

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S
SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS**

ACLA Special General Membership Meeting

October 6, 2009

- This was a special meeting called for the purpose of establishing a process for the Members to develop a response to the RAD Library Committee report issued September 29 (attached).
- Jenkins provided a review of the Library Committee report. She first emphasized the clear support of RAD in providing a commitment of level funding for ACLA in 2010 while most assets will be experiencing a decrease. She then noted that the Committee commended ACLA on the Membership involvement in the process utilized to develop the new formula. The report notes three concerns: the removal of local funding as a factor, the eligibility for distress, and a phase-in plan.
- Jenkins then noted that the RAD Board has returned the proposed formula to ACLA. In doing so, there is no formula on the table for consideration. ACLA will therefore need to respond. The RAD will release its final budget December 1. In order to provide time for the RAD to consider a response from ACLA, it should be submitted on or around November 15. The Membership has a regularly scheduled meeting on October 29 at which it might consider a proposed response.
- Gaetano indicated that the Board would like to have a Rapid Response Team appointed that would review the concerns articulated in the Library Committee report and prepare a recommended response to be submitted to the Executive Director on behalf of the Board no later than October 23. When asked if the Team would have the authority to make changes to the formula, it was clarified that the focus for the Team is developing a response to the Library Committee report. That response would be presented as a recommendation to the Members for approval. If in the course of developing its recommendation the Team determines that certain elements of the formula should be adjusted, it can bring a recommendation to that effect to the Members. The Members hold the authority to approve the formula for submission to the RAD.
- The Members determined that each region would appoint three representatives to the Rapid Response Team and that members of the Formula Development Committee would be given first option on those seats.
- The Members also approved the appointment of Board Member Shannon Debes to serve as facilitator to the process. Ms. Debes, who works professionally as a public involvement coordinator, agreed to serve in a pro bono capacity.
- ACLA staff will provide support to the process coordinating meeting arrangements and communication.

ALLEGHENY REGIONAL ASSET DISTRICT
Report of the Library Committee
September 29, 2009

Board Members:

Under the agreement between the Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA) and the District, ACLA is required each year to submit a proposed grant distribution formula, which spells out how RAD grant funds will be distributed to member libraries. The current formula has been unchanged for a number of years but the Association has been working to revise it. In June, the membership of the Association approved a substantial revision and submitted it with their 2010 application.

The Library Committee has devoted considerable time to a review of the proposal. In addition to meeting with ACLA staff and the consultant that worked on the project, we had a working session with a representative group of library staff, trustees and municipal officials both in support and opposed to the change. We have also received correspondence from a number of library patrons and officials. Based on our review we have the following report at this time.

First, the committee commends ACLA and its formula committee for the time, effort and dedication to this project. The process included many open meetings and the use of technology to keep members informed and to obtain their feedback. It assisted the organization in developing a participatory and structured decision making process, which allowed them to reach a decision by an open vote of the members.

While this proposal was initiated and carried out by ACLA, some objectives the District recommended five years ago were achieved. The proposed formula is simpler than previous versions and increased emphasis is placed on population and library service for distressed communities.

Having said this, there are elements of the proposal that cause us concern.

Since the inception of the RAD/ACLA agreement there has been recognition of local support as an element in the formula. ACLA representatives for years strongly argued that such a factor was critical to maintain what is now \$11 million in local support for libraries. Some of this is made up of funds from direct municipal or school district appropriations and some is actually made up of taxes dedicated to libraries.

Despite ACLA's prior assertions as to the crucial nature of maintaining local support, the proposal removes that factor from the formula entirely. This major change in library funding policy comes without a clearly stated case from ACLA on why it should be dropped. RAD funding has the capacity for limited support of local libraries to assist them in providing countywide services. It cannot be the foundation for those libraries and thus it seems logical that a formula should encourage the growth of local support.

As previously noted, we are pleased that ACLA is recommending a higher allocation of funds to distressed libraries. We are not convinced, however, that the proposal fully considers the criteria for determining this status and think that further work needs to be done on it.

Finally, the removal of any long standing criteria can result in swift changes in funding levels to individual libraries, both positively and negatively. Those that experience decline will find them difficult to absorb with short notice. In the past, major formula changes have been phased in so that libraries could adjust their budgets over time. Such a provision is more consistent with the District purpose of providing sustained and predictable funding. Assuming that the District can mitigate the impact through increased funding is unrealistic, particularly at this time.

Given these concerns, the committee will not recommend the proposed formula change to the Board and suggest it be returned to ACLA without the District's approval. We understand that there are those who believe that the District should accept it "as is" or risk a rupture in the library federation effort. Such concerns, we believe, sell ACLA and its dedicated members short. In the end, as the trustees of the RAD funds, we must act in what we believe to be fair and in the best interest of countywide library service.

Submitted by

Herman Jones, Rob Jones and
Rick Pierchalski, Connie Yarris