

Attention: Orange County Commissioners

I am writing this letter in support of the Orange County Library Task Force recommendations for Orange County library funding and interoperability.

As President of the Friends of Chapel Hill Public Library, I was one of a diverse group of participants on the Task Force and can attest to the thoughtful, respectful, and thorough discussion of issues that resulted in a clear consensus on recommendations.

Consensus on Orange County library funding: There was unanimous agreement that funding for all Orange County libraries should be both equitable and sustainable. Our recommended funding formula would allocate funding between Chapel Hill and other Orange County libraries based on population – recognizing the fact that all Orange County residents are taxpayers and should receive the benefits of such funding. Because an equitable formula would substantially increase the amount of existing library funding allocated to Chapel Hill, we also acknowledged that achieving an equitable percentage of funding for Chapel Hill would require some time and recommended regular step ups over a six year period. *I should note that the data we viewed included the surprising statistic that Orange County library funding per capita is below the North Carolina state average and this certainly supports the need to increase overall library funding.*

Consensus on library interoperability: We also reached a conclusion on interoperability – more specifically what interoperability should look like for our libraries. We did not see combining operating systems as either desirable (in terms of increasing access) or cost-effective (given the potential increase in staff resources required). We did, however, agree on the importance of good communication and coordination between Chapel Hill and Orange County staff, and it was clear from our meetings that this existed and was already being reflected in regular communication about services, policies and best practices, as well as occasional collaboration on public programming.

I am sure the thoughtful recommendations of this task force will receive your equally thoughtful consideration. I look forward to the development of a more equitable funding formula for Orange County libraries as well as continued progress in cooperation and collaboration between the Chapel Hill and Orange County Library Directors and staff.

Sincerely,

Karen Curtin, President
Friends of Chapel Hill Public Library