



City and County of Denver

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Dennis Gallagher

Auditor

August 1, 2011

Honorable Michael Hancock, Mayor
Honorable Chris Nevitt, Council President
1437 Bannock Street, Suite 350
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Mayor Hancock & Council President Nevitt:

As I think you well know libraries and the books and materials they contain are very dear to me. They are one of my great passions and one of the city's great resources.

For centuries libraries have been the foundation of our civilization and the repository of the collected wisdom of the ages. From the great library at Alexandria to our own wonderful library system in Denver the advancement of human knowledge has relied on libraries. And as the loss of the great library at Alexandria was devastating so too would be the loss of our Denver library system.

It is vital that we maintain our superb library system and provide access to it for all of our citizens; to educate and entertain us; to enlighten and brighten our lives.

However, the severe budget situation our city faces – too many needs and not enough resources - threatens the viability if not the very existence of our libraries. We must do something to ensure the vitality of our libraries while relieving the budget burden on the city's general fund.

But creating a whole new bureaucracy and another level of government is not the way to address the problem. Additionally, giving away the vast and valuable assets of our library system is irresponsible and unnecessary. As Auditor, looking out for the taxpayer's interests, I strongly oppose this.

There is a simpler and better solution.

How?

Books, not Bureaucracy.

By authorizing a property tax mill levy dedicated to the library budget – without creating a library district – our library system can be fully funded; the strain on our general fund will be relieved (also possibly helping to eliminate the ongoing structural shortfall the City is experiencing); and the citizens of Denver will not lose the valuable assets they spent their hard-earned dollars to acquire.

To promote open, accountable, efficient, and effective government by performing impartial reviews and other audit services that provide objective and useful information to improve decision making by management and the people.

We will monitor and report on recommendations and progress towards their implementation.

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Don't give away for free our libraries, the land they sit on, the books, paintings, western history collection, furniture, vehicles and everything else that Denver citizens have spent over \$200,000,000 to acquire. \$200,000,000 is a lot of money to have its value just given away. Rather, let's keep those assets and create a dedicated source of funding to maintain and enhance them.

Funding our libraries with additional dollars through the current system is not only better than establishing another level of bureaucracy and government, but even the proponents of the special district acknowledge it is a lower-cost way of accomplishing the same goal. A dedicated mill levy of approximately 3.6 mills (less than the 3.7 mills being proposed) would generate enough money to fund a first-class library system. Rather than see our system deteriorate or cease to exist, I believe our citizens would support this, and I am prepared to lead the effort to ensure it. However, I don't believe they want an additional and unnecessary level of government – and I would lead the opposition to that.

Let's fix this problem but let's not do it by creating even more red tape and without giving the store away. We once owned McNichols Arena and all the revenue it generated for the city but then we gave it away and got nothing in return. We once owned Mile High Stadium and all the revenue it generated for the city, but then we gave it away and got nothing in return. I will vigorously oppose any such additional give away.

We can have a wonderful library system without giving it away – Books, Not Bureaucracy!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis J. Gallagher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dennis J. Gallagher
Auditor

cc: Members of City Council
Denver Registered Neighborhood Organizations
Denver County Democratic Party Executive Committee
Denver County Republican Party Executive Committee