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TMLDA COMMUNIQUE

Spring 2005

Texas Municipal Library Directors Association is an Affiliate of the Texas Municipal League

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

RoseAleta Laurell

TMLDA is an affiliate organization to the Texas Municipal League and provides Library Directors the opportunity to network with other Directors as well as members of City Councils, Mayors and City Managers. It has been my experience that City Managers pay a whole lot of attention to what is coming out of TML. I encourage you, as a member of TMLDA, to spread the word with your fellow librarians about just how important this organization is to Librarians.

TML Conference will be held in Grapevine this year and I have always found this to be an excellent way to meet and talk to Council members and my City Manager, plus the Conference provides so many opportunities to learn what other cities are doing and how they are doing it.

Marleen Watling, President-Elect, and I will be working on putting together a program that we hope will be of interest to librarians and to City Managers and Councilmembers. I also encourage you to volunteer to work in the TMLDA Booth during the Conference. This is a fun way to get to meet many fellow municipal employees and our booth has always drawn a lot of attention. **People Like to Talk to Librarians!!!!**

If you have ideas you wish to share about a program for the Conference, please don't hesitate to contact me. My email is RoseAletaL@cablone.net.

TMLDA at TLA

Please plan to attend the
TMLDA Meeting at the
TLA Annual Conference
in Austin.

Tuesday, April 5, 2005
2:00 – 2:50 p.m.

TML Conference

Mark Your Calendars!
TML Annual Conference
October 26-28, 2005
Gaylord Texan Resort
Grapevine TX



TML Director's Report

by Joyce Baumbach

As your newly elected representative to the TML Board of Directors, I attended my first meeting in Austin on December 9 & 10. TML had an orientation for new members on the first day. TML did a nice job of providing a lot of background on the organization, its scope of services, goals, and objectives.

On the second day we got right down to business. Since this is a legislative year, TML is very busy with legislation. The board finalized the League's 2005 Legislative Program. It can be viewed at www.tml.org. The link to the program is right on the main page. TML's main legislative philosophy is to kill proposed bills that would be bad for cities. This is where they expend the majority of their resources. In the last legislative session, they monitored more than 1,200 bills or resolutions that were bad for cities. This year, they expect that number to grow.

The Board's next meeting is March 18 and I believe the majority of the agenda will once again concern the legislative session.

This is an update from the March 18, 2005 TML Board Meeting. Three issues that are currently in the legislature are of concern to cities and libraries. Material in quotes is from TML Legislative updates and literature.

First, is the issue on appraisal caps. HB 784 and HJR 35--"These bills would reduce the cap on annual increases in appraised value (the appraisal cap) from ten percent to five percent, and apply the cap to all real property. This would erode the city's tax base, shift property tax burdens, and result in property tax inequities. The current cap is ten percent for residential homesteads only. The reduction from ten to five percent would apply to both residential and commercial property."

Second issue is HB 1006. "This bill would require a popular vote if a city needs to raise its maintenance and operations property taxes by more than three percent, which is far less than municipal cost inflation. A city that needs more than a three percent increase would have to develop two budgets: one that would go into effect if the voters approve and another that would go into effect if the voters disapprove. Cities would probably cut budgets rather than call expensive elections."

Both bills will probably be debated on the house floor on Wednesday, March 23, 2005. There is a call out to urge Texas House Members to oppose both bills.

Third issue is HB 789-- Rep. Phil King's telecom bill. Rep King is expected to lay out a committee substitute to the bill he introduced. One of the provisions that could affect some libraries will be, and once again I quote from TML Legislative update, "...Would expand the current prohibition against cities offering telecommunications service to include information services such as broadband and wireless Internet (WiFi). The most controversial municipal provision of the bill relates to prohibiting cities from offering certain Internet, telecommunications, and information services. The provision in the filed version of the bill would have completely prohibited cities from offering to the public any kind of Internet service, including free Internet access at public libraries or Wi-Fi access at parks. Fortunately, the committee substitute for HB 789 will likely allow such services as free Internet access in libraries and municipally owned buildings, operating networks for governmental purposes, and operating networks for connecting governmental entities such as schools. The substitute is also expected to grandfather cities that are providing broadband service on or before January 1, 2005.

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Although the committee substitute will loosen the proposed restrictions on cities, it will still prohibit cities from offering broadband or Wi-Fi on a citywide basis.

Many city officials argue that providing services such as Wi-Fi and broadband is no different from operating a public library. They argue that private bookstores, such as Barnes and Noble, have not asked the legislature to close public libraries simply because citizens can check-out the same books that bookstores sell for a profit. The telecommunications industry argues that the prohibition is necessary to ensure that cities do not use taxpayer dollars to compete with private industry. City officials have argued that the free market basis for the municipal prohibition fails to make sense if the private sector is not serving a particular community. ..."

So right now, the committee substitute for HB 789 will still allow free Internet access in libraries, but this bears watching. Especially since on the last day to file house bills (3/11) Rep. Alonzo--Dallas proposed HB 3412 that relates to public use of computers in certain local public libraries. The bill reads, A municipal public library in a municipality with a population of more than 50,000: 1) shall provide computers with high-speed Internet access for use by the public; and 2) may charge a reasonable fee for use of the computers.

For the full articles on these issues see the March 18 legislative update on the TML page www.tml.org.



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Achievement of Excellence in Libraries Award Winners

The following libraries have received the Achievement of Excellence in Libraries Award. Letters of congratulations are on their way to city officials and arrangements will be made with each library for the award to be presented at a city council meeting. For additional information or questions please contact Marleen Watling, Award Committee Chair, at 817-952-2332.

Congratulations to all Libraries!

Bedford Public Library
Crowley Public Library
Denton Public Library
Euless Public Library
Flower Mound Public Library
Grand Prairie Public Library System
Harker Heights Public Library
Highland Park Library
Hurst Public Library
McKinney Memorial Public Library
Mesquite Public Library System
Plano Public Library System
Richardson Public Library
Richland Hills Public Library
Rita and Truett Smith Public Library
(Wylie TX)
Westbank Community Library
(Austin TX)

Achievement of Excellence in Libraries Award

This is a new annual award given by TMLDA to libraries that demonstrate their service excellence through the attainment of ten service criteria.

Many members wonder why another award when there are plenty of awards given by ALA, PLA, TLA, and regional systems. This award is given by the library directors affiliate group of the Texas Municipal League, the one organization that is familiar to your city's appointed and elected officials.

This award spotlights the many wonderful services your library provides and if awarded to your library ensures that your appointed and elected officials know about your good work.

Unlike many other awards presented by ALA, PLA, and TLA, the Achievement of Excellence in Libraries Award is presented not to just one or two libraries but to any library that can demonstrate their service excellence.

If a library receives the Achievement of Excellence in Libraries Award and wishes to have a presentation made at a city council meeting, TMLDA officers will be available to make the presentation.

For more information on the award and for a copy of the application please visit the TMLDA website at www.tmlda.org.

TMLDA Newsletter Editor

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