



# Escondido Indivisible

*Indivisible for liberty, justice, and compassion for all*

September 5, 2017

Mayor Sam Abed and City Council members  
City of Escondido

**Via Email**

Dear Mayor Abed and City Council,

As you know, we are tremendously disappointed in your action on August 23. We continue to believe that you are making a huge mistake if you continue on this path. Having had time to reflect and discuss, we were able to see a few areas of fundamental misunderstanding or disagreement which we would like to address here and to make some recommendations.

**The evidence does not show that LS&S will ‘improve’ our library.**

Please review the information in the attached ‘rebuttal’ to the staff report. The rebuttal speaks for itself but there are a couple points that bear repeating.

The claim that LSS will ‘improve’ our library is unfounded. Consider that both the Shasta branch average and the Riverside Branch average demonstrate that there are fewer programs and they are less well-attended than the Escondido’s public library. (Rebuttal at 3). The Temecula library, so widely touted as a marvel at the hearing, actually has fewer volumes and fewer computers. How is that better?

Last, and worst, compared to both the Riverside and Shasta branch averages, they have both lower staff/patron ratio and far fewer ALA-MLS educated staff. (Rebuttal at 2) These deficiencies add up to worse service and a worse library—not a better one.

**Outsourcing will undermine commitment and support for bond for new library**

We think some on the Council misunderstand something here. We do not believe people will directly ‘sabotage’ a new library bond, it is just that the motivated base of people you need to pass it will not be there. To pass a 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s anything in our divided nation takes a veritable ‘army’. Just ask SANDAG. To get to 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s vote you need, essentially, a large and unified ‘army’ of volunteers. You don’t have one. We could offer some of that support, but if you outsource the library, trust that we’ll be working on other initiatives.

The other benefit of not outsourcing the library and, thereby, enlisting the legion of library supporters that have emerged is that we would work for free, requiring only motivation. But, people motivated to work hard to help a corporate profit-center make more money are hard to



come by. As one volunteer told the Trustees, *‘Just like I don’t go to McDonalds and pick up a broom, I’m not helping LS&S increase their profits with my volunteer effort.’* If you are counting on LS&S to do this for you, you’d better factor in the cost. We imagine that it will far exceed \$400,000.

The other reason our motivation is inhibited to help you is that, as a Council, by your comments and actions to date, you have not demonstrated that you truly support, understand, or value libraries—or librarians. We do not, in fact, trust you with our library. After you closed one and if you outsource the other, can you really blame us?

### **A library is not just a building and books**

This is one of the most frustrating and heart-breaking misunderstandings you have. **It does matter who runs the library.** Just as a family is not just a house and the people in it are incidental, a library is a ‘family-like’ relationship. As you heard in testimony, it is ‘home’ to many families and young people. Libraries change lives. Your move to ‘outsource and replace’ our library staff is the worst thing you are doing. And, once done, it is not recoverable. Once the city has a reputation of being a terrible place to work, it will take a long time to recover. Our poor reputation is already hurting our ability to attract the best candidates to work here. When you went to replace the last City Manager a couple years ago, how many candidates finally interviewed for the City Manager job? How many dropped out at the last minute? Why?

### **We are confused about your commitment to cost-savings.**

Until the 23<sup>rd</sup>, this issue had been presented exclusively as a need to save money annually and to reduce the number of people in CALPERS. Mr. Abed, you went into great detail about the ‘pension crisis’ at the meeting. Now we learn on Facebook that yet, **another** Deputy City Manager has been hired. We assume he will be highly paid and on CALPERS. What happened to the ‘crisis’? What problem are we trying to solve?

### **Taking time to evaluate alternatives and forge collaboration is worth the effort.**

We don’t understand why Council and staff are so adverse to looking at alternatives for the library and alternatives that really will solve the pension ‘crisis’. No one can say that they even know if this is the best alternative or not. No one can say what the best solution to the pension issue is either. We respectfully ask that you please stop this contract process, ask the current library staff for a proposal, and ask the County library system for a proposal. Then, take a look.

As for the pension issue, we ask that you appoint a budget committee to look at this situation in the public domain. Task the committee to look at assigning funds from payoff of the CCAE bonds to the debt or sale of fragment parcels or left-over enterprise funds etc... Hold workshops that allow for meaningful input and collaboration. It can easily be done. It is what leadership requires.



Mr. Morasco was right in asking, 'what really is lost' if we wait to get more information. Nothing is lost compared to what is gained. There are lots of other options. You should want to evaluate them before you take this unredeemable act.

### **Who has the 'activist gene'**

Last, we enjoyed the comments around who has and doesn't have the 'activist gene'. It was a fun topic to discuss. The best way to understand it is a version of 'If you see something, say something'. People take action when things they love are threatened. It isn't a 'genetic mutation', it is a protective response to something at risk.

Please know, the reason why we are all on our computers, on the street, and in your chambers, is that three of you are threatening something we love, our library.

And, as long as you do, we will continue to resist you.

Sincerely,

*April Ortiz*  
*for the Organizing Team of Escondido Indivisible*

Cc.  
Mr. Jeff Epp, City Manager  
Mr. Michael McGuinness, City Attorney  
Ms. Joann Axelrod, Librarian  
Board of Escondido Library Trustees