



PUBLIC LIBRARY
7421 West National Avenue
West Allis, Wisconsin 53214-4699

February 27, 2009

Mayor Dan Devine and City of West Allis Legislative Committee
c/o Paul Ziehler
City of West Allis
7525 W. Greenfield Ave.
West Allis, WI 53214

Dear Mayor Devine and Legislative Committee members:

At its February 25, 2009 monthly meeting, the West Allis Public Library Board of Trustees discussed the minutes of the Legislative Committee dated January 27, 2009 and February 10, 2009.

The Library Board is concerned that the Legislative Committee made important decisions in endorsing proposed legislation that would seriously impact how public library services are implemented to the community without first conferring with the library director, and in turn, library trustees.

At its meeting on January 27, 2009 the committee voted to endorse legislation that would change state library provisions including, "authorizing the establishment of regional/metropolitan or countywide library districts." After the library director read the minutes of the meeting, he contacted Paul Ziehler and requested that the committee retract that endorsement, as it was not reflective of the Library Board's philosophy. At its subsequent meeting on February 10, 2009, the committee did not drop support of the proposed legislation, but rather changed the language to read, "allowing or enabling the establishment of regional/metropolitan, countywide, or multi-county districts, not requiring or mandating them." The committee's decision to simply change the semantics of the issue and not abandon advocating for the possible creation of that legislation is disappointing.

By giving your approval to the potential that such legislation can be facilitated, the City of West Allis is effectively making available the option for legislators to consider changing the way public library service is provided to city residents. The option does not properly take into consideration, consciously ignores, and weakens the authority of local library boards.

It is the strong opinion of the West Allis Public Library Board of Trustees that legislation promoting a regional approach endorses centralized services, and the erosion of local community consideration in providing public library services. The Library Board

understands what the library means to the citizens of West Allis, and the pride that the community has for the facility. The Library Board's prime commitment is to the citizens of West Allis for which the library exists to serve.

Additionally, the trustees want to point out that any and all endowment monies currently secured by a library within the current federated system model, would be absorbed by the regional system. The Irv H. Terchak Endowment Fund has allowed the West Allis Public Library to improve its services to citizens, create economic and workforce efficiencies benefiting the city, and positively respond to patron expectations relating to technological improvements. Such advancements work to better library services for city residents, and should not be diluted among an entire region.

The West Allis Public Library Board of Trustees welcomes an opportunity for input and consultation between the committee, the library director and trustees before such important legislative decisions are made - as seems to be afforded other departments.

In this time of economic instability it is disconcerting that the City of West Allis Legislative Committee chooses to endorse legislation that would remove public library funding responsibility from the local municipality. The minutes reveal that the committee wanted to retain the option for such legislation in the future, "if it were ever needed based on changing political or financial reasons." The West Allis Public Library Board of Trustees respectfully states for the record that it opposes any support or endorsement by the City of West Allis Legislative Committee of legislation that would move municipal, public library services toward a regional model.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Mary Ellen Paulson, O.P." The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Sr. Mary Ellen Paulson,
President,
West Allis Public Library Board of Trustees

cc: West Allis Public Library Board of Trustees
Michael Koszalka, Library Director