

## **EDUCATION, ARTS & CULTURE COMMITTEE**

**March 10, 2009**

**4:00 P.M.**

In the absence of Chairman Robinson, Councilman Benson called the meeting of the Education, Arts & Culture Committee to order with Councilmen Rico, Bennett, Berz, Page, Gilbert, Gaines and Pierce. City Attorney Phil Noblett and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

Others present included Daisy Madison, Mark Keil, Richard Beeland, Barry Bennett, David Johnson, Missy Crutchfield, Karen McMahan and Greg Haynes.

Missy Crutchfield, Director of Education, Arts and Culture Dept., presented handouts, which are made a part of this minute material.

### **LIBRARY TASK FORCE'S FINAL REPORT**

After calling the meeting to order, Chairman Benson asked if the Mayor wanted to be present at this meeting, noting that some of the Council had already heard this report. It was noted that Karen McMahan would have June Garcia on the Speaker Phone to deliver the Report. Chairman Benson noted that the Report is long, and we just needed a capsule of it. He indicated that it was an excellent report, and we need to know which direction we need to go. He turned the meeting over to Karen McMahan

Ms. McMahan stated that she was representing the Mayor and the Task Force; that this Task Force was commissioned last March; that the Library is a profession or a science; that we had engaged June Garcia and Susan Kent to do this Report and that this document (which is made a part of this minute material) is the final report to the Task Force; that these people spent last summer compiling this information, and the Task Force had spent a great deal of time likewise. She mentioned that a series of community meetings were held last August; that part of what Chattanooga does best is asking the community what they want; that a Survey was also conducted and 500 people responded. She mentioned a Public Meeting in September that was filled to capacity; that June Garcia and Susan Kent had taken the information and this Report is the result. She then proceeded to get June Garcia on the Speaker Phone, stating that she had given the Council an introduction and that June could now go through the slides. Ms. Garcia indicated that she was ready to go through the process.

Ms. Garcia began by saying that they worked closely with the Planning Staff and the Mayor's Office and had looked at the metropolitan libraries in Tennessee, including Memphis, Nashville and Knoxville; also Birmingham, Asheville, and Charlotte, which is a city that Chattanooga often compares themselves with.

Ms. Garcia explained that they dealt with expenditures per capita and that the Chattanooga Library is \$19.40 per capita, which is less than the other metro areas in Tennessee. The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library, with a per capita expenditure of \$19.40, is in the lower quartile for libraries in this population group. The Library's square footage per capita is 0.49, which is less library space than the residents of any of the other metro areas in Tennessee. The average size branch is also smaller, and we are the third from the bottom on the benchmark.

In speaking of materials expenditures per capita, the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library is \$2.04 per capita. Ms. Garcia noted that most hardback books cost \$25.00+ and paperbacks are \$7.00+. \$3.92 is the medium spent and Chattanooga spent one-half of what Nashville spends (\$4.85), but we spend two times as much as Memphis, which is \$0.74.

The really important issue is circulation per capita, with Chattanooga's being 2.50 per capita, which is the very lowest. A library comparable in size to our population would be 6.25, and we are in the lower quartile on this measure.

Ms. Garcia next looked at the number of visits per capita, with ours being 2.14, which is clearly the lowest in the benchmark group of Tennessee Metro libraries. The medium per capita is 4.39. In regards to Reference Transactions per capita, we were 0.53, which is the second lowest in Tennessee Metropolitan Libraries. The medium is 0.88. She began to proceed with Critical Findings.

At this point, Chairman Benson asked if some of our circulation problems could hinge around the staff not being service friendly? He asked if they had checked service-friendly?

Ms. Garcia responded that this was a good point—that the Staff, for the most part, were given high marks; that the problem is the amount of materials and the amount purchased; that Chattanooga only purchases one copy of a popular item, which is an economic hardship. She reiterated that it was not a matter of attitude—that the Staff was outgoing and friendly.

Ms. Garcia continued with Critical Findings: Lacks a clear vision for the future; Has no strategic plan in place; Is underfunded both in its operating and its capital budgets; Is not making good use of the funds that it receives; Is not allocating its current resources in line with community needs; Has not kept up with population growth in developing and expanding library facilities; Has a very problematic governance structure that does not lend itself to clear lines of authority and responsibility; Has an organizational structure that is inappropriate and cumbersome; Has buildings that are inadequate, unattractive, and crowded; Uses technology that is limited and dated; and Has collections and collection policies that do not meet contemporary library best practices.

Councilman Page asked if she was through with the Report; if so, he had a question—What is the next step in regards to this Study?

Ms. Garcia responded that this is what they have heard from the public—that they want a vibrant, responsible library system, and this should be a key part of the City and County.; that no other critical areas have gone unimproved; that a Building Leadership Team needs to be put into place to implement the conditions. She urged that the Council look at this Report and adopt what makes sense or modify it; that a team needs to be put in progress; that with inaction, the Library will continue to remain lower quality.

Councilman Gilbert asked about the cost factor? Ms. McMahon responded that they had not attached numbers to this yet. Ms. Garcia added that we need to re-allocate the existing Budget; that she heard support from members of Fund Raising groups and Charitable organizations that give, but the public sector needs to step up first.

Chairman Benson stated that Ms. Garcia had done a good job capsuling this but wanted to know if there was anything we can point to with pride with the Library? He also wanted to know if any Library System that is working efficiently and effectively is jointly funded by the City and the County? Ms. Garcia stated that the answer to his second question was “yes”—that City-County was a very common model. Chairman Benson again asked if there was anything that we could be proud of? She responded that we could be proud of our Staff, who has worked with limited resources and still served the public. She continued, saying that the Staff was not discouraged and were working hard, and this is essential; that a Staff could get bitter and depressed, and this was not the case here—that they want to do more.

Councilman Gilbert asked if in other cities if private funding came into play? Ms. Garcia needed someone to repeat the question and Ms. McMahon stated that Councilman Gilbert wanted to know the role the private sector played and if they could sponsor a room in their name.

Ms. Garcia responded that both Susan and herself had done extensive work with library foundations; that people give money for two reasons—to back a winner or correct an embarrassment; that money could be raised to supplement but not to replace a basic public service. She stated that the easiest way to raise money is a Building Campaign, mentioning a Fund Raiser in San Antonio, where there was an agreement with the City Council to match what was raised, and this had worked effectively; that with the naming of buildings, criteria needs to be set up.

Chairman Benson had a quick question to ask Ms. Garcia, noting that a new trend, like at Barnes Nobles and this type atmosphere, that there is a place to sit down and drink coffee and also buy concessions; that perhaps a library is more stoic. Ms. Garcia responded that the downtown library in Chattanooga is a storage facility; that coffee shops and cafes would do well as long as there is foot traffic to support them.

Councilwoman Gaines asked if Ms. Garcia planned to present this Report to the County Officials? She responded “no”—that a representative of the County served as a member of the Task Force.

Chairman Benson asked her if she could present this Report to the County Commission and would she; that if so, he was requesting her to do so.

Councilman Gilbert stated that he and Councilwoman Gaines would also both request this to be done—that we need joint funding.

Councilwoman Bennett mentioned a combination of curious facilities, making the facility multi-purpose rather than just a library.

Ms. Garcia noted that a number of libraries have co-located facilities such as senior housing and shared space with health clinics, day care centers and literary centers; some even have retail malls—that it could be any use that was not contradictory with children being present—that this had been very successful.

Chairman Benson thanked Ms. Garcia for the presentation.

Ms. Garcia expressed appreciation for the opportunity to speak, stating that she would be happy to respond to further questions.

Councilman Page indicated that this was a good report.

The meeting was adjourned.