

November 3, 2022

The Sullivan County Public Library Board of Trustees held a public meeting at the Sullivan Civic Center at 6:00pm.

**Library Board:** Terri Roberts, President; Aaron Greve, Vice President; Katie Couch, Secretary; Jo Linda Lyttle, Secretary; Susan Brooks; Chris Gentry; Sarah Hannon

**Library Staff:** Jordan Orwig, Director; Tammy Secrest, Accounting Manager

**Other Attendees:** Zach Benedict, MKM Architecture + Design

**Call to Order:**

Called to order at 6:02pm. Chris made a motion to call the meeting to order. Susan seconded and motion passed.

**I. Feasibility Study Presentation**

Zach encouraged the spectators to fill out a comment card stating thoughts on the feasibility study and what would make someone use the library more. He stated that he will stay this evening for all questions. He also stated that the study will be available on the SCPL website tomorrow. He explained that what is being presented is an executive summary not a strategic plan. It is a facility plan for the assets owned/leased by SCPL. He then listed the five key priorities of the study as follows: to right size the space, diversify offerings and technology, increase programming capacity, prepare for demographic shifts, and increase storage capacity.

**II. Public Input Period**

Jordan informed the crowd that nothing has been decided and the library would open it up to feedback.

Sabrina, a resident from Shelburn, stood to speak. She said the community needs the library. It is a low-income area, and the library is a safe place for children. Adults would have to drive to another branch. The price of gas would stop them from going anywhere else. The librarian there has parties for holidays and after school programs. It is all that Shelburn has, the only thing. Lots of people go there. Before Covid, it was always people in and out using copiers and faxes. Elderly and children know the librarian, and she is amazing with the kids. She has lived there 20 years and it would be devastating to take it off the map and fix up Dugger.

An attendee named Diana spoke. She said she understood the whole PowerPoint presentation. It was about dollars and cents. One had to take into consideration the community. Shelburn has access for handicap through the side door. She had done this herself. It seemed ADA compliant to her. She stated that community has rallied to make sure the branch does not close, saying it would close the town.

Joshua Collins asked why the library got the idea of being ADA compliant at all locations. The main branch covers that problem. By doing that we jeopardize this small town. The community needs internet.

Jesse Kasinger from the Shelburn town council mentioned the utilities first (these are paid by SCPL). He listed three steps that the council is willing to take: they will charge nothing for building; empty lots can be used as a parking lot; and they will do what they need to make it handicap accessible. They are willing to add space to the building. Community has offered to donate money. The council proposes that this money could be used to pay a percentage of the librarian's salary. They will take care of maintenance. They don't want it closed down.

Bonnie Stowers commented about a gentleman who had come from far away and talked about building community, the library, and the gardens. She asked how you make people feel like they belong. They always used the Merom library for internet. Children go to the library, and the librarian looks at them like a person and cares about them. The librarian takes time to listen to what they say, and they will remember that.

Jordan Stowers was a Merom resident and asked about the people whose library you want to shut down. She only went to Sullivan branch a few times, but children get dropped off at Merom library every day. Shelburn library patrons may not have time to get to Sullivan. It's wrong to benefit Sullivan and take away from others.

Jessica Retseck was a resident who moved back to Merom. She had heard Shelburn was "on the chopping block and it hurts." She stated that most of Sullivan County lives outside the city of Sullivan. She said that a bookshelf in Shelburn would not give a place for attachment. She claimed that she didn't hear anything about how to serve the desert areas in the presentation, and that the people of Shelburn are deserving of some investment.

Nina Cage, a Hymera resident, was happy for Shelburn but didn't see Hymera in the presentation. She said that she never got anything from Sullivan but had gotten something from Hymera. The kids at North Central High School are doing well because they have librarians who care about them, and that a nicer chair did not help the children. The Hymera library has made accommodations at their facility for the children. She is going to request that her tax dollars be moved from Sullivan.

A child who goes to the Shelburn library said that the library board all cut them off the chopping block. The graph was not accurate, and the Shelburn library was on top of everything. There were lots of programs there, with kids coming in and out to do homework. They said that we should have a library in every single county (town). They said to make changes on your own time and stop using the town's money. They would not go around and try to take someone else's library away from them.

Kathy Strahle, the Hymera librarian, said that their library was never added to SCPL but were instead given a monthly lease for Sullivan County books. They have been working our butts off to get funding from township and town donations and have gotten a large donation. She knows

they have people who love their library and are an important part of our town. She asked why they don't get tax money.

Matthew Price, the Shelburn Town Marshall thanked the board for the opportunity to speak. He stated that, since the school was closed, opportunities were reduced. Also, since the median income had risen, there was now a 27 percent poverty rate. He said individuals who have left took their resources with them, and there is a need for the library and its resources. He said all here today know that libraries are pathways to culture that create opportunities. He had several questions such as: How do children grow if opportunities are taken away? How do we grow if we do that? He said that the library is a safe refuge that boosts the economy and allows people to apply for employment which makes communities healthier. He said that budgets play a role but not at a cost of children's future. He didn't know that there were budget issues, and, after hearing from community, he believes they can solve the budget issues and can discuss the ADA situation. He wants to accomplish a solution where our children can grow, and residents can thrive.

A teacher, Tracy Drappo, said that her students were devastated about news of the Shelburn closure. She asked questions like: Where will they hang out? Where will they have Internet? What if there is another pandemic? She said that anyone who loves a library wants everyone to have access to books, and that, if one doesn't expand to save another, she was okay with that. She wants the board to tell them how they could help keep the library open.

John Gettinger, a Merom town council member, asked if there was a library tax, as it sounded like money was needed to fund libraries as steady income for libraries.

Kaylee Retseck, a community member, said that the librarian taught her to read even though she doesn't like to read. The reason she was speaking was that she loves children who don't have passionate parents. She said that children are running the streets, and that there were no institutions to partner with Shelburn for programming.

Derrick Grant, a school leader of RCA and past educator, said that he has dropped off kids at libraries in Merom and Shelburn and was concerned that all branches will start to be closed since libraries are critical for neighborhoods.

Beth Reed, a Merom resident, said that her children use the Sullivan library. She lives close to Merom library. She personally talked to board members. She said that books are the gateway for learning and the future, and she hopes that the board would never vote to close any library in the county.

A Shelburn resident spoke about the genealogy of family all over Sullivan. She said that, without Nonnie, kids would have no one to look up to or to tell them what's right or wrong.

Marie Walsh, a Shelburn resident, had lived in Shelburn when it was thriving but then moved to Sullivan. She said it was fortunate that there is a town council for exciting things. She was in Shelburn library the other day and the librarian helped her send a fax. A lady came to return

books and waited to speak to the librarian. This patron needed a hotspot for Internet for student. During Covid, the children did homework at library. She hoped that Internet is consideration. While there, a woman waited and wanted to hug Nonnie, and a troubled kid came in to use the computer. She said it was not about books, but the library was the heartbeat of the community. She hoped Shelburn got to keep the library.

An attendee claimed that they didn't understand how the money was spent. He said these people loved their library. He said if paint needed done or steps needed fixed, it was still the library, and that the kids didn't care about that stuff. He said it was more important that communities have these libraries. He doesn't want to see the library close.

Josh Collins spoke again about changing the goals of the board and that he didn't feel staff were involved in these decisions.

Brandy Wolfe, the director at the chamber of commerce, noticed on the proposal for genealogy that it didn't say where it will go if the museum does not get fixed. She asked if anyone thought of what will happen for the "desert areas."

Jordan thanked the public and reminded the crowd that the study will be on the website the following day. The next meeting was currently planned to be Wednesday, November 9, at the Annex. Some members of the crowd would like for the time to be changed.

## **II. Adjournment**

Time 7:28pm

Susan made a motion to adjourn. Chris seconded and motion passed.

NEXT MEETING: November 9, 2022

cc: Katie Springer, Attorney at Law

Board Members

November 9, 2022

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Terri Roberts, President

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Susan Brooks, Board Member

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Aaron Greve, Vice-President

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Chris Gentry, Board Member

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Jo Linda Lyttle, Treasurer

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Sarah Hannon, Board Member

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Katie Couch, Secretary