

CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER OF COUNCILLOR CHARLES C. YANCEY

ORDERED: That, under the provisions of Section 17F of Chapter 376 the Acts of 1951, as amended, and under any other applicable provision of law, His Honor, the Mayor, be, and hereby is, requested to obtain and deliver to the City Council, within one week of the receipt hereof, the following information:

1. The Library is in the process of hiring WB Meyer to handle offsite storage conversion duties, which are currently being preformed by Library staff.
 - a. What is the cost of those duties if performed by BPL staff?
 - b. What is the cost of those duties if performed by BP Meyer?
 - c. How much does it cost to bring up books from Norwood that used to be stored at Copley. And what kind of delay does that meant for patrons?
 - d. What storage facilities were considered within the City of Boston?
 - e. How are weeding quotas set by the BPL administration and what criteria are used to determine which materials are eliminated from the collection in order to meet the weeding quotas set by the BPL administration?
 - f. What criteria were used to select a vendor for off-site moving and storage?
2. What criteria will be applied for determining which materials are moved to the "offsite" collections?
3. What will the library do to aid the public in accessing these inherently inaccessible collections?
4. What steps are being taken to increase the capacity of the Boston Public Library rather than decreasing the collection?
5. What steps are taken to ensure that a valuable, rare, or final copy of a book is not discarded?
6. How likely is it that books that are discarded will ever be made available to the patrons of the library digitally?
7. How much we are reducing the shelving capacity of Copley by removing all the top shelves?
8. How does reducing the shelving capacity at Copley impact the quotas needed to be met by the library staff?
9. What is the amount of new fiction and new non-fiction purchased over the past 6 months?
10. What is the percentage it has increased/decreased in the past 6 months?
11. What is the percentage it has increased/decreased over the past 2 years?
12. How many database contracts have been canceled over the past ten years?
13. How many books have been added to the research library in the same time period (and in comparison to how many were added in the ten years prior to that.)?
14. How much has been spent each year on the retrospective conversion of the research library catalog?
15. Are there additional fees for direct catalog access by the public to the materials entered into the new offsite storage database?

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1. What is the library's FY10 budget surplus?
2. What is the city's FY10 budget surplus?
3. If surpluses are available, why are they not being used to support the library system?
4. Why does the city not allow the use of trusts or foundation donations to be used to support operating expenses and employee salaries?
5. What adjustments does the city make to free up cash using trusts or foundation donations so that other sources of funding can be used for this purpose?
6. Is the use of centralized purchasing typical of an urban library system?
7. If materials are purchased centrally and librarians are not able to order books for their specific collections, what steps are taken to ensure that librarians assigned to a specific branch are familiar with the collection and can help patrons access it?
8. Why has no inventory been taken prior to the weeding and selling of materials?
9. What is the nature of BPL's relationship with Amazon?
 - a. How much does it cost the Library to send materials away to Amazon?
 - b. What money is received back from Amazon by the Library?
 - c. How does this compare to the cost of storage?
 - d. How are the funds received from Amazon used?
10. Where do funds generated by the library rentals and fines go?
11. What contracts does the library currently have?
12. What new contracts have been made in the past year?
13. What are the external funds the library has-- millennium fund, enterprise fund, etc.?
 - a. How much money do they generate?
 - b. Who controls them?
 - c. What do they pay for?
 - d. How is this determined?
14. What was the rationale for a \$20,000 housing stipend supplied by the BPLF for President Ryan in FY10 when the unions were asked to take a wage freeze and layoffs occurred?
15. Why does the BPL fund the ReadBoston program, which is run by the Boston Redevelopment Association?
16. When a position is fully funded and budgeted can the incumbent staff member be laid off and not replaced?

(over)

17. When an incumbent staff member leaves a fully funded and budgeted position, what happens to the money allocated for that position?
18. Who oversees the President implementing the budget approved by the Board of the Trustees, the City Council and the Mayor?
19. If money was provided to keep the branches open, why are subscriptions, services, and book purchasing being limited at these facilities?
20. What is the staff to management ratio?
 - a. What will be the staff to management ratio after October 1, 2010?
 - b. What has it been in the past?
 - c. How does it compare to other urban library systems?
21. Why are rooms kept empty for weddings instead of using them for library purposes?
22. Why are new branches designed with limited capacity for materials, and how is the capacity of the library estimated during the design process?
23. What has been done to begin the process of citing a new East Boston branch library?
24. Why are other capital projects that have already been approved by the City Council on hold?
 - a. How is this determined?
 - b. Why are Jamaica Plain and Chinatown branch renovation/construction on hold while East Boston is moved forward?
25. Please provide a list of all trusts and current balances.
26. How does the Library ensure purchases are made using the tax-free status?
27. Who ensures the approved budget accurately reflects the Position Titles and positions in the Library?
(example: Quality Services Manager)

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1. What arrangements have been made for continuing services currently offered by the libraries that are being eliminated?
2. Where is the cost analysis that shows that alternative arrangements saved the city any money?
3. How is the library implementing the principles outlined in the Action Plan filed for FY11 as required by the Massachusetts State Board of Library Commissioners? Specifically:
 - a. Principle 1: "Comprehensive review, renovation, refurbishment of ALL BRANCHES" and that "each branch facility will reflect the diversity and uniqueness of its community" (p. 7, Neighborhood Branch Initiatives).
 - b. Principle 3: "Professional development." This principle states that "The Library will seek to RETAIN AND PROMOTE CURRENT STAFF by investing heavily in continuing education..." and "Staff at all levels will receive training to develop an institutional culture that recognizes the importance of excellent customer service and honors the diversity of the city's residents" (p. 7 Neighborhood Branch Initiative).
4. What is the amount set aside for training the staff of the Library?
5. What analysis has been done to show that the lead library system is distributing resources fairly across the city?
6. What analysis has been done on the potential impact of closures and laying off of staff?
7. How will the library be able to provide the same or improved services with fewer staff?
8. What planning has been done for covering the extra work generated by the loss of staff?
9. What safety nets are in place to prevent escalating overtime costs?

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1. What criteria does the Boston Public Library management use to decide what positions would be eliminated?
2. With staff reduction in the BPL circulation department how will requests be filled, materials checked in, materials shelved, shelves verified in a timely fashion and is there a backlog?
3. With the massive reduction in staff at the central library how will the central library do the following:
 - a. Maintain services as Copley?
 - b. Maintain services to the entire library system?
 - c. Maintain hours of service on Saturdays at the Branches?
 - d. Maintain hours of service on Sundays at Copley?
4. How will the branches maintain services with the relocation and layoffs of staff?
5. How will the branches and central get the supplies they need with staff reduction?
6. How will books and materials be delivered in a timely fashion?
7. How does the Library plan on maintaining cleanliness across all Library locations?

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1. The Boston Public Library Action Plan FY11 calls for the introduction of new and expensive technology. What are these technologies?
2. What is the BPL budget for the new technologies?
3. How is the decision made to invest in these particular technologies?
4. How is it determined that these services are needed or wanted by the patrons of the library?
5. What is the benefit to the public of these technologies and how do they compare to the benefit of more locations and staffing?

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1. What criteria does the Mayor use in selecting Trustees?
2. Has the Attorney General of Massachusetts approved the remote participation of Trustee Berthe Gaines?
3. What persons from neighborhoods not currently represented on the Board of Trustees (particularly those affected by his cuts: East Boston, Brighton, Dorchester, South Boston) have been considered for the position of Trustee?
4. What expectation are the Trustees given about the budget process when the Mayor appoints them to the board?
5. How is the conflict of interest between the Trustees and the Mayor managed during the budget process?
6. How is this conflict of interest managed in the use of trusts, which are now controlled by the treasurer of the city?
7. Who has oversight over the management of these trusts?
8. What criteria do the Trustees use to approve a contract?
9. How long does it take the Trustees to vote to approve a contract?
10. What is the time frame between selection of a contractor and the approval?
11. Are there any increases in cost due to votes being delayed?