

CLACKAMAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Acting as Library Service District of Clackamas County Board of Directors

Policy Session Worksheet

Presentation Date: December 16, 2025 **Approx. Start Time:** 4:00 PM **Approx. Length:** 60 min

Presentation Title: Library District Task Force Recommendations

Department: County Administration

Presenters: Gary Schmidt, County Administrator
Tony Mayernik, Policy Advisor

WHAT ACTION ARE YOU REQUESTING FROM THE BOARD?

Board direction on implementation of the recommendations of the Library District Task Force.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Background

The Board of Directors held two policy sessions in August 2024 to examine the history of the Library District and to provide direction on then-proposed amendments to the District's operating agreements. Out of those policy sessions, the Board directed staff to develop a task force to identify and provide recommendations on issues faced by the District in a holistic manner. During a January 2025 policy session, the Board created the Library District Task Force to make recommendations to the Board on several longstanding library issues, including but not limited to service levels, funding, and governance. In April 2025, the Board selected task force members from stakeholder groups, including mayors, city managers, library directors, and public members from incorporated and unincorporated areas.

Initial Recommendations

The Task Force held a series of meetings to explore the district's history and current state, potential pathways to resolve issues, and develop recommendations. As a result of those conversations, the Task Force initially devised four recommendations for the Board:

- Direct staff to propose an amendment to the Intergovernmental Agreement to clarify the use of district funds for capital expenses and allocated costs.
- Direct staff to conduct analysis of the library district and make recommendations for core levels of service.
- Direct staff to conduct analysis of the funding formula and service boundaries, incorporated and unincorporated, and propose recommendations for changes to address funding disparities amongst the service areas.
- Direct staff to initiate the creation of a strategic plan for the district that would prepare the district for its 20th year of service and beyond.

Community Feedback

Task Force members then met with their constituencies over a two-month period to gather feedback. Respondents were asked to score their support for each recommendation on a scale of 1-3 (1 = "Do Not Support", 2 = "Unsure", and 3 = "Support") and to provide comments. A summary of that feedback is included on page 5 of the attachment. For discussion purposes, there were a few key themes:

- There is general support to amend the IGA to clarify use of district revenues for capital expenses and allocated costs. Most "Unsure" and "Do Not Support" respondents indicated current documents and legal advice are sufficient but they could support an amendment to end debate.
 - Some public opposition to amending the IGA was an artifact of their desire that any amendment prohibit the use of district revenues for capital expenses and allocated costs
- Member cities appear to be generally opposed to any district-level "minimum service levels" beyond the standards of the Oregon Library Association or any changes to the funding formula that would redistribute revenues attributable to city tax lots.
 - Cities "losing" service area may not support service area boundary changes for unincorporated areas whose usage patterns do not match service areas.
- Work should be focused on a "new" district or building support for a levy that would address funding disparities.
 - It is unclear whether member cities would join a "new" district or support a levy whose funding formula materially differs from the "current" district's formula.

Final Recommendations

Based on the feedback from stakeholders, the Task Force reduced their recommendations to two items during a fifth meeting, focused on future funding measures. The Library District Task Force recommends that the Library District Board of Directors:

- Direct staff to propose an amendment to the Intergovernmental Agreement to clarify the use of district funds for capital expenses and allocated costs.
- Direct staff to initiate the creation of a strategic framework for the district that would prepare it for its 20th year of service and beyond.

For both recommendations, the Task Force asks that the Board continue to work within the existing library district governance and advisory structure as outlined in the Intergovernmental Agreement and incorporate external stakeholders as appropriate, and that the Board consider retaining the Task Force to advise on the work. For the strategic framework, the Task Force asks that the Board consider hiring a consultant to work on creating the framework, including a systems plan and economic feasibility study, incorporating the strategic planning efforts of the library directors, and engaging cities and unincorporated areas to plan for their library service areas.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (current year and ongoing):

Is this item in your current budget? ☐ YES ☒ NO

What is the cost? ~\$500,000 What is the funding source? County General Funds and potential cost sharing with Library Cities

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

- How does this item align with your Department's Strategic Business Plan goals?

The work proposed would align with County Administration's goal to ensure the Board has the information to make effective decisions by analyzing the current state of the Library District and making recommendations on changes to improve the function of the District.

- How does this item align with the County's Performance Clackamas goals?

The work proposed would align with the Board's general desire to build public trust in good government by analyzing the current state of the Library District and making recommendations on changes to improve the function of the District.

LEGAL/POLICY REQUIREMENTS:

District operating agreements, such as the Intergovernmental Agreement, and policy must be consistent with the District's Master Order, adopted as Board Order 2008-189.

PUBLIC/GOVERNMENTAL PARTICIPATION:

Approximately 58 individuals provided feedback to the task force. Future work would likely require further community engagement, especially if formation of a "new" district was undertaken.

OPTIONS:

1. Direct staff to implement the recommendations of the Task Force as proposed.
2. Direct staff to implement the recommendations of the Task Force with amendments as discussed today.
3. Direct staff to take no further action.

RECOMMENDATION:

Option #1: Direct staff to implement the recommendations of the Task Force as proposed.

ATTACHMENTS:

#A: Library District Task Force Recommendations and Considerations

SUBMITTED BY:

Division Director/Head Approval _____

Department Director/Head Approval _____

County Administrator Approval _____

For information on this issue or copies of attachments, please contact Tony Mayernik @ 503-742-5920



Recommendations and Considerations

Library District Task Force

October 28, 2025

Background

Task Force Charge

The Library District Board of Directors approved the creation of the Library District Task Force in January 2025 to make recommendations to the Board on several longstanding library issues, including but not limited to service levels, funding, and governance.

Task Force Composition

The Board selected the task force membership in April 2025 to ensure representation from urban and rural communities, including mayors, city managers, library directors, and the public. We would like to thank the members for their participation:

Mayor Michael Milch, City of Gladstone (Urban Mayors)

Mayor Kathleen Walker, City of Sandy (Rural Mayors)

City Manager John Williams, City of West Linn (Urban City Managers)

City Manager Dan Huff, City of Molalla (Rural City Managers)

Library Director Melissa Kelly, City of Lake Oswego (Urban Library Directors)

Library Director Marisa Ely, City of Canby (Rural Library Directors)

Al Matecko, Happy Valley (Library District Advisory Committee)

Gay Walker, Unincorporated Clackamas County (Unincorporated Public)

Library Network Manager Rick Peterson, Clackamas County

District Director Paul Savas

District Administrator Gary Schmidt

We would also like to recognize the County staff that supported the task force, including:

Policy Advisor Everett Wild

Policy Advisor Tony Mayernik

Policy Advisor Kimberlee DeSantis

Assistant County Counsel Jeff Munns

Special thanks to Shelly Parini, who served as facilitator for the task force's meetings and helped formulate the task force's final recommendations and considerations outlined in this document.

Meeting Summary

The Library District Task Force met 5 times over 5 months, not including extensive engagement by the task force members with their representative constituencies. Over the course of these meetings, the task force reviewed the historical context and current state of the district and explored pathways to position the district for future success. As part of an extensive public engagement process, the various members of the task force met with their representative constituencies to gather feedback on the work of the task force and draft recommendations.

Meeting 1 – June 11, 2025

During Meeting 1, members explored the history of the district, including its formation, operating agreements, and identified opportunities to deepen their understanding of the district. Members also engaged in a thought exercise to identify potential enhancements to the current district, which identified themes such as the ability of each city to meet their population's needs, equitable funding distribution and equitable service levels, and ensuring that services aligned with the needs of the community served. Members also identified additional topics that they would like to learn more about in subsequent meetings to ensure their recommendations addressed the district's needs in a holistic manner.

Meeting 2 – June 26, 2025

Based on requests from Meeting 1, staff and members of the task force provided background on the district's funding formula, historical capital funding agreements, allowed uses of district funds, and the issue of capital expenses and allocated costs as it relates to the use of district funds by cities for library services. Members also participated in a group exercise to identify topics for potential recommendations, which identified themes such as clarification of capital and allocated cost expenses, pursuit of additional funding in the form of a higher permanent rate or levy, addressing equity issues, and long-term planning.

Meeting 3 – July 23, 2025

Members explored the issue of defining equity in the context of the district, which brought forward themes such as equal access to resources, the evolution of technology needs over the life of the district, ensuring that libraries are welcoming spaces, aligning hours of operation with community needs, identifying core service levels, providing equitable funding, and understanding the needs of the community served, including the change in the role of libraries over time to offer services such as warming and cooling shelters.

Staff provided background on the library service areas originally identified in 2000 as part of work done by the Oregon State Library, with updates in 2008 related to the creation of the district and ensuring that member cities had sufficient funding to meet threshold standards, and the effective per capita rates based on served populations. These service areas have remained largely unchanged since 2008, and members identified that mapped areas may not align with the actual populations served, due to population growth and urban expansion.

Members identified draft recommendations based on the conversations to date, which included themes such as clarifying the use of district funds for capital expenses and allocated costs, researching distribution formula changes, garnering stakeholder support for future tax measures, creating a district strategic plan, evaluating levels of service, and aligning service areas with actual use.

Meeting 4 – August 7, 2025

Based on member feedback, staff identified four draft recommendations and related considerations for evaluation by the task force. These recommendations were centered on four themes, namely, clarifying the use of district funds for capital expenses and allocate costs, analysis of the levels of service within the district and alignment with best practices, analysis of the funding formula and service boundaries to recommend changes, and creation of a strategic plan for the district.

Members noted that the issue of capital expenses and allocated costs may have been addressed by previous work on a draft amendment to the district's intergovernmental agreement. This draft amendment was not adopted due to concerns raised by the district's advisory board, but the sense was adoption would likely resolve the issue as desired by member cities. Staff and representative library directors identified that some work on vision and strategic goals has been undertaken by the library directors, and hope that this work would be incorporated into any future planning process.

Based on the discussion, deadlines and timeframes were added to the draft recommendations to ensure that all of the actions would be completed within 3 years. At the end of the fourth meeting, the task force outlined four potential recommendations for the Library District Board of Directors:

- A. Direct staff to propose an amendment to the Intergovernmental Agreement to clarify the use of district funds for capital expenses and allocated costs.
 - a. Consideration: Work within the existing library district governance structure as outlined in the Intergovernmental Agreement and incorporate external stakeholders as appropriate.
 - b. Consideration: Retain the Library District Task Force as a steering committee to advise on the work undertaken to implement this recommendation.
- B. Direct staff to conduct analysis of the library district and make recommendations for core levels of service.
 - a. Consideration: Hire a consultant to assist with analysis.
 - b. Consideration: Work within the existing library district governance structure as outlined in the Intergovernmental Agreement and incorporate external stakeholders as appropriate.
 - c. Consideration: Retain the Library District Task Force as a steering committee to advise on the work undertaken to implement this recommendation.
- C. Direct staff to conduct analysis of the funding formula and service boundaries, incorporated and unincorporated, and propose recommendations for changes to address funding disparities amongst the service areas.
 - a. Consideration: Hire a consultant to assist with analysis.
 - b. Consideration: Work within the existing library district governance structure as outlined in the Intergovernmental Agreement and incorporate external stakeholders as appropriate.

- c. Consideration: Retain the Library District Task Force as a steering committee to advise on the work undertaken to implement this recommendation.
- D. Direct staff to initiate the creation of a strategic plan for the district that would prepare the district for its 20th year of service and beyond.
 - a. Consideration: Hire a consultant to work on drafting the plan, incorporating the efforts of the library directors, cities, and unincorporated areas to plan for their library service areas.
 - b. Consideration: Work within the existing library district governance structure as outlined in the Intergovernmental Agreement and incorporate external stakeholders as appropriate.
 - c. Consideration: Retain the Library District Task Force as a steering committee to advise on the work undertaken to implement this recommendation.

Members were then tasked with engaging with their various constituencies to get feedback on the draft recommendations, using a provided rating form and encouraged to keep their presentations of the recommendations neutral to avoid biasing respondents. Respondents were asked to score the recommendations on a 3-point scale, with 1 being “Do Not Support”, 2 being “Unsure”, and 3 being “Support”, and to provide comments as appropriate.

Meeting 5 – October 6, 2025

During the fifth and final meeting, the task force reviewed the feedback received over the previous two months, including input from 58 individuals, including 5 mayors, 11 city managers, 10 library directors, and 32 members of the public. Staff note that several constituencies submitted combined responses (e.g. 11 city managers signed a single letter in response) and made allowances in the scoring to count each person as a separate response rather than a single entry. Staff endeavored to summarize that feedback and identify key themes, then shared that feedback with the entire task force:

- Recommendation A (Capital Expenses & Allocated Costs) – Average 2.5 (9 “Do Not Support”, 11 “Unsure”, and 38 “Support”)
 - Most “Support” did not comment, but the few that did were in favor of either adopting the previously drafted language or codifying counsel’s legal advice in some manner to end the line of inquiry
 - “Do Not Support” and “Unsure” was generally themed around the idea that existing documents offered the necessary clarity and/or that no additional work was needed
 - A subset of “Do Not Support” voiced a specific objection to the downstream work allowing capital expenses or allocated costs to be paid from district funds (these respondents might “support” the recommendation if the downstream work would prohibit or cap the use of district funds for capital expenses and/or allocated expenses)
- Recommendation B (Levels of Service) – Average 2.3 (8 “Do Not Support”, 24 “Unsure”, and 24 “Support”)
 - “Support” generally didn’t comment, but the few that did support identifying the community’s wants and needs for levels of service

- “Do Not Support” and “Unsure” had 3 general themes:
 - District-level standards would not provide the flexibility necessary to meet individual community needs and budget constraints and this issue was a city-level conversation
 - Existing Oregon Library Association standards were sufficient for “district-level” standards, with some support for adopting “current” standards
 - Member cities won’t support changes so no sense in doing the work
- Recommendation C (Funding Formula & Service Boundaries) – Average 2.1 (20 “Do Not Support”, 12 “Unsure”, and 24 “Support”)
 - “Support” generally themed around:
 - Specific fixes and solutions (“I support this if X happens”)
 - Anecdotal identification of desired service boundary adjustments (either “Clearly this is an issue because of examples like X” or “I’m really only interested in addressing Y”)
 - Desire for “ground truthing” of service areas with a subset of respondents interested in carving out at least one new service area, though it is unclear which entity would be responsible for operating the library for that service area
 - “Do Not Support” and “Unsure” had 3 general themes:
 - This work only made sense in the context of a future funding measure
 - Member cities won’t support changes so no sense in doing the work
 - The only question raised was around the role of the Library District Advisory Committee in reviewing reports from member cities
- Recommendation D (Strategic Planning) – Average 2.3 (8 “Do Not Support”, 20 “Unsure”, and 27 “Support”)
 - Generally, feedback centered on the question of whether the strategic planning would be “with the current resources” or “in pursuit of a new funding level through a levy or new district”, with some concern that this would duplicate work already completed by library directors
 - Some feedback voiced the concern that this work should really be focused on a future funding measure because there would be little support for changes to the “current” structure

Following the general summary, members offered their individual perspectives. Much of the individual feedback reached beyond the initial recommendations and made assumptions about the work that would result from the proposed studies of levels of service, funding formula, and service boundaries. Noting that there was little or no support from city managers or elected officials to make changes to the “current” agreements, the task force felt that it would be difficult to propose recommendations B or C as separate work from the idea of a “new” funding measure.

Based on that assumption, members explored a consolidated set of recommendations that focused on future funding measures, such as a replacement district with a higher permanent tax rate or a supplemental levy within the current district. Staff noted that any such ballot measure would require a strong analysis of the economics and that further discussion would be needed with member cities regarding the implementation of the measure, along with a strong public outreach effort to ensure success.

Recommendations

The Library District Task Force recommends that the Library District Board of Directors:

Recommendation A

“Direct staff to propose an amendment to the Intergovernmental Agreement to clarify the use of district funds for capital expenses and allocated costs.”

Recommendation B

“Direct staff to initiate the creation of a strategic framework for the district that would prepare it for its 20th year of service and beyond.”

Considerations

For both recommendations, task force members outlined considerations that they felt should be shared with the District’s Board of Directors. Both recommendations included the following considerations:

- Work within the existing library district governance and advisory structure as outlined in the Intergovernmental Agreement and incorporate external stakeholders as appropriate.
- Retain the Library District Task Force as a steering committee to advise on the work undertaken to implement this recommendation.

Additionally, task force members felt strongly that the District’s Board should consider the following when considering the creation of a strategic framework:

- Hire a consultant to work on creating the framework, including a systems plan and economic feasibility study, incorporating the strategic planning efforts of the library directors, and engaging cities and unincorporated areas to plan for their library service areas.