



Chatham County, NC

Legislation Text

File #: 20-3414, **Version:** 1

Vote on a request to approve Chatham County Public Libraries submitting a grant application to the State Library to request funding to hire a consultant to conduct a community assessment.

Action Requested: Vote on a request to approve Chatham County Public Libraries proceeding in submitting a grant application to the State Library.

Introduction & Background: During the past twenty years the 3 branches have received facility improvements. Some buildings were refurbished and a joint-use library was constructed on the community college campus in Pittsboro. These improvements have benefitted the community by accommodating a growing collection of reading, listening and viewing materials, increasing access to technology, and space enhancements to provide locations for meetings, and programming for adults and children. After many years of being in a regional library, Chatham County became an independent library system in the past decade. During the past year the library partnered with CCPS to encourage academic success by developing the PASS program to create fine-free student accounts by using their school ID numbers to check out library materials.

The library staff's customer services skills were rated positively on the biennial survey. Each branch collects data related to circulation, program attendance, and general usage of the libraries. The statistics have indicated a disparity in attendance at events and in the number of items checked out.

Coming up with a plan to provide more equitable library services requires knowledge from a variety of sources. Input from residents, stake holders, elected officials, county employees, business leaders, agency members, and all community partners is necessary in obtaining an accurate picture of the needs of current and future library users.

Discussion & Analysis: Previously the library has benefitted by contracting with consultants who made recommendations about space needs, building requirements, organizational structure, and technology requirements. At this point in time it makes sense to enlist the professional services of a consulting firm to assist in gathering, organizing, analyzing information to create a roadmap for the future.

A consultant who meets the criteria stipulated in the RFP for Chatham County Public Libraries needs assessment has been selected. You need to add the consultants name/firm once selected. In addition to having experience throughout North Carolina, she was a resident of the county for 13 years.

How does this relate to the Comprehensive Plan: Completing a Library Needs Assessment is part of providing social services and support that seek to minimize the impacts to those in poverty. The library is a significant community resource, but not everyone recognizes the value of this county service. Entire families can benefit from the materials and services. Assisting with online job applications, helping students to complete assignments, early literacy skill development, destressing activities such as viewing DVDs are all examples of services that help bring about family stability.

There are many residents that are already utilizing these services and the goal is to increase this number to have a more fully engaged population.

Budgetary Impact: The library is looking to fund the services of the consultant by applying for a grant from the State Library. The grant requires a 25% match from the county. The total cost for the assessment is \$24,000 and the county's contribution would be \$6000.

Recommendation: Motion to approve the library applying for a grant to fund the fees associated with hiring a qualified consultant.