

## **Frazier Community Library Timeline / Survey Answers**

**I want to thank everyone who took the time to ask questions as it pertained to the Frazier School District and the Community Library. The district tried to address all questions that were received and what led to the decision to ask the Community Library to vacate.**

Below is a timeline of discussions which have taken place between Frazier School District and the Community Library Board of Directors.

The partnership between the Frazier School District and the creation of the Community Library has been in existence for well over sixty years. During this time, there have been an abundance of educational benefits and programming provided due to this relationship.

However, the landscape in our country, and most importantly within school districts across the nation, has changed. There have been 377 school shootings since Columbine in 1999 and over 349,000 students have experienced some form of gun violence in schools in the last 25 years, as per the Washington Post. The enormous responsibility placed on school leadership, district personnel, and local law enforcement to protect our students is unprecedented.

In October 2018, the high school principal and the district librarian met with the Community Library to discuss ideas on renovating the library space. Discussions were met with opposition and the idea formulated the district wanted to put a "coffee shop / lounge" in the current space. The school district is not closing the high school library and turning it into a lounge area.

In April 2019, a Student Library Improvement Team presented Dr. Henderson with a slideshow regarding the updates they would like to see in the library space. Students addressed the furnishings in the library and the need for them to be upgraded to a learning environment conducive to students needs and similar to most modern school libraries across the nation. This included an area for students to collaborate with one another, comfortable seating, ability to use technology, and a variety of furnishings that would meet the students' needs. In addition, and upon the request of our students, the plan was to add a cafe style atmosphere in a portion of the library. The district's intent was to utilize students in the Business career pathway to manage and operate this café as an educational experience for those pursuing business /management type career goals. To date, the reaction of the renovations to the library from the students has been nothing but positive.

During 2020, discussions halted due to COVID.

### **Did the district throw away books?**

In October 2020, the district received an email from the Community Library Board requesting the list of 1,008 "weeded books," be placed on Board agenda for approval to discard. This list was Board approved and the books were discarded. The Superintendent, nor any staff, have thrown books away or "ripped up" books. After the most recent weeding done, the students carried the books to the hallway area and we offered them to the community for free. These books were then recycled once people had the

opportunity to come and take what they were interested in. Of note, not many books were taken as the Superintendent oversaw the entire process.

Weeding is a process used in libraries to keep offerings current. Library books are weeded routinely. Books are chosen to be weeded if they are obsolete, in bad condition, or have not been checked out over the last several years so we can make room for new books. The District Librarian, along with the Community Library staff worked together to compile the books that needed to be weeded.

The current trend throughout the country with regard to getting rid of certain books is not the case when weeding books. We have never recommended removing a specific book based on the content of the book.

## **Memorial Books**

In regards to memorial books being destroyed, the Superintendent gave multiple directives that during the weeding process, memorial books were not to be destroyed. The District Librarian along with the Community Library Board, were to ensure that no memorial library books were to be removed.

## **Renovations and Remodeling of the Library**

There were multiple communications between the District and the Community Library spokesperson with regard to the remodel of the library which was brought with opposition and defiance. The Community Library staff asked that a committee be formed to address the renovations. Members of this committee included; administrative staff, Board members, students and Community Library personnel. The district invited the Library Board to meet with PEMCO designers to discuss the layout and furniture options. The Community Library staff was disrespectful and impolite to the PEMCO designers. This behavior resulted in the Superintendent ending the meeting prematurely and apologizing on behalf of the district.

Communication continued back and forth between the district and Library spokesperson for several months. In March 2022, the district requested three (3) years of financial statements from the Community Library. To date, we have received no financial information and are unable to answer several questions regarding the financials of the Community Library.

The district received communication informing us the Community Library had a community donor who would cover the cost of the carpeting in the Library. The carpeting was ordered by the Community Library through Ferris in Uniontown at a cost of \$26,290. In September 2022, and after the carpet order was placed by the Community Library and its Board, the Community Library spokesperson informed the Superintendent the community donor would not cover the carpeting expense, if the Library did not get the renovation done their way. As a good faith gesture, the district covered the entire cost of the carpeting.

At the direction of the Community Library spokesperson, and unbeknownst to the district, the carpet installers arrived at the school unannounced to install the upstairs carpet. The district sent them home due to the fact they did not have clearances, and requested the install be done over the weekend.

Of note, the furniture portion of the renovation funding was earmarked to come from the district's capital reserve account for capital improvements. The furniture cost was \$47,000.

The furniture that was removed from the library when the new furniture arrived, was made available and delivered to the Borough and the Historic Society. No furniture that was able to be used was thrown away.

## **Finances**

The district does not receive any funds from the Mary Fuller Frazier Trust account.

The Community Library does not rent space from the district nor do they cover any of their operational costs. The district has budgeted \$4,000 annually to support operational costs. The district also covers their custodial costs and helps with all their technology needs. The district receives no financial support from the Community Library or the Borough of Perryopolis. In addition, \$5,000 is budgeted to purchase high school level books and subscriptions each school year.

The district does write and secure grants for many projects within the district. If you are aware of any private grant funding available, please share the information with our administrators.

## **Risk Assessment**

The Frazier School District requested a risk assessment to be completed by the Pennsylvania State Police. The assessment was scheduled in March 2022 and in May 2022 we received the results. The document was created for the district administration to help support its security efforts and cannot be shared with the public due to the nature of the report. During the risk assessment, the police indicated the multiple entrance points into the high school from the library was a major concern. Many have questioned why the doors cannot simply be locked. The interior doors to the high school are not permitted to be locked due to the fact that those within the library need to have means to exit the library in the event of an emergency. Because locking the doors is not a viable option due to safety reasons, several recommendations provided by the Pennsylvania State Police were forwarded to the Community Library, but were all denied. These included a sign-in/sign-out sheet so that the district could be made aware of those who entered the building while district employees were not present; to complete a use of facilities form when holding public fundraising events; utilizing the restroom within the library and not the school district's bathrooms outside of the library; and lastly, the district requested security be present during operating hours and events. These recommendations have been ignored.

Although the Community Library is not open during regular school hours, the risk of someone who is unknown to the district entering the building with ill intent is a safety and security concern. Due to having three access points from the library into the school building, it is impossible to seal off access into the school building when it is not in use by the school district. The doors need to open into the building for safety reasons, therefore they cannot be locked.

It has been recommended that we install cameras or alarms on the doors, as well as replace the existing doors. The district already has cameras present, however the suggestions to remedy the situation are not in the best interest of our students and are costly in an older school building.

To date, the district is covering the cost of security during community hours and events. The district has asked for reimbursement for the additional costs.

As with any outside organization that utilizes district facilities/property, they are responsible for providing their own security, if the public is involved or attends the function. Athletic practices which are not open to the public do not require security.

Even though there have been no identifiable safety issues with local authorities over recent years, the district must address safety concerns identified by the Pennsylvania State Police.

Of note, because of security concerns, the high school entrance area will be renovated this summer. The cost of removing the current doors and installing a vestibule area for security purposes will cost an estimated \$370,000. This project is being funded by federal grant monies.

Safety and security is not a topic for public discussion and/or debate.

### **Relocation of the Community Library**

The current library space has been renovated and will continue to be a library for the high school students. Teachers are beginning to utilize the space for classroom lectures/work areas because of the updated technology access and a change in the learning environment for the student. The district will consider reassessing summer availability of the library to the students.

Moving the Community Library to a standalone location is an option. They would be permitted to relocate to any area they choose. Once the Community Library relocates, our librarian will assist the Community Library in determining the division of books.

Students becoming lifelong learners is an accurate statement and not a contradiction by removing the Community Library. Updating the library to the needs of the students is a responsibility of the school district.

We do not wish to dissolve the Frazier Community Library, we simply cannot share the space and maintain a safe and secure environment for our student body and staff.

### **Fundraising Events**

The district had nothing to do with the cancellation of the Bunco fundraiser. The district was notified by the Community Library spokesperson the event was being cancelled.

Also of note, the "Meet the Candidate" event that was to be held in the library was cancelled due to the district's use of facilities form noting the following, "At no time shall any school facility or part thereof be extended, either free or for a charge, to any group whose intention is to pursue activities of either a religious or a political nature."

As previously noted, the Community Library would have needed to complete a "use of facilities form," and provide security for any event. In fact, there is currently a Community Library fundraiser scheduled in the library on May 8, 2023. A use of facilities form was partially completed for the event and recently submitted by the Community Library staff. This event coincides with a co-curricular high school club and the district's club sponsor plans on attending.

No charges are imposed to the Community Library for holding any event nor does the district receive any funds made from the events.

## **Communication at Board Meetings**

There are procedures that are to be followed at Board meetings regarding public comment. There are also things that cannot be discussed in an open forum such as school safety and security, student discipline, personnel matters, litigation or legal matters.

Public comments do occur at the beginning and end of every Board meeting and welcomed. There have been many meetings that have occurred that the Board has changed direction, or their minds, regarding decisions that needed to be made after listening to input from parents or the citizens of the school community. However, there are also times that comments from the public do not sway the Board's decision or vote. Regarding people being silenced, there are certain rules and time limits that are to be followed during meetings regarding public comment. These are not open question and answer sessions or a forum for debate. They are strictly to provide the public's ability to weigh in on decisions before the Board.

## **Social Media Defamation**

From the discussions in 2018 to date, the Community Library spokesperson along with Community Library Board members have been unwilling to discuss and have ignored requests from the school district. The Community Library's current Facebook account, which includes comments controlled by the Community Library staff, have proven to be discourteous and defamatory filled with insults directed at the School Board and the District Superintendent. In addition, the current security guard in which the district has provided, has been harassed regarding his presence during Community Library hours. The district does not condone this type of behavior and will not partake in the demeaning of others as it sets a poor example for our students.

It is portrayed that the district refuses to meet with the Community Library. There have been multiple communications between the two groups during the last several years regarding the library upgrades and changes that will occur. Throughout these exchanges, the district has been met with resistance and an unwillingness to collaborate on modifications unless it was done "their way".

Over time, it is obvious these groups do not see "eye to eye," on issues or concerns of the district. At this time, we have asked the Community Library to vacate to another location within the community to serve its patrons.

## **Conclusion**

From the onset, the Superintendent, administration, and the Board of Directors were excited to provide a new and exciting learning space for our students and community. They have involved the Community Library throughout the process regarding paint, carpet, furniture, and the layout or vision of the library space. And although the Superintendent and Board have remained professional at all times, the same cannot be said for the Community Library or its Board. Throughout this process the treatment of our

administration and Board has been less than professional. The Community Library continues to denigrate district employees and Board members through their social media page and throughout the community.