



May 12, 2009

Dear Library Friends,

I am writing the week following the library administration's Fiscal Year 2010 (FY10) budget testimony and FFL's testimony regarding the library budget to City Council. The news I have to share, while not rosy, is not gloomy either. After a stormy six months of outstanding advocacy activities and public outcry by thousands of Philadelphians, we have won, resoundingly. Mayor Nutter and the library administration have backed away from the permanent closure of the 11 branches, or any branches – now or in the future. As library stewards, we will hold them to their word, of course; but for now we can cheer because due to our collective efforts, our beloved 54 branch library system remains intact. Those of us who have been at this a long time, as well as those who have just recently joined the ranks, can be proud. Together we have done our job and remained true to our mission to safeguard open libraries for all children and adults. And in addition, FFL now has 51 Friends Groups.

Admittedly, we have not turned around the city's financial crisis. Until the economic downturn is behind us, it is unwise to expect that the 20% reduction to the library's budget, the resulting staff eliminations, or the severe shortage of materials will be restored. The city's revenue issues, which directly impact the library's budget, remain vexing. However, this appears certain: the summer branch schedule begins on June 9th, ending Saturday service except at Central and the 3 Regionals until October. Per Mayor Nutter's request of all agency directors, the library administration developed two plans (A & B*) for library service, depending on revenues and the approved FY10 city budget. There is reason to be cautiously optimistic.

If Plan A is adopted, the FY10 library budget will not suffer any further reductions than the 20% taken in the November 2008 re-balancing, but will remain just shy of \$33 million (down from \$40 million where it has hovered for a decade). Throughout May, and possibly June, city and state lawmakers, along with Mayor Nutter's finance team, will resolve their differences and pass a budget. Because revenues are so uncertain, it is not guaranteed that Plan A can be adopted. If it is, the following is what we can expect of library services beginning on July 1:

Basic Services:

- Schedule: All 54 branches, including the 3 regional libraries, will have 5 **full days of service per week**, bringing an end to the unscheduled closings that interrupt programs and services. The options are either Monday through Friday or Tuesday through Saturday.
- LEAP: The library's after-school homework help program for all school students is funded through December, with plans to seek private donations beyond that. LEAP will continue to be available at all branches including those that are open on Saturdays, but not Mondays, so that no students are left out or have to travel far to get the homework assistance that they rely on.
- Bookmobiles: Three bookmobiles will rove throughout the city (with a focus on lower income neighborhoods) in order to **augment**, not replace, services and to reach more citizens.

The library administration will be formulating the two options for the (Plan A) Fall/Winter 5 day branch schedule that will begin in October. Based on location, branches will be paired so that communities are

provided with Saturday service close to where they reside. Half of the branches will open Monday through Friday and half will open Tuesday through Saturday.

This is where I need your help. It is crucial that, along with the advice of branch staff, the library administration receives input from patrons **prior to** determining which schedule is best for your neighborhood. We will be contacting you soon for your recommendation and will assist you with surveys about scheduling if you would like to hear from others. In addition, I will take this opportunity to request that library leadership review and rescind its decades-old policy of nine branches having no evening hours. I know that we can do a better job to meet the needs of all working families so that everyone has access to the vital educational and cultural resources of your library.

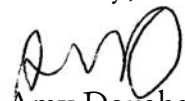
Please keep in mind that we are approaching 5 day per week operations practically and as a **temporary stopgap measure**, so that until the financial crisis eases, all library branches will remain open for service. Once the city's revenues recover, we should expect the library budget to be restored and eventually grow, so as to meet the increasing demand and complexity of this valuable public agency.

The next piece of good news relates to the appointment of Michael DiBerardinis as the new Commissioner of Recreation, Parks, and Libraries. A native and current resident of Fishtown, Mr. DiBerardinis began his career as a community organizer before becoming Director of the Department of Recreation under Mayor Ed Rendell. Most recently, Michael served as the Commissioner of Pennsylvania's Department of Parks and Natural Resources. We are enormously fortunate to have him back working in the city. Please join me in welcoming him on **Saturday, July 11th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Skyline Room of Parkway Central**. I expect that, together with Library Director Siobhan Reardon, Mr. DiBerardinis will want to talk about and answer questions on the new service schedule and will be interested to hear from you about your branch and any of your concerns. **Please RSVP to Steven Duckworth at 215.567.4562 or sduckworth@libraryfriends.info by Wednesday, July 8th.**

Lastly, it is my great pleasure to announce an addition to the FFL staff. Beginning on May 26th, Susan Montella will join us as our Community Organizer and Outreach Manager. She will help groups with organizational strengthening and membership development. Utilizing FFL's new publication, *Library Friends: a Best Practices Manual*, Susan is eager to get started and will be contacting many of you in June and July to get acquainted. Please welcome her.

Once again, thank you for all that you do in support of your library and best wishes for a sunny spring and successful group activities that support and promote your branch. All of us at FFL look forward to learning about and assisting you with upcoming events as needed, and to seeing you on July 11th.

Sincerely,



Amy Dougherty
Executive Director

*The Plan B library budget is the worst case scenario in the event that revenue enhancement strategies do not go into effect and it would require that **all city agencies**, the library included, take drastic, cost saving service cutbacks. If this occurs, all library branches would go to **half day service, 5 days per week**. We hope this does not happen.