



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

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April 2, 2010

Dear President Ryan,

We have been working closely with your office and the Boston Public Library's Board of Trustees as our library system works to close its \$3.6 million budget gap. We appreciate your willingness to meet with us to discuss the concerns we are hearing from our constituents.

It is the job of the President and the Board of Trustees to run our city's library without being micromanaged by City Hall. But when the proposal to close eight to ten of these branch libraries is made, the decision requires a more meaningful dialogue with the public.

A recent study found that nationwide, one-third of Americans have used a computer within their local library to look for jobs, stay in touch with friends, or do their homework. Closer to home, circulation of books, CDs, and DVDs has risen by 31 percent since 2006, and in 2009, the library issued 40,000 cards to new users. Libraries give students a safe place to go after school to study. They serve as a place for the elderly to gather during the day, and a place where young families can socialize during story hours. These spaces are vital to our neighborhoods.

It's clear that the way in which library patrons access information is changing. When you combine that paradigm shift with a budget gap, it's tempting to chip away at the bricks and mortar of the Boston Public Library.

However, re-envisioning the BPL for the future should be an endeavor we approach carefully and with the full participation of the wider community. Closing our libraries should be the last option, and should be considered only after lengthy public debate and after we ensure the BPL has eliminated all waste. This means a top-to-bottom review of the library's finances, from the cost of energy for our libraries to other everyday expenses. Obviously, such a review cannot be completed in time for the Council's vote on the budget. The Council recognizes that sometimes closings can be beneficial, as in the case of the Kirstein Branch, which relocated its resources to the Copley Square Library. That created a better experience for patrons while saving money for the BPL.

The Board of Trustees should incorporate fundraising as a core function of its many duties. Many BPL supporters and residents say that they would gladly donate to the

Re: Letter To President Ryan

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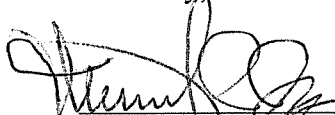
institution that means so much to them. Board members should be able to help facilitate donations, bringing new revenue into the system when it needs it most.

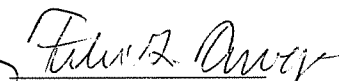
We should also consider the recent efforts of our neighbor to the south. Providence, Rhode Island recently proposed a similar number of closings for its library system. The community rallied around their libraries and together the city and its residents came up with innovative solutions that kept all its branches open. While its system is organized and financed differently than ours, we can learn from that city's process.


The Boston City Council has faith in President Ryan's leadership and we believe that the men and women who run and work for our libraries do so for all the right reasons—for love of service and learning. But we cannot support the plan to close libraries after so short a discussion period.

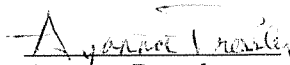
The undersigned, as City Councilors, having met in a public meeting to discuss your proposal and in contemplation of our duties to our constituents and to our budget review process, believe that the BPL needs to broaden the level of public input and participation, and search for alternatives to library closings. The citizens of Boston are innovative and resilient. Let us challenge our public and corporate citizens and engage them in contributing to the solution. We cannot make a decision that will affect the lives of Bostonians for years to come in only a few short months.

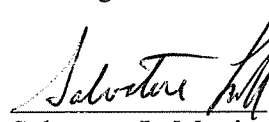
Sincerely,

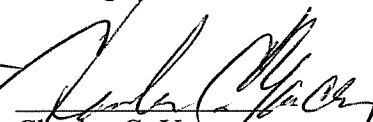

Michael P. Ross
President, District 8



Felix G. Arroyo
At-Large



John R. Connolly
At-Large

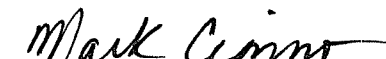

Ayanna Pressley
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Cc: Boston Public Library Trustees