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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Board Meets

Establishes Public/Private Task Force to Examine Funding Sustainability

(PITTSBURGH, PA – February 23, 2010) As Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh’s Board of Trustees met on February 22, the focus was on long-term sustainable funding and community engagement.

Last year, the Library was one of the top ten news stories as it struggled to close the gap between increasing costs and declining revenues, which were due primarily to state budget cuts and level RAD funding. The Library projected a \$5 million deficit by 2014 and presented an Action Plan, which included service reductions and branch consolidations and closures. That Action Plan is currently on deferral for one year as the Library works to find long-term dedicated funding.

Current funding

The Library’s current funding situation is still critical at both state and local levels. Governor Ed Rendell has proposed a 2% cut in the Public Library subsidy on top of the 27% cut that was made in 2009. RAD funding is expected to stay flat as local sales tax revenues continue to be negatively affected by the national economy. The City of Pittsburgh is providing the Library with one-time stop-gap funding of \$600,000 for 2010 to keep Library facilities open while it seeks long-term funding.

Public/Private Task Force

The Honorable Frank J. Lucchino, former board chair of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, current board member and library advocate, will chair a 10-member task force on Sustainable Library Funding. Comprising public officials and community members, the task force will explore alternative funding models and sources of funding to sustain the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh system.

“For years our libraries have struggled with insufficient funding, while the costs to operate them continue to climb,” said Judge Lucchino, a long-time Library Board member. “The goal of this Task Force is to identify a diversified and recurring funding base that will provide the Library with some level of funding stability and opportunity for growth each year.”

The work of the task force will begin in the spring with the group expected to recommend a sustainable model of operational funding. Members of the group include: Ron Baraff, Director of Museum Collections and Archives at the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area (Community Representative); James Barnes, Partner, Reed Smith; Senator Jay Costa, Pennsylvania Senator, 43rd Senatorial District (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Board Member); Darla Cravotta, Special Projects Coordinator for Allegheny County Executive’s Office (County Executive’s Representative); Councilman Bruce Kraus, City Council District 3 (Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Board Member); Scott M. Lammie, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, UPMC Insurance Services; Grant Oliphant, President and CEO, The Pittsburgh Foundation; Sabrina Saunders, Manager of Youth Policy, Office of Mayor Luke Ravenstahl (Mayor’s Representative); and Representative Chelsa Wagner, Pennsylvania State Representative, 22nd Legislative District.

Community Engagement

Also during the meeting, the Board of Trustees discussed the importance of an expanded community engagement process.

“We believe that engaging our community in dialogue is important,” said Jacqui Fiske Lazo, Board Chair. “In the coming year, we hope to achieve a mutual understanding among board, staff and community members about the future of the Library in terms of both funding and services.”

The Library will work closely with community residents and leaders in the coming year. Community residents can also communicate through the public officials who sit on the Library’s Board of Trustees. For 2010, these public representatives are: City Council President, Darlene Harris; City Councilman Patrick Dowd; City Councilman Bruce Kraus; City Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak; County Councilman John DeFazio; County Councilman Chuck McCullough; Mayor’s appointee Kristen M. Baginski; Pittsburgh School Board President Theresa Colaizzi; County Executive’s appointee Barbara Logan and County Executive’s appointee Alice Mitinger.

Capital Projects

The Board’s full agenda also included discussion of capital projects, specifically the renovation currently underway at CLP-East Liberty, the proposed merger of CLP – Knoxville and CLP – Carrick and the proposed renovation of CLP – South Side.

“While the Library continues to seek ongoing, dedicated funding to sustain operations, it also faces an aging infrastructure,” said Barbara K. Mistick, President and Director of Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. “Nearly half of our current facilities require significant upgrades in heating and cooling systems, handicapped accessibility, security and technology. Experience has taught us that renovated locations are more efficient to operate, result in increased use and provide economic development benefits for the surrounding neighborhoods.”

The Board agreed to proceed with the pre-planning process for the renovation of CLP – South Side, which has been a priority for renovation since 2005. A grant from the Community Infrastructure and Tourism Fund (CITF) was previously awarded to pay for the planning process and must be spent by June 2010. In addition, there are other committed, time-sensitive grants which have been designated specifically for use for capital expenses related to CLP – South Side. Funding extensions will be sought while Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh continues to seek long-term dedicated funding for library operations.

CLP-East Liberty is expected to re-open in the fall of 2010. The proposed merger CLP-Knoxville and CLP-Carrick will be a topic of community discussion during 2010.

Private Fundraising

While most of the Library’s operational funding comes from public sources and will continue to come from public sources, the Library has made significant progress in increasing the percentage of its operational funding that comes from private individuals, businesses and foundations. With the work of a dedicated development team, private giving has increased from 1% to 6% of the Library’s operating budget between 2006 and 2009. Throughout 2009, the Library made it very easy for customers to give, in person, by mail, online or through donation jars at all check-out counters and the request to pay fines or “round up” fines. Through its fundraising campaigns, the Library raised more than \$800,000 in unrestricted gifts to its operating budget and an additional \$500,000 in restricted gifts. In just two years, the number of gifts to the Library has increased by 67% and the number of donors has increased by 33%. In 2010, the Library will continue to seek donations from individual community members through email and direct mail appeals sent regularly throughout the year. In April, the Library will enhance its successful Donor Plus program, where customers can opt to donate \$35 - \$50 for a special Library card.

Library Services in the 21st Century

The board has eight Life Trustees who, given their long-term commitment to and experience with the Library, are in a unique position to work with staff to examine the strategic questions about the future of Library service. This group will consider best practices related to the delivery of library services and how Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh can best fulfill its mission.

The Library previously announced that the Colcom Foundation awarded a \$150,000 grant to the Library in support of outreach services for children and teens in the City of Pittsburgh. Outreach programs will bring library services into the community, with emphasis on providing children greater access to literacy opportunities. The Library is also exploring the possibility of bringing collections, literacy programs, digital resources and computer instruction to underserved neighborhoods through mobile units. This is an example of the type of services to be considered for the future.

In other business the Board agreed to move forward with refunding its current bond issue in order to obtain a lower interest rate. The discussion of open board meetings has been deferred due to pending litigation. Additionally, the Board reviewed year-end statistics for library use. In 2009, the Library hosted 2.3 million visitors and circulated 3.6 million items. The Library provided more than 8 million minutes of free wireless internet access. The Library will release its complete and audited 2009 Annual Report in May.

Community members interested in learning more about Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh and how they can help protect Pittsburgh's library system may view information online at www.carnegielibrary.org.

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About Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Engaging our Community in Literacy and Learning

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh contributes to the educational attainment, economic development, and cultural enrichment of the region. Through critical services such as early learning programs for children, job search assistance and computer and Internet access, the Library fosters lifelong learning and is a renowned leader among the nation's libraries. With more than 2 million visitors and 3.5 million items borrowed each year, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is the region's most visited asset and one of the largest public libraries in Pennsylvania. Established in 1895 by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie as a public trust to be funded by the community, the Library derives approximately 90% of its annual operating budget from public or government sources, including the Allegheny County Regional Asset District (RAD), the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the City of Pittsburgh.