

## **DRAFT – FOR INTERNAL DISCUSSION ONLY**

### **Renton Libraries**

#### **Key Messages**

#### **Current environment - Libraries are a highly-valued public service**

- Renton residents care about their library services and use them regularly. The City of Renton's priority is to provide quality, financially-sustainable library services to residents.
- Renton's population has grown and diversified since the 1960's when the Renton Public Library's new building first opened. The role of libraries has also changed. While libraries once just offered books, they now do much more –support career development; provide access to technology; and connect community members.
- Currently, the City of Renton funds two Renton Public Library facilities and programs. A reciprocal agreement with the King County Library System (KCLS) allows Renton residents to use King County libraries for an annual fee (\$72,000 in 2007 and \$278,000 in 2008 and 2009). Fees are expected to increase with potential annexations of unincorporated areas to the City of Renton.
- Quality library services in Renton are not sustainable at current funding levels. In today's challenging economy, the City of Renton cannot financially support current library services and programs that its diverse residents want and need, much less make a commitment to upgrade and enhance its services and facilities.

#### **Need for improvements – Current system is unsustainable**

- There is a recognized need for library improvements in Renton. Comparison data shows large gaps between Renton's existing library service levels and those of other similar libraries in Washington and around the nation.
- A 2006 Master Planning process found that "Renton lags far behind in the resources available to provide responsive, high-quality library services needed by its growing and diverse citizenry". The planning process identified \$27 million in investment needs in order to upgrade buildings, services, collection, and programs to rebuild and modernize the library system.

- Investments are necessary in order to maintain and improve library services in the future. Doing nothing will result in library service cuts that could range from reduced staff hours to closing facilities.

### **The public will decide - An important decision will be made in February**

- The Renton City Council and Renton Library Board both endorsed giving Renton voters the chance to decide for themselves whether to join the KCLS. The issue will be on the February 2010 ballot.
- The City of Renton wants to make sure residents have information necessary so they can make informed decisions about future library services.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

What library services are currently available to Renton residents?

- Commitment to high quality service and cost effective service delivery
- Do we need a list of facts here, e.g., size of collection, programs offered, etc.?

Why are residents being asked to make a change/decision about library? Why can't we continue with our existing City of Renton library system?

- Growth and diversity of Renton residents
- Growing demand for services and rising costs
- Current system is unsustainable
- Competition for General Fund resources with other services provided by the city

What is the King County Library System (KCLS)?

- Second-busiest public library in the United States
- Collection of more than 3.6 million items
- 1,200 employees
- Operating budget of more than \$80 million

- Independent taxing district, not part of King County
- Provides library services in 43 community libraries, in all cities but Seattle, Enumclaw and Renton

What changes would accompany joining KCLS?

[Is this too broad a question? I'm not too sure how to respond....](#)

Will the quality (?) of materials or services change under KCLS?

- The quality of materials will not change, but the quantity and variety of materials and services will increase. Examples: more public computers, down-loadable books, music, classes and programs for adults, traveling library service, etc.

Will Renton Library staff lose their jobs?

- All Renton staff with regularly scheduled hours will become employees of KCLS
- All Renton substitute staff will be able to join KCLS substitute pools at the appropriate level

Will Renton Library facilities close?

- KCLS would use the existing Renton library facilities initially. In the future, they would work with the City of Renton to build replacement facilities

Will library hours be cut?

- Many KCLS libraries are open on Sundays and longer hours during the week. Open hours for Renton libraries have not yet been determined.

Will it take longer to get a book?

- If desired items are in high demand, wait times for borrowers may be longer. Many items will be available on the shelf when needed, or will be shipped within a short time from another library.

What would happen to the current Renton collection?

- Each item in KCLS has a “home” where it resides when it is not on hold somewhere else in the system. The Renton book collection would remain in Renton libraries and would be available for borrowing anywhere in the district.

Will independence and local control be lost by joining KCLS?

- Yes, the city would no longer determine which library services would be provided to residents.
- KCLS encourages their library staff to be aware of and responsive to community needs and desires.
- The City of Renton would continue to appoint a local library board who would be able to advise the KCLS Board of Trustees on issues specific to Renton.

Would KCLS be accountable for services and costs? How would their actions be made transparent to the public?

- As a government entity, KCLS makes their actions available to the public as required by law. Information about services and costs are currently and would continue to be available on the KCLS website, at Board meetings, and via Public Information requests.

What would be the cost of joining KCLS?

- Taxpayers would begin paying the KCLS operating levy with their 2010/2011 tax assessment. Amount??? Should we use the current rate even though we know that will be changing for 2010? I don't want us to be accused of underestimating...

What would be the cost of not joining KCLS?

- Renton residents would continue to pay the city's property tax assessment, some of which helps to fund the Renton Library.
- An increase in taxes would be necessary to maintain library services at the current level, or to improve services as recommended by the Master Plan Study.

Who makes the decision about whether Renton will join KCLS?

- The voters residing within the City of Renton

### What is the process and timeline for joining KCLS?

- Process already taken place
  - 20-year master plan, meetings, input gathered, etc.
  - Council actions - recommendation to join KCLS; place it on February 2010 ballot
- Process moving forward
  - Public vote – February 2010

### What happens if voters reject joining KCLS?

- The City will continue to operate an independent library system and will need to ask voters to approve additional taxes to maintain or improve services

### How do larger King County budget problems affect KCLS?

- KCLS is an independent taxing authority and not directly affected by King County government budget problems.
- Property value reductions throughout King County have an affect on the rate-per-thousand KCLS is authorized to collect from taxpayers, but the total amount collected by KCLS from year to year cannot exceed 1% of the prior year's levy without taxpayer approval, up to a maximum of \$.50 per thousand.