by the Board. Indeed, some of these public Trustees participate in the leadership of the Board. The Library's Board of Trustees will continue to engage with elected officials with regard to any proposals for both short- and long-term sustainable funding. In fact, meetings are being arranged for all elected officials representing the City, County and State levels of government. Active and productive dialogues with many elected officials have occurred, and will continue to occur, as most are committed to working with the Library to solve our funding gap. Already, Senator Costa, Representative Frankel, Mayor Ravenstahl and City Council President Shields, among others, have been rallying actively to secure long-term sustainable funding for the Library.

In addition to individual meetings, group meetings with elected officials and the RAD board that have recently occurred include:

- Post-Agenda with City Council, September 14
- City Delegation Meeting, October 20
- Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD) Meeting, October 21
- County Council Meeting, October 22
- Meeting with Mayor Ravenstahl, October 23
- Executive Committee Phone Call with Sen. Costa and Rep. Frankel, Oct. 27 and Nov. 17

4. In response to providing “complete financial information to include respective budgets of the libraries proposed for closure”:

Closing libraries is part of a cost saving plan that includes a workforce and service-hour reduction across our system. On November 4, the Library staff submitted a revised 2010 budget and detailed financial analysis to RAD. In addition, we took the initiative to provide detailed background information related to the Board’s decision-making process as well as an updated five-year budget projection. To ensure complete transparency, we made the documents available to the public by including them on our Web site, www.carnegielibrary.org/future. These documents include independent studies, financial projections and information exchanged throughout the summer between the Library and community members.

RAD is in the process of conducting a special audit that will test the assumptions made in our financial projections to determine their reasonableness. Complying with the audit is the Library staff’s priority. We will continue to work diligently to provide additional information to RAD and the community, including the Action Plan’s cost savings and respective budgets of library branches proposed for closure.

5. In response to committing to holding the “December 14 board meeting in the public”:

Our Board of Trustees will hold a public forum in conjunction with the December 14 meeting and will communicate details through the Library’s Communications Office.

We appreciate the efforts of all those who are seeking solutions to the Library system’s funding problem. Thank you.

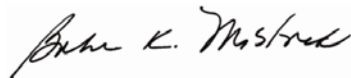
Sincerely,

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Executive Committee

Joan Gulley
Carol Robinson
Lou Testoni
Betsy Watkins
Terri Wolfe



Jacqui Fiske Lazo
Chair, Board of Trustees



Dr. Barbara K. Mistick
President and Director

cc: Representative Dan Frankel, Delegation Chair
Senator Jay Costa