**CROSS COUNTY LIBRARY**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

**December 17, 2015**

**Call to Order and Roll Call:** The meeting was called to order at 4:07pm by Reta Ragland. Trustees present were Joy Shepherd, George Anne Draper, Jerry Harvey, and Kitty Bingham. Library Representatives present were John Paul Myrick, Executive Director, Claire Miller, Deputy Director, and Asti Ogletree, Youth Services Coordinator.

Public attendees were Mayor Bob Stacy, Cross County Friends of the Library President, Whitney Hayes, and Martin Smith.

Reta asked that the trustees approve the minutes from the October 27, 2015 meeting. Kitty moved to approve the minutes and Jerry seconded the motion. All trustees voted to approve the minutes. All aye, motion carried.

**Proposed Budget Cuts/ Quorum Court Budget Decision**

Reta then opened the floor for discussion concerning the possible reduction in funds due to the Quorum Court’s budget proposal. John Paul asked to read a statement, An Open Letter to the Residents of Cross County, dated December 16, 2015 at 3pm. Reta granted his request. The letter has been entered into the record and will be filed with the minutes.

Joy Shepherd says that she agrees whole heartedly with the letter. She met with the Quorum Court Budget Committee Chair Lynn Blake after the Rotary meeting today. However she doesn’t know that John Paul’s name should be on the letter because he is a paid employee. Joy said that she was willing to put her name on the letter and talk to the other Quorum Court members. John Paul replied that he is the paid warrior and the letter was already sent to David Boger at the paper per his request. Joy Shepherd said she was willing to ask to be on the agenda for the upcoming Quorum Court meeting on Monday. She had received a list from Lynn Blake and had already started calling and speaking with the Quorum Court Members until the meeting started. Jerry Brewster said the he didn’t want to cut the library and didn’t even know that was included in the budget. Lynn Blake said that he isn’t for cutting the library either. Kitty Bingham said that the trustees should be at the Quorum Court Meeting. Joy said that there are three members of the budget committee: Lynn Blake, Sharon Lawson, and Kevin Jumper. She said that Sharon and Kevin are very accounting minded, and they were probably the ones that requested the cut be included in the budget. Asti Ogletree said that according to what Judge Sanders said on Tuesday, some of the Quorum Court members said that they would not pass the budget if this cut was not included.

Martin Smith said that it’s very odd that after 35 years, the Quorum Court just decided to cut our utilities. George Anne said that we don’t want to go in fighting, it won’t help the situation. John Paul disagreed, stating now is the time to get this situation resolved once and for all. Kitty said she would rather take the cut than go through that. Jerry said that we need to be soft gloved with this but if we don’t stir the pot a little we won’t have any effect. Jerry recommended sending a letter to invite the public to an open forum discussion about what the library will do if the budget cut is passed. The major question is, do we have time between now and Monday to do that? Joy Shepherd said that would be a great idea when it comes to the Big Green Switch project but we don’t have time with this issue. She said that she does feel strongly about this. George Anne said that it’s funny that Martin just spoke about the community and the county working together as one. Martin said that it’s a power struggle. He had a discussion with Doug Kennon and that’s what it comes down to. George Anne pointed out that the budget committee aren’t all from the City of Wynne or Cross County.

Kitty asked what the procedure was for getting on the agenda at the Quorum Court meeting. Joy said that you call Melanie Winkler, the County Clerk, and ask to be put on the agenda. The supposed reason for the cut is that we receive a millage. Joy said that they should consider building maintenance over utilities. It’s been a 35 year partnership and to take it away now doesn’t make sense. Something is going to have to be cut and she’s definitely not willing to fire someone. Mayor Bob Stacy said that we need to lay a guilt trip. The City covers the Senior Citizen Building and they don’t have too. George Anne asked how many people are willing to pay to add a new wing on a building they don’t own? That’s what the Friends of the Library did. Joy said that Becca Jackson recommended that we have all of our kids reading along the wall during the meeting. Reta said that she doesn’t see a logical reason for them to cut the library. When Judge Sanders is asked if it’s retaliation for the Big Green Switch Project, he always says no.

Martin Smith said that the opposition we face is the people who say that they’re fine with staying where we are or moving backwards. Jim Luker is one of those people. George Anne said that the young people are the ones who will be here when all of the nay-sayers are gone. This is for their future.

The trustees then asked who was going to speak at the meeting. Joy said that she’s very passionate about this. John Paul pointed at that she is vice chair. They discussed drafting a response but decided just to let Joy talk about why she loves the library and to state the Board’s case. Jerry Harvey brought up the fact that the judge has the power to veto but John Paul said it’s only to veto the entire budget. Mayor Stacy said that he couldn’t imagine them approving a budget that they’ve just been presented. The trustees said that we need to be there to make an impact. Everyone in the room should make calls to friends and family to rally support. It doesn’t just need to be staff members doing this. We don’t want our response to be personal. John Paul said that he heard about the proposed cuts back in August or September at a Downtown Revitalization Meeting. He went and spoke with Lynn Blake and he said he would take it into consideration. Martin Smith said that the historical society, county, and the library should all be working together.

Asti said to make sure that we keep the physical building out of the conversation because that could hurt us when it comes to the Big Green Switch Project. Whitney asked what the Friends of the Library needed to do? John Paul suggested that we send an email out to all of the paying members to let them know what we’re up against and ask them to come and support us. George Anne said we could use the Chocolate Feast list.

**Feasibility Study Discussion**

The floor was now open to discuss the results of the Feasibility Study and the decision to proceed or to drop the Big Green Switch Project. It was pointed out that the Downtown Revitalization Committee has already purchased one of the buildings in question and the Wynne Economic Development Committee has placed on option on the Appliance Repair building that will expire on December 31st. John Paul explained that the option prevents someone from buying the building out from under us. Joy said that she is more towards the 100% support mark for this project but she’s not passionate about it yet. She still hears negativity in the community about it. She is for the project though. George Anne asked if we could approach the WEDC to see if they would be willing to extend the option on the building. Martin said that they don’t meet again until January so we won’t have time. The Downtown Revitalization group wants to go to fight the flood issue. Another option would be if someone offered to purchase the building for us. John Paul replied that the Trustees had the study, they had answers to their questions. If they did not, parties were present that could answer those questions. George Anne Draper questioned the flooding, and John Paul referred her to the Mayor. The Mayor discussed addressing the flood issue, and Martin Smith gave several options to help and said that there are lots of grant opportunities for this type of project. John Paul again asked the Board if there were questions. Hearing none, John Paul asked why the Board was continuing to wait to make a decision. Kitty mentioned that it needed to wait until after the Monday Quorum Court session. John Paul questioned what the board would wait on then? He reminded the Board that continued waits will likely mean the loss of City support, and the likely sale of the properties. Mayor Stacy said that the City was committed to do something to replace City Hall, whether it involved the library property or not. He said they can’t wait forever, and the council will get frustrated if a decision is not made soon and choose another option. George Anne again asked if the city is willing to deal with the flooding issue. Mayor Stacy said they are willing to work on it. Whether or not the trustees decide to proceed with the Big Green Switch, he’s going to pursue those opportunities. People like to jump on a bandwagon and right now safety and flooding are the issues they are clinging too. Kitty said that the Trustees needed to vote on whether to proceed. Reta called for a vote, which was as follows:

Jerry – yes

Kitty – yes

George Anne – yes

Joy – yes

Reta – no

The Trustees voted to proceed with the Big Green Switch project. John Paul offered a reminder that the trustees have an ethical obligation now that they have voted, even if someone voted against, to stand by the decision and be consistent with conversations in the public. He asked Mayor Stacy to ask how long they are willing to wait to purchase the library building? The Mayor stated they could wait some, but not forever. They could wait while the proper work, environmental and flood studies, and reasonable fundraising took place. Martin brought up ideas to phase the project and focus first on the Burnett Drug Buiding and move so that the City Hall could move in. It has less square feet but it would be a start.

**Adjournment:** Kitty moved to adjourn the meeting. George Anne seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 5:48pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire Miller, MLS

Deputy Director