

Press Conference Budget Reductions

Wednesday, June 24, 2009

3:00 p.m.

Held at Bel Air Branch Meeting Room

Audra Caplan – Information Release

During tough economic times people flock to public libraries for access to free materials, services, and support. Harford County Public Library has welcomed this increase in usage and worked tirelessly to support the community demands.

The current year's numbers speak for themselves:

- Over 1,610,000 people have walked through our doors, a 6.3% increase over FY08.
- Our libraries have circulated over 4,400,000 materials, an 8.6% increase over FY08.
- Our website has received over 5,543,000 visits, an 86.22% increase over FY08.
- Over 117,800 people have attended a program at the library, a 10.89% increase over FY08.

These tough economic times have also resulted in significant budget reductions for Harford County Public Library. Budget cuts from the state, County Executive and most recently, the County Council, have resulted in a \$1.6 million dollar reduction in our operating budget for FY10. Knowing that the economic forecast predicts additional losses in revenues for the next few years, the Harford County Public Library Board of Trustees looked extensively at the operating budget, the eleven branch system and two outreach vehicles, and made recommendations. These

recommendations included the proposed closing of one of our eleven branches.

Over the last few weeks the Board of Trustees has received an outpouring of letters, emails, phone calls, petitions and public testimony from residents from all areas of the county. The message was clear; implement the necessary budget cuts across the system so that doors would remain open at all library branches.

In order to accomplish this goal, service at all branches will be different as we move forward. The Board of Trustees will vote tomorrow evening to accept the FY10 budget with the following implementations:

- A 10% reduction in staffing through lay-offs, vacancies and salary reductions
- All staff will be furloughed for five days
- All branches will be closed on Sundays and an additional four hours during the week
- All branches will have fewer programs for children, teens and adults
- All branches will see a reduction in the frequency of maintenance service and cleaning services
- Materials purchases will be reduced by 18%, which includes a reduction in new books, DVDs, databases, and periodicals in all branches
- The Library Store has been closed
- The Small Business Center will be closed

In the next few weeks, the Board of Trustees will be reevaluating our current fines and fees as well as considering additional revenue sources.

These decisions were not easy; there simply is no way for the Library to absorb budget cuts of this magnitude without significantly impacting our services.

I continue to be proud of our library, its employees, the Board of Trustees, our countless volunteers, and active Friends members. Together we have built a strong library system providing the community with an invaluable resource.