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CONTACT:

Elizabeth Carter – Tel: 719-331-3877

Save Rockrimmon Library

email: eliz_carter@yahoo.com

MEDIA ADVISORY:

Community Demands Action from County Commissioners and PPLD Board

Save Rockrimmon Library Organization Fuels Unstoppable Grassroots Support

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO – November 18, 2024 – *Save Rockrimmon Library*, a rapidly growing grassroots coalition, invites local media to witness and cover the next pivotal steps in our campaign to reverse the Pikes Peak Library District (PPLD) Board of Trustees' decision to close the Rockrimmon Library on December 1st. Our organization will present well-researched arguments and advocate on behalf of the community in a formal appeal to the County Commissioners and the Pikes Peak Library District (PPLD) Board of Trustees. We are requesting a postponement and a thorough reconsideration of the decision to close the Rockrimmon Library.

The decision to close Rockrimmon Library was made at the PPLD's monthly board meeting on October 16th, where five of seven Trustees voted "yes" to close the library: President Dora Gonzales, Secretary/Treasurer Erin Bents, Angela Dougan, Internal Affairs Committee Chairperson Aaron Salt, Governance Committee Chairperson Julie Smyth, and Angela Dougan. The two "no" votes were from Vice President Scott Taylor and Public Affairs Committee Chairperson Debbie English.

Press Invited to Attend Two Critical Public Meetings

Upcoming Rally and Event Details: Our protests are expected to draw large crowds, and over 20 citizen speakers will present at each event.

1. County Commissioners Meeting – Tuesday, November 19, 9:00 AM

Where: El Paso County Commissioners' Chambers, Centennial Hall, 200 S. Cascade Ave.

2. PPLD Board of Trustees Meeting – Wednesday, November 20, 5:00 PM

Where: East Library, 5550 N. Union Blvd.

Recent News Developments

City Council Joins Efforts to Reconsider Library Closure:

City Council Members Donelson, Henjum, and Leinweber are signing a letter of request, calling for a postponement to close the library. As of this release, other council members have adopted a "hands-off" approach, refraining from taking immediate actionable steps. On November 25th the City Council is set to convene for a working session to vote on a resolution that seeks to delay the library closure, and they have invited the Pikes Peak Library District (PPLD) Board of Trustees to participate in a discussion.

Background:

Save Rockrimmon Library Sparks Unprecedented Local Backing

In just over two weeks, this grassroots movement has sparked unprecedented local backing, collecting \$47,555 in pledges, securing 1,199 petition signatures, achieving 3,400 unique website visitors, over 400 faithful email newsletter subscribers, and an active social media community. Save Rockrimmon Library has successfully engaged the City Council and County Commissioners in an ongoing dialogue. Members of the PPLD Board of Trustees continue to refuse engagement with our leadership and community members.

Save Rockrimmon Library Key Talking Points:

1. **Data Does Not Support Closure:** Save Rockrimmon Library has researched the PPLD's budget documents and Master Facilities Plan and found that the PPLD's data does not justify closing the Rockrimmon Library. Based on the PPLD's Master Facilities Plan, Rockrimmon Library has the second highest circulation and usage efficiency out of all 15 PPLD libraries and is one of the most cost-efficient libraries. This independent review of PPLD's data shows that the library's overall cost and usage are not a reason for closure but rather for expansion.
2. **Inadequate Stakeholder Process:** Until the October 16th vote, PPLD staff repeatedly assured the Northwest community that Rockrimmon Library was not in danger of closing. The Board of Trustees stated no closures would be considered until 2025. The Board misled City Council members, community leaders, and patrons. There were no Northwest community meetings to discuss either the PPLD Master Facilities Plan or the impending closure. While this group has reached out to the Board, the Board refuses to engage in a productive dialogue.
3. **Unjust Financial Priorities:** Rockrimmon Library operates at a lower cost per citizen than many other facilities. The area contributes approximately \$1.2 million annually in PPLD mill levy taxes, but the Rockrimmon Library costs approximately half as much to operate each year.
4. **Community Hub at Risk:** This library is essential for Northwest Colorado Springs. It serves as a gathering space for community meetings, senior programs, student resources, and more. There are no other community centers in the Northwest area. The City funds 4 community centers in other areas of the City, paying an average of \$707,000 each, or \$2.8 million total, every year.
5. **Concerns Over Equitable Access:** Other PPLD libraries cannot absorb Rockrimmon's patron base without causing significant inconvenience. Many residents specifically moved to the area for easy library access, and many patrons, including seniors and youth, rely on Rockrimmon Library for its accessibility. There is no bus service to this area, meaning residents without cars will lose access to libraries.

Overview from November 12th City Council Meeting: (reference: November 12th City Council Meeting: YouTube 1:32 minutes into the video <https://www.facebook.com/coscitycouncil/videos/1628875474683528/>)

On November 12, *Save Rockrimmon Library* mobilized close to 200 residents at a City Council meeting. Many rallied outside with signs; others filled the council chambers, overflowing into the side gallery, while 25 citizens delivered impassioned speeches. Despite this, the council could not agree to grant the PPLD \$200,000. Councilman Randy Helms explained his reasoning, "The question about the \$200,000 coming out of the Colorado Springs taxpayer's reserve. I can't agree with that win because the Pikes Peak library district has somewhere between 15 and \$20 million in reserves themselves, so it makes no sense..." Helms continued, "...try to get the (PPLD) board to reconsider this (their decision to close the library), or at least explain what's going on. I absolutely support having them come forward on a work session to be able to explain... we'll invite them, and we'll see what happens." Leinweber reiterated, "Look, we're not just saying

come and talk. We're saying come and seriously, explain yourself (PPLD Board), because we're losing confidence." In closing, councilman Donelson championed the Council Members to act, "Don't let this library close because it will be harder to bring it back once it closes."

Councilwoman Nancy Henjum - "We do need to do something. I don't know what that's going to look like exactly, but we will. We will do something. We will take action!"

Lynette Crow-Iverson - "We're committed to working on this and resolving it as much as we can from City Council."

Michelle Talarico - "I will support in any way that I humanly can, as a council member, as a person keeping this library open, or doing what these next steps are." "It is preposterous that they (PPLD Trustees) would be in the business of closing libraries and not opening them or expanding them. We can do better than this."

Chris Johnson, CFO, and Library Advocate - *"We're talking about a little more than a quarter million dollars in savings. Closing this library doesn't do the job, but it deprives our community."*

Marina Mayberry, Local Library Patron - *"This is a safe place for us. There are other libraries that, like the downtown one, I don't feel safe going there anymore."*

What's at Stake

The decision to close Rockrimmon Library could set a dangerous precedent for other facilities in the PPLD system. With the support of local media, we aim to amplify community voices, hold decision-makers accountable, and safeguard public access to essential resources.

Why This Story Matters

The closure of Rockrimmon Library would impact thousands of residents in Northwest Colorado Springs, where the library serves as a critical hub for education, community programs, and civic life. Despite the PPLD Board's assertions, *Save Rockrimmon Library* has uncovered flaws in the research data used to justify the closure. The group contends the decision is not only premature but also avoidable with existing funds and alternative solutions.

Help us save Rockrimmon Library and keep the public informed about this urgent community fight. Your coverage makes a difference!

More information on our Facebook Page – Save Rockrimmon Library and website

www.SaveRockrimmonLibrary.com

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