

**Escondido Public Library Board of Trustees  
Board Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, August 8, 2017, 2:00 p.m.  
Library Turrentine Room**

**CALL TO ORDER:** President Guiles called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

**Members Present:** Trustees Ron Guiles, Mirek Gorny, Elmer Cameron, Gary Knight, and Mayra Salazar.

**Members Absent:** None.

**Staff Present:** Cynthia Smith, Interim Director of Library and Community Services; Joanna Axelrod, Principal Librarian; Jeffrey Epp, City Manager; Michael McGuinness, City Attorney; Sheryl Bennett, Director of Administrative Services; Joan Ryan, Assistant Director of Finance and Misty Brey Meyer, Division Coordinator.

**Written/Oral Communications:** None.

**Agenda Item #1: Approval of Minutes:**

Motion by Trustee Cameron, seconded by Trustee Gorny, to approve the minutes of the July 11, 2017 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

**Current Business**

**Agenda Item #2: Review the City of Escondido's Response to the San Diego County Grand Jury Report Regarding Escondido Public Library**

Director Smith and the Trustees reviewed the City's response to the San Diego County Grand Jury Report. The response was issued in June and made available for public review on both the City of Escondido and the San Diego County Grand Jury websites.

Trustee Cameron said he was impressed with the quality of the response to each concern within the Grand Jury report. He commended staff for their thorough research and thoughtful response.

President Guiles seconded Trustee Cameron's statement and added the Grand Jury may be interested in trying to review complaints, but generally, they don't fully understand the context of the complaint and are limited in their ability to research complicated situations.

Trustee Salazar agreed that the Grand Jury's job is tough; however, she was disheartened that City Management sent the response without allowing the Trustees

or Library staff to review the draft prior to completion and that it mentions outsourcing as an option when that topic is just now being raised for discussion.

### **Agenda Item #3: Library Board of Trustees Discussion on Outsourcing Escondido Public Library Services.**

Director Smith communicated the background of the City's exploration of outsourcing the Escondido Public Library (EPL) to Library Systems & Services (LS&S). She spoke about the community engagement at the July 11, 2017 Board of Trustees meeting, which had 30 speakers who were unanimously opposed to outsourcing. At that meeting, the Trustees decided to discuss this topic further and made it an agenda item.

At this time, members of the audience held up various signs in support of keeping the library public.

Trustee Cameron reviewed the Trustee's bylaws and explained that they are not the final decision makers but an advisory body. He shared the Board's mission to help the public better understand the Trustee's role and their limitations in reference to making final decisions.

"The primary mission of the Escondido Public Library Board of Trustees is to be vocal and energetic advocates for the essential services that the Escondido Public Library provides to our community and to give sound and timely advice and counsel to the Escondido City Council and the Director of Library & Community Services on the development of plans, policies and programs that are responsive to community needs and desires."

President Guiles stated that the intent of the meeting was to be an example of the best use of democracy. He reminded the audience that Trustees are volunteers and in order to have an effective meeting, everyone should remain courteous.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

**Whitney McCoy of Save our Library, Escondido advocacy group**, made arrangements prior to the meeting to give a 10-minute presentation on the reputation and operations of LS&S. Save our Library felt privatizing the library was a mistake, and reiterated other public comment from the July 11, 2017 meeting that Escondido has a great library which should be protected. Public libraries are not an expense but an investment that demonstrates a City's commitment to improving the lives of local residents. An American Library Association (ALA) study found for every \$1 spent, the local community receives \$5.48 in economic value, and the average American citizen pays less than \$40 in taxes for libraries per year.

A library's role is to remain unbiased, promote literacy, identify and remove barriers,

and to be a cornerstone of democracy. EPL's budget accounts for less than 3% of the City's budget. She reminded the group that LS&S does not disclose financial information relevant to the exploration and transparency of the privatization of EPL; that the company is owned by a private equity firm. Privatization is not recommended by ALA as they found operational savings are due to staff reductions and hiring lower level staff at lower salaries and benefits. All savings will not be returned to the City.

In the last Board meeting, LS&S pointed to the County of Riverside as a successful contract in the local area, but that County transferred service to LS&S due to a financial crisis that would have closed libraries had a contract not occurred. LS&S has a material budget for Riverside that is too small for the community it serves based on an ALA survey. The survey included LS&S staff responses that confirmed ALA's concerns regarding staffing levels and qualifications, as well as on collection development and materials budgets. Based on the LS&S model at other libraries, Ms. McCoy projected how this model of operation would impact EPL. She also compared the current staffing levels of librarians with MLS degrees, and how much money was spent on youth materials between EPL, Riverside, and San Diego County libraries. In all scenarios, LS&S's Riverside County libraries were understaffed and underfunded compared to both San Diego County and Escondido Public Library.

The proposal states that LS&S can save the City \$400,000, which is only 0.0025% of the City's total budget. Ms. McCoy is frustrated the City is willing to give up operations of their Library for such a small amount. She stated the Library should not be lumped in with shopping cart removal and graffiti clean-up. Privatization will remove local funds from the local community, and give them to an out of state, for-profit company. She also repeated the Board of Trustee bylaws and urged the Trustees to formally advise the City Council against this action.

**Laura Mitchell, Vista**, read a letter sent to the Board of Trustees from both James Neal, ALA President, and Pam Sandlian Smith, Public Library Association (PLA) President in which they site ALA's policy against the shifting of policymaking and management oversight of library services for the public to the private for-profit sector. As the former Escondido Library Director, she never thought she would be angrier that when the City Council majority voted to close the East Valley Branch (EVB) library. She is sad and frustrated by this discussion and requested the Trustees recommend the City Council drop this idea.

**Lucy Berk, Escondido**, stated the Pioneer Room plays a vital role as the City's archival depository. It contains original maps, documents, photographs, and rare books. She is concerned with what would happen if a private company decides to sell the rare books for a profit. The current staff are highly trained and have recently reorganized the Pioneer Room collection and look. It would be a disaster to have it closed, privatized, or if anything else happened to it. Please keep the Pioneer Room in mind when making a decision.

**Chris Nava, Escondido**, emphasized the stance ALA has made in reference to

keeping public libraries public, and commented how decisions should be driven by the best interest of the community, not profits. Privatizing public entities threatens two pillars; transparency and accountability. She is concerned with the lack of transparency as City staff continue to explain this as an exploratory phase, when she has a copy of an email between two LS&S employees stating they are very close to securing a contract with the City. Escondido's Library is a service, not a business.

**Anna Marie Valasco, Escondido**, is a retired teacher, who loves the library. She saw the negative impact of the closure of the EVB, specifically impacting the Latino community. This is not a partisan issue; it is a money issue. Her recommendation to save money is to consider joining the County system or to look at the salaries of some City employees. Savings should come from somewhere else. Escondido cannot afford any more negative publicity. The community should control the Library; our Library is not for sale.

**Barbara Letsom, Escondido**, stated she has been accused of being politically manipulated by City Council members. Her response to that label is to focus on the loss of quality other outsourced libraries have experienced. She spoke about her shock and disappointment of the EVB closure. There is fear that this decision to outsource will be pushed through, like the decision to close EVB, without community input.

**Heidi Paul, Escondido**, shared her experience at the last book club meeting. Twenty-five people shared ideas within a fascinating exchange of *The Outliers: The Story of Success*, and gave a synopsis of the book. She commended the quality staff and dedicated volunteers at EPL, who would not work for a Maryland company. The staff are the success of this library: Great libraries like NYPL are not being outsourced.

**Bob Will, Escondido**, serves as the Pioneer Room Friends President. They have no interest in seeing any change in library service. The Pioneer Room is personal to this community and houses personal papers that tell of Escondido's history. Francis Beven Ryan gave us the opportunity to preserve and provide access to Escondido's history. Current management staff are interested and supportive and that's very important.

**Karen Tatge, President of Escondido City Employees Association**, said the association is asking the City to refrain from outsourcing. They are concerned for the employees and recognize the quality and hard work of current staff. Outsourcing is detrimental to salaries and benefits, and results in high-turnover, low wages, and causes stagnant career paths.

**Lynn Lau, Escondido**, says though she is not a professional in a library system, she is still angry about this discussion. As the former secretary for Trustee Cameron, he taught her to anticipate outcomes. In this case, she is anticipating the loss of morale of the Library staff, an unsuccessful bond issue for a new library, and a loss of cohesion within the community. When negotiating a new contract, she anticipates

that LS&S will charge the City and ever increasing amount. She urges the Trustees to not recommend outsourcing the library system.

**Patricia Borchmann, Escondido**, shared with the Board an excerpt from Participatory Budgeting Project on the democratic process which gives informational power to the public to help see how money is spent. She left information with the Division Coordinator to give to the Trustees, and will forward it to the Council prior to the next meeting. She spoke of the failures of other outsourced entities like SANDAG, and a Riverside system for collecting traffic mitigation fees to cover infrastructure.

**Debbie Resler, Escondido**, her family moved to Escondido fifteen-years ago and loves the sense of community and diversity in the area. The Library has done a wonderful job of meeting the various community needs. A large portion of the community needs internet access and when EVD closed, they lost that access.

**Laura Hunter, Escondido**, stated new information has been released since the last Board meeting, and the proposal is exceedingly weak. How can the Board make a recommendation based on generic promotional statements and a lump sum total? There are no details and it lacks how much profit will be made. The other issue is the lack of details within the cost benefit analysis. It does not show the current benefits of EPL; it only compares open hours. Nor does it calculate the potential loss of volunteer hours or donations. People do not want to volunteer or give their money to a for-profit company. Save the Council from themselves.

**Brenda Townsend, Escondido**, for 110 years EPL has existed. We have the same great programs they offer; we do not need them. LS&S may build vibrant libraries but we already have a vibrant library. If there were issues with how the Library is performing, Council should communicate that to Library administration.

**Roy Garrett, Escondido**, implored the Trustees to remember they volunteered for the position. A Trustee has a higher duty than an employee; a fiduciary duty, and high care of the Trust. You are not just volunteers, the beneficiaries of your Trust are in front of you. They are telling you without exception to stand up for them and perform the duty of your Trust.

**Greg Dean, Escondido**, gave thanks to the Trustees for not turning their backs on the public. He asked how many Council members it takes to ruin Escondido, and answered four. He recognized that only Council member Olga Diaz was present at the meeting. He spoke of his experience living in Southern Oregon, and how the libraries there are not renewing their contract with LS&S. The company's rating in that area is so low no other library system in that area will entertain working with LS&S. If it's not broke, don't fix it.

**Georgine Tomasi, Escondido**, spoke of how in the last meeting, the Trustees heard the passions of the community. She reminded them that they serve on the Board and are also members of the community. She questioned the legacy they wanted to leave and asked who would propose to get rid of a public service as good as EPL. It

compares to the Philadelphia Library as far as quality employees, services, and collections - do not destroy that.

**Joan Brushee, Escondido**, is a retired teacher who moved to Escondido twenty years ago. She recognized the good points made by the public already and reiterated what had been said. She has questions that need answers. This is not what Benjamin Franklin had in mind. Can any LS&S profits be used to benefit political campaigns? How is the public protected from LS&S becoming a political vehicle? How will the collections be protected from political influence? She hopes this gets resolved in a democratic way, just as Benjamin Franklin would have intended.

**Loretta McKinney, San Marcos**, is the most recent retired Escondido Public Library Director, and previously the Library Director for Murrieta Public Library located in Riverside County. She is not in support of a transition to LS&S, a for-profit company. From her personal experience, she knows the community is first to suffer in search of profits. The LS&S staff do not receive the proper funds to support their community, and are first to leave when an opening comes available in a municipally-run library. There is a situation with unfunded PERS liability costs, and there should be a timeline and a master plan for addressing this issue across the City – not put on the back of a single department. The Library should not be cherry picked. LS&S does exist to fix broken libraries, but EPL is not broken. The Library is a City department – not a service within a City department the way that graffiti removal is.

**Ron Kohl, Escondido** asked if the contract is already approved. He stated we are dealing with liars and deceitful people trying to steal our money. This Trustees are responsible and can help prevent this. On August 3, 2017 an email from LS&S came out saying this is already a done deal. Instead he recommends privatizing the City Mayor and the City Manager.

**Meryl Burke, Escondido**, created a petition online a week ago and currently has over 500 signatures in support of keeping the Library public. She will be submitting a PDF copy of the petition to the Board for public record. The Council was moving towards building a new facility that would be a beacon for North County, then changed and decided to privatize the Library. The blame is with the Council not LS&S. Elections are coming up and we will not reelect you. The joined petitions are showing that thousands of people are not supportive of this decision. We will not support a new library if we do not support how the library is being run. In Jackson County, Oregon the public record shows that they will not be renewing their contract with LS&S. Don't ruin our reputation.

**Jack Anderson, Escondido**, is the President of the Escondido Library Foundation, but is not speaking on their behalf as they have yet to take a formal stance. Escondido is in need of an expanded library facility. In 2010, the staff planned to expand on the current site. In 2016, the Council acted to once again explore an expansion plan, but this time at Grape Day Park. Regardless of the magnitude or location, it is important for the community to be involved and support a bond measure. It concerns the Foundation greatly that the bond may be negatively affected by unintended

consequences of outsourcing, and this needs to be addressed.

**Neal Hook, Escondido**, said he is glad to see so many people supporting the Library in this City. He is concerned that speakers are limited to two-minutes. Even Council Member Olga Diaz was limited, but she was given more time to keep everyone informed. To the Council the Library is irrelevant because they know what is best for us. Citizens spoke out in opposition to closing EVB and they ignored us. The Library is an essential feature for everyone. The Council wants to save money yet the City Manager and City Attorney are two of the highest paid City employees. Where are the Council's priorities?

**Mary Gaines, Valley Center**, says though she lives outside the city, she uses the Library. As a retired public defender she has seen the benefits of public libraries first hand. Without them, her case load would be even greater because libraries provide opportunities for people who would otherwise be in the criminal justice system to improve their lives in positive ways. She is concerned about the issues of accountability and transparency. Will LS&S replace the current Board with their own Board of Directors? The City is trying to annex areas to pay for its budget. Police and Fire retire at 50 years with 100% of their salary. The volunteers provide service to the library. Without them, it will all go away. Council needs to come up with a plan to pay pensions without cutting services.

**Virginia Abushanab, Escondido**, is a volunteer in the Bookshop. The Friends of the Library sell about \$70,000 worth of books each year. She stated she will not work for a for-profit company. The present arrangement for Library collection budget is the City puts in \$200,000 for circulating materials, and the Friends put in \$50,000. The new company is saying they will be getting the Friends money, but there is no guarantee. The Library Director must ask each year for this, and each year the Friends Board must approve the request. Do you think this private company is going to get the same response from the Friends?

**Liz White, Escondido**, says she is one of the people manning the petition collection desk downstairs, where they continue collecting signatures and educating the public on what it means if this Library is privatized. She experienced people running to the table to sign this petition. Children are also signing the banner and it is filling up with support to keep the Library public. Do not forget the people who have been showing support through signatures.

**Olga Diaz, Escondido City Council Member**, praised the crowd for showing up at 2:00 P.M. on a Tuesday. She quoted Winston Churchill as having said that success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm. She has been opposed to this since the first time she heard of the idea on April 5, 2017, and is not sure how we ended up in this situation. She did not sign the Grand Jury response as it contained language about outsourcing. It was never the intent for the public or the Trustees to be included in this process and stated that we have had to force ourselves into the process. She does not forgive the closure of EVB. She does not trust the City Council's majority to a vote. To LS&S, if they felt they were invited, that

was not by the community; this is not supported. She supports a new, publically run library in Grape Day Park. She told the Trustees that she is a good friend to have when they need support and that they should not feel alone in opposing this proposal. She urged the Trustees to recommend Council not to go through with the privatization of the Library.

**Patricia Serrano, Escondido**, an immigrant living in Escondido for twenty-three years, stated this Library helped her learn to speak English. Her son is successful in life because of this Library. He went to a great college in Massachusetts because of the books in this collection. She felt the closure of EVB was an attack on her community due to its location. They closed it due to budget, but we have a surplus. The City Manager and City Attorney's salaries are disgusting. They will not be around forever, but the damage they are doing to this community is irreversible.

### **TRUSTEE DISCUSSION:**

Board President Guiles informed the Trustees that 56 people have spoken over the course of the last two Trustee meetings; 26 today and 30 on July 11, 2017. In addition, they have received multiple emails and letters. The Trustees have patiently listened, but now it is their turn to let the public know their feelings and hopefully make a recommendation to vote before the end of the meeting.

Trustee Knight gave his appreciation for everyone speaking. In the 11 years he has been on the Board, this is the most unique opportunity to engage with the public. He clarified the he has no issues with Library operational efficiencies or outcomes. The Board did not initiate this discussion and feels the staff do an outstanding job. This is a discussion of finances. The Council appears to have gone outside the normal process of asking what is being done in other communities. A savings of \$400,000 does not come close to meeting the pension obligation. Many neighboring cities have outsourced policy to no ill effect and saved millions of dollars. He is not recommending that, but wants to know if Council has pursued that as an option. We did not request a change to how the Library is managed, so he does not want to make a change.

Trustee Salazar has been on the Board for three years. She grew up in a single-parent household in Escondido. The Library was her safe haven and she would not be sitting at this table without this Library. If it hadn't been for the Library, she would not have gone to college. She has worked in public service and knows how hard it is to manage a budget, and sometimes constituents can be wrong, but not now. This decision could have a negative effect on the community. She understands the need to figure this pension crisis out, but the Council needs to go back to the drawing board.

Trustee Gorny is in his third term on the Board. He feels the existing Library is great with professional staff and highly efficient operations. He has seen staff deal with financial difficulties in the past, yet they always pull through. Our Library is not broken and does not need to be fixed. He recommended to leave it as it is.

Trustee Cameron stated he wears two hats; one as a longtime Trustee, and one as the President of the Friends of the Library for the last 15 years. He has spent a lot of time volunteering to help raise money for the important things within the library. The Friends has a Board of Directors which represents the volunteers and over 250 paying members. Volunteers enjoy being here and seeing the work going on daily. The Friends for the last three or four years have raised \$75,000 each year. The priority is not to pay for operational needs, but specifically programs for children, books for children, and programs free to the community. The Friends do not have an official position at this time, but it is on the agenda for their meeting the following morning. He looks forward to the discussion and hopeful the Council will move ahead with the new library project. One concern he has is that if we need to build a new library, will there be support? We need a new library, not a community that says wait. He knows they are willing to support a new library, but not sure about a bond. It takes two-thirds approval to pass a bond. The board will come up with a recommendation soon for the Council.

President Guiles has been thinking about the advantages and disadvantages of this subject for the last month. The City is right to look at any potential cost savings, but \$400,000 is insignificant. He stated he is there to represent the people of Escondido to the Council. The advantage of LS&S was to open on Sundays, but after speaking with the Library Director it was found the Library can be opened on Sundays without increasing staff. Staff should be congratulated on hiring bright, highly qualified staff. He is concerned about losing those staff as a result of this uncertainty. He is concerned about losing community support for a bond measure if this continues longer. He is an advocate for building a new library on property owned and controlled by the City and explained how long and drawn out the process was when Farr Elementary school had to use the process of eminent domain to secure private property for an expansion. President Guiles continued there are not many things in a community that everyone agrees on. In all the public feedback received, only one person said they were in favor of outsourcing. If this was a broken system, he would be in favor of bringing LS&S in, but rather feels we have a fabulous Library. With privatization, his concern is limited public control. He is looking forward to using the community's passion and energy to pass a bond. We need to be thinking at this time of what outsourcing will do to our community. We need 66% to pass a bond and cannot possibly be successful with any organized opposition. Outsourcing would leave the same kinds of injuries in this community that the closure of EVB has left. He encouraged the Board to make a motion.

#### **ACTION TAKEN:**

Motion by Trustee Salazar, seconded by Trustee Knight to oppose outsourcing the Escondido Public Library. Motion carried unanimously.

President Guiles suggested a subcommittee of Trustees prepare a letter to send to the City Council and to schedule a special meeting for next Tuesday, August 15, 2017 to review the letter and make final recommendations. Everyone agreed.

**OTHER REPORTS:**

Cynthia Smith, Interim Director of Library & Community Services, updated the Trustees that the very successful Summer Reading Challenge ended July 31, 2017 and alerted the Board that the Collection Development Policy would come before the Board for review in September.

**Next Meetings:**

Special Meeting – August 15, 2017  
Monthly Trustee Meeting - September 12, 2017

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Moved by Trustee Cameron, seconded by Trustee Gorny, to adjourn the meeting at 3:57 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.



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Ron Guiles, President, Library Board of Trustees/M. Breymeyer, Division Coordinator