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To: <bos@mendocinocounty.org>
Date: 3/27/2018 8:54 AM
Subject: IN OPPOSITION of a Formation of a Cultural Services Agency weakening three institutions (library, Willits Museum & parks)
Attachments: County Museum contract archivists Russell & Sylvia Bartley.odt

Albion, 3-27-18
To Carmel Angelo & County Supervisors,

This letter is making it clear that I am in OPPOSITION of a Formation of a Cultural Services Agency that will, in my opinion weaken three institutions (library, Willits Museum & parks).

My name is Annemarie Weibel. I have lived in this county for 40 years. I am a landowner, taxpayer, educator and mother of three children. Two live in Mendocino County. I already once sent you a letter in support of reorganizing the county library so it become a gem again. It does not necessarily need more money, but it needs a vision and the right people. You have knowledgeable professionals like Sylvia and Russell Bartley who in meetings and in their three letters spelled out what needs to be done for the library. With the current proposal you are trying to weaken three institutions (county library, county museum in Willits and the county parks).

I am dismayed that DESPITE MAJOR OPPOSITION from Library advocates and defenders, museum advocates and defenders the County CEO Carmel Angelo is pressing forward with her proposal to combine the much more lushly funded county library with the County Museum and the County's remnant parks and recreation department.

The library is running a deficit. Funding may not be intermingled with the General Fund. So far, this proposal is very skimpy. So, like many other proposals out of the CEO's office, there's probably more to this than cliches like "greater access across all demographics" and "Inspire personal growth," etc. If those are the only reasons for it, the proposal should be immediately scrapped and taken off the agenda.

By pitting these programs against each other you threaten all of them.

A Cultural Services Agency, now under consideration by you, would incorporate three departments/programs: the Library, Museum, and County Parks. Allegedly, these three existing departments/programs incorporate similar vision and purpose, including providing informational, educational and recreational access to Mendocino County communities. Apparently you want us to believe that through the potential consolidation of these departments/programs under one administrative umbrella, our community will have greater access to resources. By forming an agency, you want us believe it will be better positioned to apply for grants and/or funding streams, will increase administrative efficiency by sharing resources for marketing, finance, outreach programs, and provide the potential for Countywide collaboration between the three departments/programs.

I disagree. By hiring Karen Horner, the County librarian, to also help with the museum you have done just that already and have hired in addition to her a young person basically right out college who might have some knowledge in her field, but you have not shown that you understand much of what a jewel you could have with your County Museum and could continue to cultivate even with budget problems.

Why is it that you proposed to increase the rates of your board members while tempting to tear down what keeps locals and tourists informed; enriched as far as cultural resources, opportunities for recreation and education, and enhanced quality of life and well-being is concerned? These organizations/institutions inspire personal growth, lifelong learning, healthy lifestyles, connection to nature, and promote a sense of community. Be creative, but do not combine them and therefore dismantle them.

The County has had a checkered history with the County Museum. There are on-going damage control efforts to remediate staff shortages and collections problems at the Museum. Over the course of many years the County has alternately attempted to get rid of the Museum and neglected the Museum ostensibly because this department is small. It could be deduced that this is because the Museum is a drain on the General Fund.

The former director of the Museum worked in excess of fulltime capacity. Apparently you were unaware until last year that the Museum had a problem with its director, staff morale and a deteriorating collection. Ms. Horner believes she will be able to manage the Museum as if it were

a library branch. She believes that the Museum does not need a dedicated director. Instead, she feels a curator and a part-time director or "branch-head" with staff will be sufficient. As the letters by Sylvia and Russell Bartley indicate that is not a way to run a quality museum. Ms. Horner currently devotes approx. 25% of her staff time, but intends to reduce it in the future.

In order for the Museum to thrive it needs a fulltime dedicated and experienced director to actively safeguard its collection, plan new exhibits, prepare publicity and supervise staff. The proposed CSA with a 10-25% director would abolish the validity of the Museum as a County Department and forfeit its ability to shape itself as a tourist and public entity.

In order for the seven Parks and public access areas to thrive there must be enhanced promotion and exposure of their resources. The County has provided only janitorial services to the Parks. Otherwise they are nearly neglected.

The Library is self-funded through its pro-rata share of property tax and Measure A sales tax revenue. By law, these funds are dedicated to the Library. The CEO treats the Library as a County Department, believes that the Library can be administered as such, and that the County has the legal authority to fold the Library into the proposed CSA. This may be contrary to California Code if the Grand Jury's finding are correct. (See GJ Report 2013-14, pages 8-9; Education Code §19146). On several occasions the County has improperly charged the Library for A-87 reimbursement on fully depreciated equipment. The Fort Bragg Branch insurance funded facility and the Willits Branch's grant funded facility are two examples of improper charges to the Library. It took two Grand Jury Reports and two years for the County to refund \$24,000 for building use charges and \$31,000 for equipment charges to the Fort Bragg and Willits branches. Additionally, the County refuses to even consider that the Library Director's salary should be paid by the County as explicitly stated in the Education Code. Prior to the passage of Measure A, the Board of Supervisors considered closing the Willits Branch and the Bookmobile. The Library had no budget for materials. The branches were open only three days per week. Measure A, approved by 75% of the voters, reversed this dire condition.

Arguments Against The Proposed Cultural Services Agency

[1] Today we have a thriving library system but the future of the library is contingent on a renewal of Measure A funding in 2027. Any actual or perceived co-mingling, diverting or misuse of the Library's dedicated funding or library reserve fund will detrimentally affect the passage of voter approved future library funding, thus returning the Library to its pre-2011 crisis condition.

[2] The Library deserves the time and attention of a full time Library Director. Additional admin. staff should be hired on as needed basis. Library staffing is not contingent on a proposed CSA. There is no reason a Museum room could not be used now by the Library for office space without being part of a CSA. Agencies often rent space to each other. The best intentions of the County to safeguard proper use of Library funds in the proposed agency budget would be impossible to track and would lead to public mistrust.

[3] It is likely that what the CEO means by indicating that the proposed new CSA agency will have "greater access to shared resources" is that the Museum and Parks will have the potential to utilize Library funds through ambiguous accounting and unspecified co-mingled costs of admin. and A-87 expenditures. The County's opaque accounting practices, past attempts to inaccurately assess A-87 charges and refusal to consider following state law regarding the proper source of the Director's salary are reasons to doubt the intentions of the County in its attempt to combine the Library with the Museum and Parks into one agency. The Library, Museum and Parks have disparate missions and volume of public use. The Library had a door count of approximately 417,000 in 2017, while the Museum had approximately 8,000-10,000 visitors in 2017, including special events. The Library is free while the Museum requests an admission fee. The Library and Museum provide educational opportunities but have differing use of resources. Our Parks are mainly gifted properties to the County. Both the Museum and Parks clearly need attention and deserve dedicated leadership to improve, maintain and promote the use of their assets and properties.

[4] It is dubious logic that says that combining the Museum with the Library and Parks will serve the public any better than they are now. It is feasible for any of the three to work on joint grants and programs now. We believe the Library, Museum and Parks are and have been capable of applying for grants independently and have no need for affiliation. For example, the Bookmobile was procured in part by a Department of Agriculture grant with the strong support of Supervisor Brown. Outreach can be accomplished collaboratively between agencies. There does not need to be a combined agency or budget. There is no evidence that demonstrates that combining departments/programs is a more effective

management system in providing services to communities. The proposed CSA is contingent on a convenient and reductionist approach rather than being a forward thinking structural change that takes into account the best interests of the Library, Museum and Parks.

I agree with the feelings the Library Advisory Board has that believes the proposed Cultural Services Agency will harm the Library by jeopardizing future library funding; reducing the director and admin. staff to part-time with diminished focus on library services and programs; to lose control of the library budget and library reserve fund through the potential for co-mingling and improper use of dedicated library funds; by propping up the Museum and Parks at the Library's expense; and through less effective administration and loss of services.

Different professional expertise is needed for the Library, Museum and the Parks. Basically, the CSA seems to be a proposal to skim money from the Library while at the same time weakening all three institutions.

The County Museum building and the collections need an infusion of money. It could be an attraction for tourists, boosting the Willit's economy and drawing motorists from the bypass, i.e., economic development. Yet, this proposal seems to include putting the this year's unspent budgeted dollars into the general fund, rather than using it for needed improvements, and cutting next year's budget. (Maybe you'll buy more county vehicles if \$800,000 last year wasn't enough.) Nothing now prevents the Library and the Museum from cooperating on mutually beneficial events.

The duties and responsibilities of the County Librarian are set forth in state law. He/she "shall, subject to the general rules adopted by the board of supervisors, build up and manage, according to the accepted principles of library management, a library for the use of the people of the county..." (Ed Code sec. 19146) and shall "authorize and approve" "each claim against the county free library fund". (Ed Code 19176). Sounds like an administrator to me. Wherein lies the authority of the board of supervisors to give those powers to a county agency administrator? Already, a lot of the Librarian's administrative time has been devoted to the Museum; even if reimbursed, it is a significant diversion of time and attention.

Of far greater concern is the accounting and accountability nightmare this proposal will create for supporters of the Museum, the Library and the Parks. The broad brush of the published county budget--"operating transfers in", "operating transfers out", "intra fund transfers", "A-87 charges"--create a fog impenetrable to the average citizen. In two years, the depreciation and overhead charges against the Library (A-87) have increased from 12% of its dedicated property tax revenue to 19%. To whom, for what, and why is unknowable from published information. For good government, efficiency is less important than accountability, which in turn rests upon transparency.

Transparency is particularly important in regards to the sales tax authorized by Measure A, crucial to the viability of the Library (twice in the past the County has been willing to completely shut down or eliminate a branch thereof). Measure A has a clause requiring continuation of funding existing in 2012. It has a sunset clause. It is difficult to envisage the support of nearly 75% , or even 63%, if the voters are unsure whether funds are being siphoned off to support other amenities or if the Library has lost its identity.

I personally care about all three entities. Attached are 3 letters from County Museum contract archivists Russell & Sylvia Bartley. I support their vision.

Thanks for considering my comments.
Sincerely,
Annemarie Weibel

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