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MEDIA ADVISORY

Colorado's First Library Shutdown in 20 Years Hits Colorado Springs

PPLD Board of Trustees Continue to Stonewall Citizens

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO – November 22, 2024 – The Pikes Peak Library District (PPLD) Board of Trustees recently voted to shut down one of the city's top-performing library locations despite insufficient data to back their reasons for its closure. According to an AP Newswire search, this represents the state's first shutter of a public library in over 20 years. Over the past two decades, Colorado's public libraries have faced various challenges, including temporary closures due to health concerns and budget constraints. Despite these challenges, there have been no reports of permanent closures of public libraries in Colorado during this period.

Rockrimmon Library's doors are **set to close on December 1, 2024**, amid growing protests from community members seeking answers. And the Board of Trustees continues to stonewall citizens.

***** The citizens are requesting a one-year postponement and a thorough reconsideration of the decision to close the Rockrimmon Library.***

***** PPLD Trustees' behavior suggests that they are beholden to interests other than those of the citizens.***

Save Rockrimmon Library (www.SaveRockrimmon.com), a dedicated community action group and citizens from the El Paso County, Colorado area, 400+ strong gathered live and online, November 20, 2024, at the PPLD Board of Trustees meeting. The citizens protested and 53 signed up to speak in a final push to emphasize the community's opposition to the closure. The Trustees remained stiff-necked and unresponsive, with no resolution at the close of the meeting.

The Save Rockrimmon Library group has highlighted glaring concerns about PPLD's data transparency, budget priorities, and the future of public library access as the Board warns of additional library closures. The group has raised up to \$60,000 in pledges to keep Rockrimmon open for one year while an adequate stakeholder process is implemented and other options are explored.

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 PPLD's Master Facilities Plan, Rockrimmon Library has the 2nd highest circulation and 2nd highest usage efficiency out of all 15 PPLD libraries. This independent review of PPLD's data shows 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 Colorado Springs community that Rockrimmon Library was not in danger of closing. The Board of Trustees misled City Council members, community leaders, and patrons, stating no closures would be considered until 2025. 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 is one of the most cost-efficient PPLD libraries. It 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 four community centers in other areas of the city, paying an average of \$707,000 each (\$2.8 million total) every year. If the PPLD Board of Trustees does not fund this library, it is in the city's best interest to keep this community center open.

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.

6. Call Upon City Officials for Accountability: On November 12th, the group called upon the City Council and then met with County Commissioners on November 19th. Both meetings failed to hold the PPLD Board of Trustees accountable and ensure all other budgetary solutions were fully explored before the library closure. Closing libraries is not a sign of a healthy community and should be the last option considered.

Background:

Save Rockrimmon Library was formed in response to the October 2024 PPLD vote to close the Rockrimmon Library, a decision that many in the community feel was made without adequate public input and against the library's mission of providing "equitable access to physical and virtual spaces in safe and inclusive environments." This is a nonpartisan issue affecting residents of all ages and backgrounds in Northwest Colorado Springs. Rockrimmon Library's unique role as a community center provides critical services and spaces that cannot be replaced by other facilities in the area.

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