

October 16, 2017

Dear Laura,

First let me thank you for an opportunity to weigh in on this discussion.

As noted, I was the architect for the Jackson County Library District Campaign and worked closely with LSSI (now LS&S) during that effort. At that time they were a family-run entity and quite helpful. Since then, they have come under the ownership of a hedge fund and have endured significant, and repeated, leadership turnover.

By way of background, Jackson County, Oregon closed its libraries in 2007 and then brought in LSSI to manage them upon reopening.

Now a decade later, Jackson County Library District is still under outside management and will be for another three years, because the District Board and their (now former) attorney missed that the contract did not provide for cancellation without cause.

In 2015, after witnessing staff turnover and hearing of profound discontent, the library district board hired a renowned public library expert to evaluate the management of the Jackson County Library System. That report is available online and speaks for itself as to the efficacy of the outside management firm and its ability to manage our libraries over its eleven-year tenure.

Since the report, the JCLD board has repeatedly urged for higher salaries and better benefits for staff as a way to quell staff turnover and offered more money to execute that action. Yet, the outside management team has lumbered to meet that request.

Clearly, to meet expectations of hedge fund investors, management has relied on volunteers and minimum-wage employees to ensure profits and overhead are met while simultaneously meeting minimum requirements for hours and staffing levels.

Libraries are a critical link between local government and the community; and library staff is foremost in that relationship. As a political consultant who authored the book, *The Campaign Manage; Running and Winning Local Elections*, I advise that elected who underestimate the importance of that relationship, do so at their own peril. Library supporters are among the few bastions of public service that transcend political party and demographics. The volunteers willing to work on a campaign to save and buoy libraries is truly humbling. I have worked on hundreds of campaigns chronicled in my book and can attest that library volunteers are a unique breed. They are a well-educated constituency who are typically registered voters with long memories.

Think long and hard about this decision. Once made, the lack of transparency of the private equity firm will make a return to a community-held asset, difficult to recreate. And if a decision of this magnitude is forced upon an unwilling and unreceptive community, the backlash may be swift and decisive.

Please feel free to contact me.

With Kind Regards,

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