



2019 Erie County Legislature – Finance, Management & Budget
Committee Hearing
Tuesday, November 13, 2018
11:30 a.m.

**Frank Housh, Chair, Buffalo & Erie County Public Library
Board of Trustees:**

Good morning. Thank you for having us here today. On behalf of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library (B&ECPL) System Board of Trustees, please accept my sincerest appreciation for your time and support.

[Recognize any trustees in attendance]

Libraries continue to be vital to our communities. Currently there are nearly 331,000 library card holders in Erie County. Through the end of October this year, more than 2.45 million patrons have visited our libraries with over 177 thousand attending onsite programs. There have been nearly 486 thousand public access computer sessions and more than 476 thousand logins to our WiFi. Although the use of print material has wavered (it is down less than 1%), borrowing has surpassed 5.48 million. eBook use has risen by 15.4% and downloadable music increasing by 141%.

Our staff and Administration work very hard to meet the demands of our constituents. Along with the boards of trustees from all of our libraries, we have reiterated our community focus – further developing partnerships and seeking new collaborations

to advance our services and provide for the information, education and entertainment needs of the residents of Erie County.

I would like to express my gratitude to Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz for his support and recommendation of increased funds for our libraries in his proposed 2019 budget. I hope you will support this increase, which will allow us to continue to provide quality library services to Erie County's residents and taxpayers.

Mary Jean

Mary Jean Jakubowski, System Director:

Good morning, everyone. Thank you Frank and thank you to the members of the Erie County Legislature for providing us this opportunity to comment on the 2019 proposed budget.

I would like to publicly express our thanks to each of you for your continued support and recognition of the importance of libraries to your/our communities.

I know you agree – our libraries are busy.

The 2019 budget proposed by County Executive Poloncarz contains an increase of two percent, \$488,450. We are grateful for the increase and will use the funds to reduce anticipated fund balance use from \$1,057,648 to \$506,529, which allows us to maintain open hours and services.

We sincerely hope you will support the County Executive's recommended budget for libraries.

Libraries, as you know, are economic incubators, lifelong learning centers, gathering places, cultural institutions and for many, the great equalizers – where all are welcome and where anyone can transform their life.

In 2018, we continued to look within and find ways to expand service hours at our physical locations – adding nearly 40 service hours per week. The *Library on Wheels* continues to be in VERY HIGH demand and now averages 17.5 steady hours of weekly service – with many more hours scheduled for special events and festivals. Services continue in the rural areas of the County as well as at senior centers and nursing homes. Literally, the *Library on Wheels* is traversing the County meeting the needs of residents where physical libraries are not present OR where folks may struggle to get to the library.

We asked and we listened to members of the community through online, in-house and electronically distributed surveys on what THEY want from their local libraries.

Thus far, 2018 has brought job fairs and training programs including but not limited to technology programs, resume writing, online job searching, literacy development, and programs for English language learners. We have conducted and/or provided author talks, educational lectures, Comic Con, story hours, teen time, summer reading programs, knitting classes, art classes, holistic medicine programs – you name it, and it is likely we held a program or made a connection. We actively reach out to underserved populations such as the homeless, refugees, and

those living in economically deprived areas; AND, we regularly work to develop new partners and further our collaborations with educational institutions, cultural organizations, and businesses.

I'll say it again, we are busy! Quite honestly, we are stretched. Stretched to the point that the increase proposed in the 2019 budget is critical in order for us to sustain current open hours and our high level of service – both at the libraries and in the community.

For more specific budgetary details, I have asked Mr. Stone to prepare some remarks. Mr. Stone...

Kenneth Stone – Chief Financial Officer:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of the 2019 budget request.

The 2019 Operating and Grants Budget sustains library operations and services, with a 1.7% increase in expenditures over 2018. Staffing levels remain flat.

Costs include contracted 2019 COLAs of 2.5% for Librarians Association members, 2.0% for AFSCME, and 2.25% for CSEA unit members; a \$0.70 per hour (6.7%) increase in the New York State minimum wage; step increases; and up to 2.5% for managerial/confidential personnel. The Contracting Library Clerical and Maintenance Unit (CMU) contract expires 12/31/2018 and a successor contract is not yet in place, so the budget includes \$54,996 in the Contractual Salary Reserves line.

It is important to note that the very much appreciated 2.0% increase in County support sustains the Library in the face of

these cost changes. Without the 2.0% increase, Library “use of fund balance” would have more than doubled, going from \$498,684 in the 2018’s Adopted Budget to \$1,057,648 (3.7% of expenditures).

As that level is not sustainable over time, without the 2% increase, the Library would have had to undertake a review of services and staffing levels to pare down use of fund balance to a sustainable level. With the increase recommended by the County Executive, our 2019 budgeted use of fund balance would be \$506,529 (1.8% of expenditures).

Given that the property tax base is estimated to grow by approximately 5%, the 2019 Library Tax rate will actually decrease modestly.

The Library’s proposed budget is summarized in the 2019 *Budget in Brief Charts* handout.

The charts show 10+ year data and trends for major revenue, expenditures, personnel, and service levels. They also provide breakouts specific to 2019 Budget revenue and expenditures, a chart showing the property tax information for a sample property owner, peer group comparison data and a chart estimating the value of library services received in 2017. The latter showing an estimated \$5.84 return in service value per dollar of Library Tax funding.

These charts, along with budget narratives and additional detail, have been posted to the Library’s website, accessible by Googling “B&ECPL Budget Information”.

Erie County's Capital Budget includes funding to ensure assets function well into the future.

While not part of the Library's Operating Budget, Erie County Capital funds have been included in the County's 2019 Recommended Capital Budget for System vehicles and improvements to the County-owned Central Library building which include:

\$80,000 for Shipping and Maintenance Vehicle Replacement Program, replacing 1 of each vehicle type;

\$400,000 for Central Library Exterior Building Envelope & Site Improvements; and

\$500,000 for Central Library Mechanical, Electrical, & Plumbing Improvements.

Thank you for your interest and support.

Chair Housh, Director Jakubowski and I would be happy to answer your questions.