



CITY OF SEDRO-WOOLLEY
Sedro-Woolley Municipal Building
325 Metcalf Street
Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284
Phone (360) 855-9922
Fax (360) 855-9923

Keith L. Wagoner
Mayor

MEMO TO: City Council
FROM: Keith Wagoner
RE: Library Partnership Concept
DATE: February 5, 2016

ISSUE: Status of Mayor's proposal for a combined City/District library.

BACKGROUND: I made my proposal to the Central Skagit Rural Partial County Library District (CSRPCLD) at their public board meeting on January 21, 2016. This has generated a lot of conjecture in the community, much of it positive...and some not. I want to address the issues I have been hearing and provide for the Council my perspective and reasons for continuing to support the proposal.

1. This is only a proposal. I think it is a good proposal which can accomplish what most people envisioned from the beginning; a well-appointed modern library that capitalizes on the combined strengths of each entity and can provide better service to patrons than either the City or the District can, in a go-it-alone scenario. The District may or may not agree to move forward with my proposal, or there may be some negotiations. There **will be** a robust public process. The next step will be hearing from the District Board to see if there is preliminary interest in this proposal.

2. There are citizens who are opposed to this proposal, either in whole or in part. Some came before the Council two weeks ago and gave public comment to that effect. I can tell you that I am sympathetic to their legitimate concerns and also open to any ideas that they might propose going forward. You have all had the opportunity to examine what is *actually* written in my proposal. I have read and heard from reliable sources a litany of comments on "what it really means" or "what is really going to happen", or "what the Mayor is *really* trying to do." Much of what I have heard is pure fantasy and NOT anybody's intention to the best of my knowledge. What I meant... is what I wrote.

3. I want to address a few of the concerns I am hearing in our community:

-This is all going WAY too fast. In almost three years we went from nowhere to nowhere. In the past two months we went from nowhere to having a preliminary proposal on the table and the ability to finally sit together and have a discussion. I am proud of finally getting somewhere

after three years and would disagree that things are going “too fast.” There will be plenty of opportunity for public comment when and if we move forward.

-The S-W Library is being “given away; we won’t have a library.” Not true. My proposal is that we *partner* to gain a larger, modern library. The proposed name is the “Sedro-Woolley” Regional Library. How is a new library physically located in Sedro-Woolley equated with “no library?” How does it make any sense that a student who happens to live one inch outside the City cannot use the City Library and one who lives one inch inside the City cannot use the District Library? We got here through selfishness and the inability to separate people and personalities from goals. I left all that baggage behind with my proposal. I encourage everyone else to do the same.

-The S-W Library will be dissolved. Yes, in a way, but Sedro-Woolley residents would have primary access to the new, state-of-the-art library located here in Sedro-Woolley. The S-W Library *Board* would go away under my proposal. This is an eventuality that was recognized and expected by the S-W Library Board members themselves when they supported the formation of the District. It would make no sense to have two Boards for a combined library system.

-The City residents will not be represented or respected. First, I have proposed a Joint Advisory Committee that would make recommendations to the District Board. Second, there is no reason that City residents cannot be appointed to the District Board. County Commissioners are elected just like the Mayor. Let them know your desires. In any case, it will be OUR library and that seems to be what some people are missing.

-This proposal commits City taxpayer money year-after-year to this county entity without any City representation and amounts to “Taxation without representation”. I think I addressed the representation issue above. As for commitment, yes it commits us to exactly what we are committed to now “year-after-year” (approximately \$360,000 annually), only with far superior result.

-We will be treated as “second class citizens” and lose our assets. Unless you wear sign that says “City Resident” how would anyone know and why would anyone care to single out City people for poor treatment. This is just unfounded rhetoric. As to OUR assets, they would be safe in OUR new shared library. My proposal contains an important provision which transfers the collection back to the City in the event the partnership were to fail sometime in the future; something I do not foresee.

-The District will “never allow” the proposal to go forward. No determination of this sort has been made. The District Board has said they will examine the proposal and make a decision as to whether or not they have an interest in moving forward.

-Why build a new library when our own needs so many upgrades and repairs (like the damaged door)? Exactly! OUR new library will not have any of these issues. In the meantime, the door will be repaired as soon as the insurance and design process is completed, i.e. soon.

-The books will be: not valued, thrown out, destroyed, or “given away” to the District. This is laughable. Relocating OUR books into OUR bigger better library will provide more space for the current collection as well as all of the new books, media and other materials that patrons want to see in a new library. All libraries cull books but the more space available, the less culling is

required. No one in *any* position of authority has ever said *anything* of the sort. And even if it has been uttered, it is ridiculous to think a future library would just squander assets.

-The City library employees won't be respected under a combined scenario. Read my proposal, please. A place for OUR people in OUR library is a basic tenet of my proposal. I am committed to that position and to working to ensure employee benefits are retained.

-The Mayor/City Council want this done right away before anyone has a chance to oppose it. Certainly I want to see what I view as a thoughtful and beneficial plan come to fruition. What I did want done "right away" was getting something on the table as a starting point from which to move forward. There will be plenty of time for thoughtful discussion and public input *if* the District expresses an interest in moving forward.

4. This proposal is an elegant and fair solution that moves Sedro-Woolley's library into the future, in partnership with the library district and with a shared vision of serving the Sedro-Woolley School District community in a new, state-of-the-art library sized for the population and designed to serve all of us for generations to come. This proposal is the best use of limited taxpayer dollars and avoids unnecessary duplication and government waste. The City Council adopted the following strategic objective for 2016: Design, fund & build a new library with makers' space and STEM laboratory. This proposal is the best pathway to realizing this critical objective.

Finally, it is important to me that we all consider the economic development implications of this proposal. The Council's objective includes a STEM oriented makers' space in the new library which is fully aligned with the Sedro-Woolley STEM Network and the future of Sedro-Woolley. A new library located in our downtown core will provide revitalization for the historic downtown while also encouraging new development and new residents to choose Sedro-Woolley, particularly those people who may consider Sedro-Woolley for their new STEM careers. Make no mistake, the redevelopment of Northern State into the Sedro-Woolley Innovation for Tomorrow (SWIFT) Center, home to Janicki BioEnergy, the STEM Network, Fire Station 2, Cascade Middle School, a new library, expanding the UGA to the north, new parklands and upgrading infrastructure are all part of a coordinated effort to lift Sedro-Woolley to a brighter economic future.

RECOMMENDATION: No action requested tonight, but I would appreciate hearing from Sedro-Woolley citizens and library patrons about this proposal.