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March 11, 2010

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Lawrence City Commission
City of Lawrence
P.O. Box 708
Lawrence, KS 66044-0708

CITY MANAGERS OFFICE
LAWRENCE, KS

Dear Mayor and City Commissioners:

In recent years the Lawrence Public Library Board of Trustees and the Lawrence City Commission have discussed the library's interest in expanding facilities and services to better serve the community. We come to you again with what we believe is a reasonable and fiscally-responsible proposal. We would appreciate the opportunity to present the merits of this expansion and renovation project through a public referendum.

The current library facility was constructed in 1972 when our community's population was half its current size, and when the circulation of library materials was less than one fourth its current rate. While the current building is solidly constructed, it is now inadequate to meet the increasing demands of our education-oriented citizens who borrow more than 1.3 million items from the library each year.

We have conducted a feasibility study that would address the library's primary service concerns through the renovation and expansion of the current library facility. This project will accomplish the following goals:

Goal 1: Responsible re-use of the current facility. The library would remain in its current location, and would continue to serve as an anchor and magnet for downtown Lawrence. This scaled-down library expansion and renovation project builds upon the library's existing facility, greatly enhancing the economic and environmental rationale for the project.

Goal 2: Meeting the demands of the community. The expansion would add between 15,000 and 20,000 square feet to the current building, and would focus on three primary goals: (1) doubling the size of our overcrowded children's room; (2) adding community meeting room space in response to extraordinary demand; and (3) providing more reading and computer areas. The Northeast Kansas Library System (NEKLS), the accrediting organization for our library, requires that libraries serving communities of our size have a minimum of 150 public-access computer workstations. Due to space limitations, the library is far short of that standard, with only 55 computer workstations. This renovation would allow the library to meet the NEKLS requirement for a minimum of 150 computer workstations.

Goal 3: Improved customer service. The project would renovate existing library spaces to upgrade their efficiency, functionality and appearance. Our "back office" spaces would be made more functional through the implementation of new technology such as RFID materials handling systems. These upgrades will result in greatly improved customer service for the citizens of Lawrence.

Goal 4: Savings through energy efficiency. Even with the addition of 15,000 to 20,000 square feet to the existing building, the newly-renovated library facility would be redesigned to use less energy than the current facility does, through the application of sustainable / green strategies. In fact, the project could result in the first LEED-certified public building in the community.

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Goal 5: Downtown Parking Solution. The project would also feature a modest structured parking solution and additional angled parking on 7th and Vermont streets to increase parking from 178 spaces to approximately 230 spaces. The parking solutions we are suggesting would require city planning approval. They would not only help the library, but also would provide additional parking for the outdoor pool and senior center.

It is estimated that the total project cost for the expansion, renovation and parking enhancements, as well as all related costs including technology, furnishings and furniture, would not exceed \$18 million, with architectural and construction costs supported through a bond issue. This debt issue expense, estimated at approximately 1.5 mills, would sunset when the bond is repaid. This represents a significant reduction in project scope and cost as compared to previous plans to construct an entirely new library facility. We believe this project is responsive to the most significant library facilities needs, while being fiscally conservative and responsible.

Seeking an \$18 million bond in the current economic climate was a difficult decision to make. However, the Board and staff are trying to be forward thinking and trust that the economy will have sufficiently turned around by the time any taxes are needed to support such a bond.

In order to develop a concept design for the library expansion and renovation, the Library Board of Trustees is immediately issuing a Request for Qualifications for an architectural firm, so that we can provide information regarding a feasibility study, estimated total project costs and building and site design drawings and models. The Library will use its Capital Improvement Fund to fund this concept design.

The experiences of other public libraries around the country clearly demonstrate that an expanded and improved library facility will result in increased library usage. We anticipate at least a 25 percent increase in user visits and circulation of library materials in the expanded and renovated library facility. This will be on top of already record level library usage in the current facility. For this reason, the library will require enhanced funding to support additional staffing and operational expenses. We anticipate the ongoing need for a .5 mill increase in operational funding, which would increase the library budget from 3.2 to 3.7 mills, still below the City's library fund mill levy cap of 4.0.

How will this project benefit the community?

- It allows the Library to remain a downtown anchor and destination.
- There will be adequate space for children's books on age-appropriate shelving, as well as space for children's programming and classes.
- The library will be able to meet both public demand and regional library system requirements for access to computers.
- By increasing the amount of free community meeting space, more groups can be accommodated and fewer organizations will be denied due to unavailable rooms.
- Checkout of library materials will be made dramatically more efficient and convenient through the implementation of new materials handling technology.
- The library building will become a model of energy efficiency.
- It expands parking for three active community centers: the Senior Center, Outdoor Aquatic Center and the Library.

The library's administrative team and the Board of Trustees are united in their support for this project.

We respectfully request that a public referendum on library facility expansion and renovation, and associated operational funding, be placed on the November 2010 ballot so that the community can have an opportunity to vote upon this enhancement in the library's facility and its services. We further request that the City Commission begin its discussions of this topic in April so that there would be sufficient time to fully consider this project and craft a referendum.

Please feel free to contact any of us or Library Director Bruce Flanders with any questions or comments. We look forward to working with you on this exciting project.

Sincerely,



Chris Burger, Chair



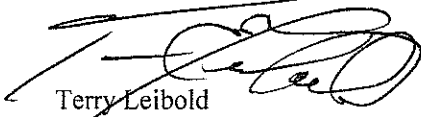
Mike Machell, Vice Chair



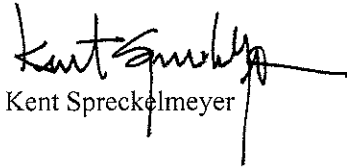
Joan Golden, Secretary-Treasurer



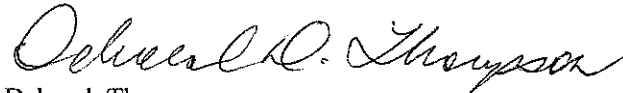
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