



DATE: October 29, 2024

TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

FROM: Councilmember Hamilton

Charmaine Arredondo, City Clerk
City Clerk's Office

Helena Stephens, Equity and Regional Policy Advisor
City Manager's Office

SUBJECT: Recommendation regarding Bellevue Library Advisory Board

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July, Council directed staff to conduct research, outreach and analysis and return to Council with a recommendation on the future status of the Bellevue Library Advisory Board (Board). Staff have concluded the work requested and will present a formal recommendation to sunset the Board at the October 29 Council meeting.

BACKGROUND

Library advisory boards were often established by individual cities whose libraries had been annexed to the King County Library System. Members of these community boards are appointed by, and serve in an advisory capacity to, City officials on matters regarding the KCLS community library they represent. They are not advisory to the KCLS, which has its own county-appointed board.

In 1993, the Bellevue Public Library was assumed by the King County Library System (KCLS). At the time, the Bellevue Board of Library Trustees (Trustees) served in an advisory role for all libraries within Bellevue. Shortly before the grand opening of the new Bellevue downtown library branch in 1993, the Council converted the existing Trustees into the current Bellevue Library Advisory Board. Chapter 3.67 BCC was amended to reflect the revised title and to modify the Board's role accordingly to:

- Make periodic reports and recommendations to the Council and City Manager related to KCLS library services and, to the extent requested by the City Manager, represent the City's interest before the KCLS Board, and
- Make studies regarding library buildings, property, or equipment and make recommendations to KCLS regarding rules and regulations for the libraries.

During the same year, the Council also signaled that the necessity of maintaining the Board should be discussed further after the downtown branch was open and fully functioning. Staff have reviewed past records and have been unable to locate any additional conversations

regarding the future of the Board or any affirmative actions to either maintain or sunset the Board until the question was posed earlier this year.

Library advisory boards have evolved substantially over time, with a steady trend of sunsetting boards due to redundancy or lack of purpose. Since 2017, Shoreline, Renton, Issaquah, Mercer Island, Snoqualmie, and Bothell have sunset their library advisory boards with the most recent sunsetting occurring in 2023. Of the 35 cities served by the KCLS, there are only eight library advisory boards remaining, including Bellevue, Duvall, Enumclaw, Kirkland, Lake Forest Park, Maple Valley, Redmond and Tukwila.

Over the past several months, the Board gathered information and met with Councilmember Hamilton and KCLS staff representatives to review the Bellevue Library Advisory Board's mission and purpose. As part of this process, the Board considered:

- City and library resources used to support the Board
- Nature of communications between the KCLS and the City
- Library volunteer needs
- Fundraising support.

After a review, the Board raised the following issues:

- A lack of a consistent purpose to develop a substantial and meaningful workplan
- Redundancy of role as the KCLS staff assumed many of the Board's duties as part of their work assignments
- The ongoing challenge to fill Board seats.

RECOMMENDATION

On October 2, the Board held a regularly scheduled meeting and unanimously voted to recommend to Council that the Board be sunset. ***Staff recommend, in concurrence with the Bellevue Library Advisory Board, Council sunset the Bellevue Library Advisory Board effective at the end of 2024.*** Should the Council determine to proceed with the recommendation to sunset the Board, the KCLS staff will assume the responsibility of making periodic reports and recommendations to the Council and City Manager related to KCLS library services. The KCLS will provide an annual report to the Bellevue City Council, usually in the first half of the year. The KCLS annual report to Council will include Bellevue-specific data on library usage, activities, and issues of interest.

All other responsibilities of the Board will be transferred to the KCLS and/or the King County Library System Advisory Board of Trustees, comprised of seven individuals appointed by the King County Executive and confirmed by the King County Council. This could include studies or actions related to library buildings, property, equipment or rules and regulations for the libraries.

Maintaining a strong connection between KCLS and the City is important. Therefore, throughout the year, the City's Intergovernmental Relations staff will liaise with the KCLS on concerns elevated from the public, questions identified from Councilmembers, event coordination, and library facilities. In the rare instance where the Council may want additional input from the public on significant facility changes that have heightened public interest (new construction of a library

branch, major remodel of an older branch, etc), the Council can consider enacting an ad hoc committee. As an example, after their library board was sunset years earlier, Mercer Island created an ad hoc committee to address the major remodel of their library. The committee was put in place for the sole purpose of addressing the major remodel and then was disbanded once the remodel was complete.

OPTIONS:

1. Direct staff to prepare the necessary legislation to sunset the Bellevue Library Advisory Board, to be brought back at the December 10, 2024 meeting for consideration and action.
2. Do not direct staff to prepare the necessary legislation to sunset the Bellevue Library Advisory Board and provide alternative direction to staff.