

# **FINAL REPORT OF THE THIRD KEIZER LIBRARY TASK FORCE**

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## **HISTORY OF THE LIBRARY TASK FORCES SINCE 2000**

### **Summer of 2000: Salem Library District Rejected: Creation of First Library Task Force**

The current "era" of library exploration began when Keizer decided not to place the Salem Area Library District proposal before Keizer voters. The decision was based, in part, on the inability of the new district advocates to promise a central Keizer branch. The council was also concerned about the fact that Keizer residents could vote against the measure but it could still pass if they were out-voted by Salem residents. After a heated debate at council, the council rejected the district plan and commissioned a Library Task Force to explore ways that Keizer could start its own library.

### **February of 2001: First Library Task Force Split Recommendations**

The majority opinion of the task force was to recommend that Keizer place a "Threshold Library" on the ballot. This proposed library would be a traditional library that met the lowest "threshold" level of the Oregon Library Association's standards in all areas of library service. Under these standards Keizer's library would be at least a 24,500.00 sf. library with 12.25 FTE (including 2 librarians with master's degrees), 64,000 books and 161 periodicals. This selection was picked, in large part, because the "threshold level" standard was the lowest acceptable level to gain full membership into the CCRLS.

A 16 page minority report was simultaneously forwarded to the council that instead of a "threshold" library, instead proposed a "21<sup>st</sup> Century Library" which would be designed to meet the unmet needs of Keizer residents. It would not attempt to meet the CCRLS standards in some areas of library service but would be designed as a niche library that would surpass the highest standards in certain select areas of library service such as computers, technology and data bases with staff with special training to help citizens use these technologies as well as provide exceptional children and senior citizen books and programs. It was proposed that this library could be a much smaller library with less than half the personnel costs of a traditional "threshold" library. While the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library would provide a smaller book and periodical collection, those collections could be focused on the most popular materials. It was also envisioned that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library would also emphasize comfortable and welcoming reading and study areas.

When the reports were provided the Council at first deferred making a decision between the “threshold” and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library proposals, instead choosing to commission another Library Task Force to study and prepare a comparative report outlining the benefits and detriments of seven separate library alternatives.

### **May 30, 2002: Second Library Task Force Comparative Report Selection of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library**

As requested by the City Council, on May 30, 2002, the second Library Task Force presented its Final Comparative Report that analyzed the status quo, a “threshold library,” a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library, a contract library with Salem, purchasing library cards, and joining a Salem District. After considering all the options the Keizer City Council decided to further explore whether or not Keizer could place a measure on the ballot for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library that would still be acceptable to the CCRLS to allow Keizer to have full CCRLS membership.

Thereafter, a short term Goal was established by the Keizer City Council in 2003 to determine if Keizer could place a 21<sup>st</sup> Century library measure on the ballot in the November 2004 general election that was acceptable to the CCRLS.

### **March 15, 2004 Third Library Task Force Attempt to Find a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library Acceptable to the CCRLS**

On March 15, 2004 the Keizer City Council established a new Task Library Task force with the stated purpose “to develop a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library package that is acceptable to both the City of Keizer and the Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library Service [CCRLS] and secure admittance into Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library service as a full member with all rights and privileges.” The task force was also charged to “return to the City Council with a recommendation to be placed on the November 2004 General Election ballot.”

It quickly became apparent that there would not be an agreement in time to place the matter on the November 2004 ballot. Nevertheless, the task force continued to work diligently over the next three years in an attempting to find a plan that would meets the spirit of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library and also be acceptable to the CCRLS. This three year effort included numerous meetings and even formal mediation with the CCRLS and member libraries. During this effort Keizer made many informal proposals, had many meetings with the CCRLS, involved the State Librarian and Salem Public Library (SPL) and even offered proposals that would fund the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library at a higher effective tax rate than was paid by Salem residents for their library services. The CCRLS did not accept this proposal but indicated it might consider a Keizer 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library plan if Keizer paid the SPL approximately \$3.00 per book for the number of books the SPL lent to Keizer residents above the number of books Keizer’s library lent to Salem residents. This proposal was rejected by Keizer for various reasons including the fact that it was not reciprocal, (i.e. they did not agree that Keizer could charge Salem if the situation was reversed and Keizer’s library lent more materials to Salem residents than Keizer residents borrowed from SPL.) In the end, despite all the attempts, no agreement was reached.

During the negotiation process, one major obstacle that Keizer repeatedly faced was the lack of reliable polling data or expert analysis from a professional librarian consultant. The CCRLS and its member libraries indicated that they needed this information to consider allowing any non-traditional or non-conforming library into the CCRLS.

**May 21, 2007 Revision of Purpose of Third Library Task Force  
New Start with Professional Help**

Recognizing the futility of attempting to move forward without any professional assistance or a reliable public survey, and recognizing that Keizer may not ever be able to meet CCRLS standards (at least not without a far more traditional library than originally envisioned) the Keizer City Council modified, revised and simplified the purpose of the Keizer Library Task Force as follows:

*“Purpose: With the assistance of a consultant, devise, conduct, and complete a survey of city residents, analyze the data, and present to the City Council an outline of the result and a recommendation on future library direction.”*

Working with the State Librarian, the CCRLS, Keizer Community Library Director Jan Dearnorf, and McNary High school Librarian and task force member Nancy Woodward, the task force was successful in obtaining a LSTA grant to pay for a scientifically valid survey to determine public support for a library. The grant also paid for a professional library consultant to assist Keizer in its exploration of Library options.

Ruth Metz Associates, a very highly recommended and respected library consultant was awarded the contract. She examined the history, institutions, options, opportunities and obstacles facing Keizer residents and also engaged the task force and various community groups in her analysis.

Northwest Survey and Data Services was awarded the survey contract and worked with the task force, the consultant and the City Council to form the questions for the survey. The survey was completed in November and December of 2007 and a final summary of the results was presented to the task force and the city in December of 2007. The survey included interviews with 370 Keizer residents and had a margin of error of +/- 5%. 59% of those surveyed supported the idea of a new library and support levels were even higher among those respondents under age 45 and those with children in the home (reaching up to 69%). 47% of all respondents said that they would support a future tax measure at the 75 cent per thousand level. The .75 level was requested because it was the recommended level suggested by the library consultant to meet Keizer resident's needs (with 5 cents factored in for building costs). It was also felt by the consultant that this level of support could help alleviate many of the CCRLS' concerns and allow Keizer to "make its case" for full CCRLS acceptance even though this level of funding still did not raise enough money to meet all of the CCRLS "threshold" standards (such as building size).

After considering the polling information and meeting with the task force the consultant issued her final report on February 1, 2008. In the report the consultant recommended:

1. Facilitate the development of a Keizer public library through the establishment of a Keizer library district.
2. Identify the responsible parties for preparing the economic feasibility statement for a Keizer library district, and as needed, funding the study.
3. Meet with the CCRLS governing board for the purpose of gaining its endorsement of the library district concept and strategy.
4. Appoint a Keizer Public Library building project management team to plan a new Keizer Public Library, and include CCRLS representation.

The task force agreed with the consultant to work toward the formation of a library district rather than seek to fund the library with a series of five year levies. The district was envisioned to be a new taxing entity but which would also match the city boundary. The district proposal was chosen by the consultant and the task force because it was the most feasible and stable funding source and would not result in a tremendous waste of tax dollars if the funding discontinued and the library had to be sold or emptied shortly after a library was set up.

Assuming the City Council would agree to the district concept, the consultant then provided a series of "next steps" leading up to the formation of a library district. (see page 5 and Exhibit E of consultant's report). The costs of the recommended approach to place a measure on the ballot for a Keizer library district listed on page 5 of the consultants report ranged from \$17,025 - \$28,400. In addition, the consultant recommended adding many of the suggestions contained on page 22 of her report which caused the recommended cost of sending the matter to the ballot to be higher. The city, as per Oregon law, would not undertake any of the expenses associated with the advocacy of the ballot measure which was expected to be undertaken by library supporters and groups.

The task force debated how to pay for the suggested costs of placing the library measure on the ballot. The Task Force was split on the issue of whether to recommend that the city pay for all or half of the costs of placing a library measure on the ballot. Some members of the task force advocated that the city should pay for the entire costs of placing the library measure on the ballot to ensure that the measure is decided by Keizer residents in a prompt manner. Other members felt that the city and advocacy groups should split the costs to ensure that at least some meaningful level of base support was present before spending city funds on the measure. Failing to reach a full consensus in the task force, the task force agreed to recommend that the City Council pick one of these two options.

### **February 19, 2008 Keizer City Council Meeting**

The report and recommendations of the task force and the consultant were discussed by the Keizer City Council on February 19, 2008. Jim Scheppke, State Librarian testified before the council and said that he supported the report and the recommendations and urged the addition of the development of a detailed plan of service and building plan. He also urged the council to not put the ballot measure on the 2008 ballot but to instead set a goal for the 2010 ballot. He said that the total costs for putting a library on the ballot, including a plan of service and a building plan, could be up to \$100,000.00. Another community member testified against Keizer providing any public funding for a library ballot measure.

During the February 19, 2008 Keizer City Council meeting, the Council accepted the consultants report and discussed, debated, and decided many motions regarding a potential library ballot measure. The first preliminary question was whether or not the council wanted to have any plan, at all, to put the library question on the ballot. The council agreed to create some type of plan.

The City Council then discussed the following two options presented by the Task Force:

Option A: Under this option the city would pay all the recommended costs of the ballot measure. This would allow the council to place the measure on the 2008 general election ballot

Option B: Under this option the city would only match money that was raised by community groups and individuals who wanted a Keizer library. This approach would take longer and could not reasonably be expected to be completed in time for the 2008 general election.

The Keizer City Council picked option B. The council estimated the average costs of the items recommended by the consultant for placing the library measure on the ballot would be \$38,400.00 and then agreed to pay up to half of this amount (\$19,200.00) for a library ballot measure. This meant that the target election would be in 2010 and not 2008 and also meant that there was no guarantee that the library issue would ever be decided by a ballot measure. The Keizer Budget Committee later followed the direction of the City Council and set aside \$19,200.00 in the 2008-9 budget to pay for potential library ballot measure expenses.

At the February 19, 2008 Keizer City Council meeting the Council also discussed the issue of a levy vs. a district to fund the library. The district would be a separate legal entity but would have an elected board with its own tax base. This new district would have a border that was at or near the border of the city (much like the current Keizer Fire District). The consultant and the task force recommended that any ballot measure be for district and not a levy because it would create a stable funding source and eliminate the risk of extreme waste in the event that the library lost all funding shortly after being completed. Nevertheless, the motion to require the matching funds only to be used for a district ballot measure failed. However, this issue may be revisited if the city moves forward on a ballot measure.

Thus, after the February 19, 2008 Keizer City Council meeting, the city of Keizer's plan to place a library measure on the ballot is to provide a match of up to \$19,200.00 toward \$38,400.00 in the expenses that were recommended by the consultant. If the community raises the \$19,200.00 in matching funds, then the city will presumably resume the work itemized by the consultant toward placing a measure on the ballot. In the meantime, all work to place the library issue on the ballot have been suspended while the city waits to see if the community responds to the library challenge.

#### **After February 19, 2008**

After the February 19, 2008 Keizer City Council meeting the task force continued to meet to address some of the remaining library issues. Requests were made throughout the community asking for library supporters to come forward to meet the challenge and raise the match money. Articles were written in the newspaper and meetings were held with community and local library support groups to see if there was interest in the community to start a fundraising campaign to meet the city's challenge. Editorials were also written in the Keizer Times asking for library supporters to come forward to meet the challenge.

Although there was some initial optimism regarding the match, as of the date of this report, no individuals or groups have stepped forward to accept the challenge. Likewise, the Keizer Community Library director reported that they also did not have any prospects on the horizon for raising the match or even spearheading the effort to raise the match. Perhaps some groups will present themselves in the future, but for the present time there are no groups known to the task force that are actively working on raising the \$19,200.00 match.

Mindful of the task force's charge to recommend the future direction of library services in Keizer the task force then considered the following somewhat antagonistic discoveries and "givens."

1. There is strong (and somewhat unexpected) support for a new public library in Keizer (59%) as uncovered in the survey,
2. There is a willingness of nearly half of Keizer residents to pay for a substantial public library at .75 per thousand which indicates that a ballot measure has a reasonable chance of passage, but only if there are strong advocacy groups of dedicated and organized library supporters who are willing to give of their time and money to see the measure pass.
3. There has been an apparent lack of any strong library advocacy groups of dedicated and organized library supporters in Keizer who are willing to give of their time and money to see a library ballot measure pass as evidenced by the limited number of citizen that attend the library task force and City Council meetings and the lack of response to the City's \$19,200.00 challenge.
4. The City Council has rejected the idea of paying all the costs of placing a library measure on the ballot, and the alternative plan of funding a citizen match is not yet in place.
5. Given the above, there is a growing realization that the library challenge may not raise the necessary match money in time for a library ballot measure in the 2010 election
6. However, there is a small but growing number of volunteers supporting the Keizer Community Library in the Keizer Heritage building. Those volunteers are committed to continuing to provide some level of library services to the residents of Keizer and have maintained a small community library extremely efficiently for under \$7,000.00 per year. They are willing to expand their library services to the community if they are provided with more space and some additional resources.

Given all the above, and recognizing the value that the Keizer Community Library volunteers provide to the residents of Keizer, and recognizing that it may be some time before another Library Task Force is convened, and looking at the present and into the distant future, the Keizer Library Task Force makes the following final recommendations:

1. That the City of Keizer keep the match money in the budget until at least the filing deadline before the 2010 election in case library supporters organize in time to fund half of the costs of the ballot measure and that the match be limited to a library district or other permanent funding ballot measures.
2. That the City of Keizer maintain support of the Keizer Community Library to help defray costs and to provide stable funding in the amount of \$3,500.00 per year, adjusted yearly for inflation. This will allow the library and its volunteers to focus more on providing increasing library services to the residents of Keizer and to direct their fundraising to providing a larger collection and possibly even add some internet service to residents rather than forcing the volunteer group to focus their energies and resources on simply paying the rent.
3. That the City of Keizer support the Keizer Community Library by considering it a primary donee of usable city surplus property, supplies, computers, and other items no

longer usable to the city. These donations would be made only where lawful, feasible and economical to the City.

4. That the City of Keizer allow the Keizer Community Library to access city wireless internet connections, if an opportunity arises to make this occur that is lawful, feasible, and economical to the city.
5. If the council determines that the Keizer Community Library is serving a growing number of residents, and if and when more space becomes available to expand the size of the Library in the Keizer Heritage Building, then the Task Force recommends that the city increase the \$3,500.00 funding by an amount needed to allow the Community Library to rent that additional space.
6. If the council determines that the Keizer Community Library is serving a growing number of residents, and if a substantial portion of the Keizer Heritage Building ever becomes available for the city to rent and if and when city funds are available, then the Library Task Force recommends that the city rent the building (or as much as is available) and (with the approval of the Heritage Foundation) pay to renovate the building for efficient library services. At such time the task force recommends that the library be designated as a city library and staffed with at least one volunteer coordinator whose principle charge would be to find volunteers to keep the library open but who may also have other volunteer coordinating responsibilities shared with other city departments.
7. The Library Task Force further recommends that, if possible, the city also work in partnership with the Keizer Art Association and the Keizer Heritage Museum and (if they are both willing) to share space and incorporate the Library, Art and Museum collections as integral components of the library, effectively transforming the Heritage building into a combined Heritage Museum/Art/Library Community Center.

Of course some of these recommendations depend a great deal on the cooperation and willingness of numerous partners, including the Heritage Foundation, the Heritage Museum, the Keizer Community Library, and the Keizer Art Association. The recommendations also require certain resources that have yet to be identified. If these hopes and assumptions do not occur, or if other unanticipated contingencies and obstacles arise, then it is the hope of the task force that the city would accept these recommendations in the spirit of suggested examples of what could be done to support and encourage the growth of library services in Keizer. It is further hoped that when Keizer approaches future events, opportunities, and obstacles that it will be guided by the goal of fostering and encouraging increased access to library and information services for Keizer residents in a manner that is innovative and effective and yet is still financially prudent and responsible.

Having concluded its charge, the third Keizer Library Task Force requests that it be concluded and discharged by the Keizer City Council.