



San Francisco Public Library

Date: March 22, 2007
To: Ed Harrington, City Controller
From: Luis Herrera, City Librarian
Cc: Fred Abadi, Director of Department of Public Works
Subject: Branch Library Improvement Program Review

I'm following up with our discussion regarding a request to undertake a review of the Library's Branch Library Improvement Program (BLIP). As you know, in 2000 voters in San Francisco approved a \$106 million capital bond program that called for the renovation of 19 branch libraries, property acquisition to construct five new libraries to replace leased facilities; and the property acquisition of a new support services building. The primary goal was to provide seismic safety improvements, accessibility upgrades and modernization. To date, the library has completed four projects including the acquisition of the Support Services Building at 190 9th Street.

The request for this review results from many factors: growing concerns about escalating construction costs; the challenges of attracting enough bidders to have a competitive bid climate; and an ambitious community engagement process that poses delays to original project schedules. For these reasons, the BLIP is facing a significant shortfall to compete all the projects.

In March, the Library Commission took action to transfer funds from five remaining projects (Bayview, Golden Gate, Merced, North Beach and Ortega) in order to complete eleven active and upcoming projects. This action followed a series of commission meetings devoted to public discussions on the status of the BLIP.

During these discussions, the Commission felt it was important to undertake an independent review of the program as it enters a critical juncture in the implementation of remaining projects. The review also has the concurrence of Fred Abadi at the Department of Public Works who manages the program. The recommended scope of the review should include the following elements:

- Investigating the methodology in arriving at the construction cost estimates. How should the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Library determine the appropriate escalation cost factors for the respective projects?

- Identifying the issues impacting the bidding climate and the program's ability to attract an ample number of contractors to establish a competitive bidding environment. What should DPW and the Library do to maximize the number of bidders?
- Identifying key lessons and best practices with regard to project timelines and schedules. How can we develop a realistic schedule for the remaining projects?
- Identifying best practices in managing a large number of capital projects. What management oversight, structure and program support best ensures a successful completion of the program?

I would like to present information on the scope and timeline of the assessment to the Library Commission at their April 19 meeting. Please let me know at your earliest convenience your thoughts and suggestions on the feasibility of the proposed elements for the review. Thank you.