

**Questions & comments received by the Latah County Library  
District Board of Trustees regarding the proposed  
FY 05-06 budget**

1) What does "library materials" mean?

***Library materials are the books, magazines, CD's, books on tape, videos, DVD's, etc. that are purchased by the District for patron use.***

2) Insurance information:

	Current (Regence Blue Shield)	Proposed (Group Health)
Deductible	\$500	None
Office Visit Co-Pay	\$25.00	\$15.00
Rx	Generic - \$7.00; Formulary – 30% co-pay; Non-formulary – 50% co-pay	\$15.00 co-pay for generic & formulary
Hospital	Goes toward deductible; then 20-80 up to maximum out of pocket which is \$2,000 per individual	Employee pays \$200/day up to max. of \$600 per admission; then 100%
Maximum Out-of-Pocket	\$2,000 (individual) \$4,000 (family)	\$2,000 (individual) \$4,000 (family)
Travel		
1) Emergency care – higher than normal co-pay (\$125 or total cost, whichever is lowest) 2) Find a Kaiser Permanente – coverage same as in-network 3) Find a First Choice Preferred Provider network – although out-of-network they take advantage of discounts and the individual does not get billed for the difference between full price and discounted price		

***The major differences between the two are:***

- ***Group Health availability in the valley is very restrictive***
- ***Hospital expense is higher under Group Health***
- ***Medical coverage while traveling may be less than with Regence***

***Savings to the Library District if we move from Regence to Group Health is about \$10,000 per year.***

***The Library District's medical premiums are not renewable until Feb. 1, 2006 and it is difficult to get exact costs this far out.***

3) How much does an individual pay toward their medical insurance?

***The staff portion is pro-rated: a full-time employee pays nothing toward their premium; a half-time person pays 50% of their premium.***

***This is consistent with the county's policy. However, county employees also get part of their spouse's coverage paid as well.***

4) What prompted the salary increases?

***Upon hire, the Director was charged with identifying appropriate salary equity increases for LCLD staff. To determine what the salaries should be city, university, and area public libraries' salaries were reviewed. LCLD salaries are currently mid-range as compared to these other organizations.***

5) How do the salary increases benefit the Library District?

***The Library District is dependent upon qualified and well-trained staff to provide quality library service to patrons. Fair and competitive salaries help the District attract and retain well qualified staff.***

6) Are Library District employees considered state employees?

***No. The Latah County Library District is an independent taxing district within Latah County. The Board of Trustees has complete discretion to set District salaries.***

7) Cut staff salary so branches can remain viable.

***Branch viability is dependent upon qualified staff. Cutting salaries makes it more difficult to find and retain qualified workers.***

***The services provided in the county libraries are dependent upon the staff. Staff cannot be separated from the building when focusing on branch library viability.***

8) Rely on transient population in Moscow to staff Moscow positions. There are many spouses of U of I students who would probably be willing to work for less than current staff are paid.

***Relying upon a transient population to provide service in Moscow will jeopardize not only service in Moscow but service to the entire county.***

***Training new employees involves a learning curve (6 months to a year) and is time consuming as well as expensive. Much of the expense comes from taking the more expensive staff away from their tasks to train the new staff. Most organizations realize that high turnover as a result of low pay and poor benefits is ultimately more expensive than retaining employees by paying a higher salary.***

***While staff is in training both efficiency and effectiveness are sacrificed. So if we have a continually changing staff in Moscow the branches will not be immune from the impact. It takes staff time to pull and prepare materials for***

***the branches. This is precisely the time that will be eaten into if we are always hiring and training new employees.***

9) The Library District should be able to live within their budget.

***We agree. That is what we intend to accomplish.***

10) Please develop a budget that will be sustainable for years to come, so we don't have to go through this ordeal again.

***That is the goal!***

11) How are budget priorities set?

***Given the tight budget there isn't much flexibility in setting budget priorities.***

***To open the door of a library we immediately incur insurance, staffing, training, materials, utility, computer, copier, and maintenance expense.***

***The District requires administrative, payroll, accounts payable, courier, technical services (ordering & processing books, etc.), facilities oversight, depreciation, and professional (accounting & legal) expense.***

***The priorities that we must address are:***

- ***Does the District support staffing over library materials?***
- ***Does the District support providing fair compensation to staff?***
- ***Does the District provide competitive salary & benefits packages?***

12) By whom are the budget priorities set?

***Budget priorities are proposed by the Director with much input from staff, the public and ultimately set by the Board of Trustees.***

13) Is there a budget process which involves community patrons?

***Yes, we are in the midst of it. The director met with members of all but one community to discuss the budget process and gather input. The director also worked with the Branch Services Task Force members in this process. Now that a proposed budget has been drafted more public input is being received.***

14) Is a budget override possible?

***A budget override is possible as long as it doesn't take the District over the state mandated cap of \$.60 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The District is currently at \$.57. October 1, 2005 the District will take the state set maximum 3% increase bringing the District up to \$.60. If the assessed values go up the re-calculation of the District's levy amount may again drop to an amount less than \$.60. Depending on if and how much the levy amount drops the option of an override may be available. We will not know this until September 2005. However, if there is room to make an override possible the***

***override would then reduce or eliminate the increase that the District could take October 1, 2006.***

***It should be noted that an override, even if possible, is only a temporary fix and not one that we could build into our budget.***

15) How does the budget affect the board members?

***Board members, as volunteers, are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the Library District is well run – by hiring an able director, by adopting a balanced budget that allows the director and staff to do the jobs they are asked to do, by approving policies that guide the director and staff, and by overseeing the services provided. The budget that the board ultimately approves provides the basis on which the director and staff can build the mandated services. As elected officials the budget has an immense affect on each and every board member.***

16) It is neither appropriate nor practical to plan a budget that would depend on Friends groups for necessary items such as utilities. These expenses should come from taxes which are dependable sources of income.

***We agree that it is neither practical nor appropriate to depend on the Friends groups to help the District balance its budget. Depending upon Friends help isn't part of the proposed budget. The Revenue in the budget comes from Library Generated sources (fines, fees), Interest, Sales Tax, and Property Tax.***

***The suggestion has been put forth on several occasions by one of the Friends groups to ask the respective city councils to help with utility costs. The director has indicated her willingness to go to city council meetings with a request for the city to take on some/or more of the library's utility expenses. However, she will only make the request IF there are local citizens who are willing to attend the meeting in a show of support for the request. Bovill is the only community so far to take her up on her offer.***

17) Rumored proposal to off-set fundraising efforts for the Library District's book budget to the District's Friends groups. Branch Friends groups already support their library's programs, such as the Summer Reading Program.

***The operative word in this statement is "rumored" because that is exactly what this statement is - a rumor. The fundraising effort that the Director talked about in her presentation is purely voluntary and would be a district-wide effort not some amount that each Friends group would be expected to raise.***

***The director and board members are well aware of the tremendous support that branch libraries receive from their Friends and we in no way want to jeopardize those efforts.***

18) The budget draft provided to the public seems to include a \$32,000 contribution generated from fund raising to be placed into the general budget to be used to pay for utility costs or for materials acquisitions.

***There was no budget draft provided to the public other than the one available at the June 28 board meeting. This comment alludes to explanatory information provided to staff but which was eliminated because of the confusion it seemed to generate.***

19) Look to fundraising and grant to increase revenue.

***We do not think we can look to grant to increase revenue. Grants are usually available to provide services not currently in place. When a grant would meet district needs these grants are pursued, depending upon available time and the amount of money needed to provide requisite local matches.***

***Fundraising takes time as well as a particular expertise. Current staff has neither the time nor the expertise to take on a large scale fundraising effort. The director would like to see county-wide fundraising become an established effort and will work with interested individuals to make this happen.***

20) Fundraising shouldn't supplant the responsibility the District has for their budget.

***The situation the District finds itself in is trying to maintain the current level of hours at all of the seven libraries while at the same time provide a current and viable collection. We have committed the District to maintaining the hours – no hours will be cut from any library. This leaves the materials budget short of the 10% (absolute minimum) level that must be achieved. This is why the Director, in her presentation June 28, said that one of the assumptions on which the proposed budget is based is that district-wide fundraising will raise enough to bring the materials budget up to at least 10% and preferably 13%. If fundraising isn't established and undertaken district-wide then the sustainability of the budget is called into question. It will likely mean that we will have to look for further cuts in the upcoming years if we don't develop a reliable and steady stream of "soft" money coming into the budget's revenue. With this being said it must be emphasized that fundraising is voluntary not mandated.***

21) Reactivate the Latah County Library District's Foundation and encourage them and the Director to begin an active fundraising campaign.

***It is difficult to reactivate a group that has no members who are willing to do the work. Many communities' representatives have quit attending the***

***Foundation meetings putting more and more expectations on the remaining few to do the "activating." The good news is that Tim Hillebrand (Moscow) and Pat Eck (Bovill) have agreed to take on leadership roles in the Foundation. Pat Eck is very enthused about the possibilities, so all of you who want to help "activate" now is the time to may yourselves available. The Foundation will only be successful if many people pitch in and help.***

22) Why is there a feeling among branch staff that they are not to attend non-staff board generated meetings? ( Friends meetings)

***The Fair Labor Standards Act (federal law) provides definitions of what constitutes an exempt employee. The branch supervisors had been classified as exempt but they do not meet the exempt definition so they had to be reclassified as non-exempt employees. A non-exempt employee must be paid for all hours worked.***

***According to Dawn McLees, Idaho Labor Compliance Officer, there are four questions that must be asked to determine if a particular activity engaged in by a non-exempt staff person is considered work or can be seen as outside of work and therefore doesn't have to be recorded on a timesheet. The four questions are:***

- 1) Is the activity voluntary (must be answered 'yes') and***
- 2) Is the meeting outside regular work hours (must be answered 'yes') and***
- 3) Could the activity be seen as part of their job (must be answered 'no') and***
- 4) No productive work is done as part of this activity (must be answered 'yes').***

***If the answer to any of the four is other than the answer in parentheses then the activity is considered work and must be recorded on the timesheet. Since attendance at a Friends meeting likely breaches at least one of the four criteria branch supervisors must record time at Friends meetings on their worksheets.***

23) The relationship between the Director/Board of Trustees and the patrons can be bridged by the Friends groups. How are these groups supported?

***This question ties into the question above. Of course the Director and Board encourage and support Friends groups.***

***The Director, it seems, would be the logical person to serve as the bridge between the District and the Friends groups. The Director is the one charged with administration, management, and leadership of the District. To expect the branch supervisors to take on this administrative responsibility is asking them to do something that is not in their job description. There is no reason the supervisor can't attend the Friends meetings as an interested citizen but***

**to have them be the link between the District and the branch puts them in a very precarious position.**

**All seven libraries in the District are part of the District, which is what was approved by the county residents in 1993.**

**One of the many questions that the Director has pressed for an answer to is "what is meant by branch autonomy?" The answer to this question relates directly to the concerns surrounding branch supervisors serving as the link to the seven different Friends groups. Until this question is definitively answered, and it can only be answered by the Board of Trustees, we will never find resolution to this pressing question.**

24) Are any libraries losing hours?

**No hours are going to be cut.**

25) Can branch community citizens transport branch requested materials between Moscow and the branch – in lieu of or in addition to the courier?

**This may be a possibility but we would first have to check with out insurance carrier to see what liability issues, if any, might exist.**

26) How does the District protect the current level of services?

**The District is attempting to protect the current level of service by working with interested citizens in each of the communities. Education of the budgetary limitations within which we operate has been part of this process. Looking for new and creative ways to do business is another avenue we are exploring, with help from many of you.**

27) Where would volunteers be most effective?

**Volunteers are most effective in:**

- **cleaning libraries**
- **shelving library materials**
- **shifting library materials**
- **assisting library staff in provision of programming (particularly story times and the summer reading program)**
- **decorating the library spaces (particularly youth areas)**
- **in helping library staff with crafts**
- **other projects as identified by library staff**

28) Who should be contacted regarding the cleaning of libraries?

**The branch supervisor.**

29) What about the Library District is important to the board members?

**The answer to this question is the same as question #15.**

30) The Library District's mission statement speaks to all residents – young, old, rich, & poor.

***Yes, it does. The reality is that particularly between young and old we encounter conflicting information needs. Whether we like it or approve of it the young are learning in a much busier environment than some older patrons. This raises issues such as the library must try to provide quiet areas while at the same time allow the youth to learn in the noisy environments that they require. Older patrons want print materials while younger ones want digital resources (computers, games, etc.).***

***This does raise the question regarding the level to which the District's mission can be achieved. It also begs the issue of "is there only one way – through library open hours, that library service can be provided?"***

31) Rural American is seeing its people leaving for lack of community. In Juliaetta the library is seen as the center of the community, providing that which is missing in many small towns.

***It has become abundantly clear that the six branch communities value "library as place" above all else. The District will protect this value as long as is possible.***

32) The Troy City Council strongly believes that with each small community contributing its share of support for providing services through taxes that each community is entitled to equal representation based on its contribution as a minimum.

***The Library District, as an independent taxing district, receives its property tax dollars from the total county assessed value not from an aggregate of the cities in Latah County. If the District's money came from an aggregate of the cities how would we fairly determine to which city rural property should be assigned? There is no way to determine how much each community is entitled to, so what is being suggested in this comment could only be artificially determined, at best.***

33) If services need to be cut then do it at the main source of expenditures – the main library rather than the low cost centers of the small communities that desperately need a library for its citizens.

***There are two very different ways to answer this question.***

***1) If you consider only the direct costs (staff & utilities) then yes, the branch libraries are low cost centers. However, if these are the only costs you consider then there would be no computers, access to materials located in the other District libraries, courier service, library materials (other than donated items), and no business office support (payroll, accounts payable).***

**2) If you consider the indirect as well as the direct costs then the branches are no longer low cost centers. In fact on a per circulation basis no library comes close to providing the low per transaction cost that is available in Moscow.**

**There is no possible way to cut the "main source of expenditures" without it having a very real and detrimental impact on every branch library.**

**It is important to remember that the director, business manager, courier, branch support, outreach manager, technical services staff, adult services manager, youth services manager, and access services manager all serve district-wide functions NOT just Moscow.**

**We must be careful to not lump the cost for these staff in with the staff who work at the Moscow circ desk. The staff that works the Moscow circ desk are lower paid staff than the branch supervisors.**

34) Robbing to pay Paul does not make sense.

**I am not sure to what this refers.**

35) Deary, Bovill, and Genesee all have newly revived Friends groups.

**Good job!**

36) Bovill Friends pledge the following support:

- Raise \$2,280 to cover the janitorial as well as heat & lights for FY 05-06 **(they have already raised \$1,200!)**
- Work on developing long-term solutions to the current fiscal concerns by:
  - o Help update the strategic plan for the library district;
  - o Assist in locating, writing, and submitting grants that meet the mission of the library district;
  - o Participate in budget writing work sessions;
  - o Work on effective ongoing communications between the community and the district.

**Many thanks to the Bovill Friends for their "can do" attitude and willingness to work with everyone to make this a better Library District!**