

Plan of Service Focus Group Session

Greene County Trustees | February 12, 2011

Challenges & Issues:

- **Funding**

- Need to improve operating funding was the #1 self-identified challenge
- Libraries were in agreement that they are all experiencing increases in demand but level or reduced funding
- General operations costs are rising
- Concerned about pay equity
- Trustees do not want to have to cut services or pass along fees but they are beginning to feel this is inevitable; "[A] core value of a library is equal access to the American dream and now we may be putting a toll on that road."
- Recognition that the library should seek increases in public support but sensitive to the fact that many residents are struggling financially; "Town government has tough choices to make."
- More conscious of serving unserved areas
- Feeling very uncertain about the support of the community; afraid to ask for more
- Increased interest in fundraising for extra services
- While trustees see a need to be more serious about overdue and billed items they are somewhat torn about the perception of fines: it is needed revenue but seems to be bad PR. Wondering if fines are turning away potential patrons?
- Want to make the most of what they already have; unsure of how to budget for the future

- **Space**

- Many libraries are seeking ways to make their current space work better for them
- Some libraries are beginning to plan for expansion and need support in this area
- Need more space for programming
- Looking for ways to minimize custodial responsibilities
- Struggling with the upkeep of older buildings
- Would like space that is manageable and flexible for the future

- **Outreach**

- Recognize that they need to get the word out to more people; "We need to educate our users so they can make good choices [about library funding]"
- Looking for ways to get young people to use the library
- See a need to educate the public about the cost of resource sharing in the System
- Feel that front desk staff are integral to communication with users; staff need support in this area and it needs to be clear that is part of their job
- See a clear connection between the library, schools and the town
- Seeking support in developing Friends Groups; both starting and supporting existing groups

- Whose job is it to carry the message of the library out in the community? Struggling to make it “everyone’s” job and having a clear message.
- See programming as a way to get new users in; to building support; and spread the word
- Would like to hear more from the community about what they want in their library
- Feel it is important to convey to the community that the library is living within its means
- Important to convey we are relevant in a “mobile” society (mobile devices)
- **Board Development**
 - Board recruitment needs work
 - Seeking ways to look further into the future to plan ahead
- **Management**
 - See a direct correlation between good customer service and successful budget votes
 - Would like more processes in the library to be standardized
 - Grateful for the System’s support of newer directors
 - Trustee recognition that front line staff are in a very stressful role; would like to help staff feel good about their jobs
 - Recognize the challenge of running a library with part-time staff people and volunteers but also see this as providing opportunities for people in the community (people trying to get back into the workforce, working mothers)
 - Staff need to be able to focus on services to people

Trends:

- Fewer children
- Less local activity
- People are using library in different ways (technology, meeting space) but still view the library as a good and trusted source of information.
- Kids waiting to use computers
- Helping more people with employment assistance
- Helping more people use computers.
- Technology has provided an opportunity to bring new people in.
- Need to be able to support, serve and tolerate a wide range of users.

What do you hope people are saying about your library?

- Excellent service
- Safe place for children
- A place people go out of their way to recommend to others
- Welcoming
- Friendly
- Touchstone for new people in community
- Respecting privacy.