

Friends of the Jefferson Madison Regional Library

(Question 1): The cooperative agreement that has governed the operation of the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library (JMRL) for more than twenty years is currently being reviewed and updated for re-authorization by the five participating JMRL localities: Albemarle, Charlottesville, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson. **Please describe the extent of your personal experience with and knowledge of the JMRL system and explain what you will do to enhance the JMRL services provided to more than 1.2 million visitors.**

Last year the Board of Supervisors directed staff to study the regional system. A complete report by Roxanne White provided a clear analysis concluding that the benefit to the county was far greater than our cost invested, and that it would cost far more to provide comparable services on our own. The study also concluded that the costs of the Regional Library were lower on almost all counts than libraries in our benchmark communities. The Regional Library system is a huge asset to Albemarle County, one I intend to support.

(Question 2): A new JMRL branch library serving residents of Crozet and Western Albemarle County has been promised as part of Albemarle County's Capital Improvement Program for many years. A new library is part of the Crozet Master Plan adopted in 2004. Construction of a new library was approved in 2007 by the Board of Supervisors. The current library in Crozet, housed in a 1923 train depot, was labeled "unsafe" in 2010 by an outside consultant who called for the library "to be shut down until a safer one could be opened." **Please describe what you will do to get a new library built in Crozet and by what year.**

The community and county staff have anticipated the construction of the Crozet Library for many years. It entered the need list in 1988, when the library was found to be below state standards for the population then. It has survived 23 more years in a tiny facility due to the effectiveness of the staff, and it enjoys the support and loyalty of the residents of Western Albemarle due to its wonderful programs. The library is now "shovel ready." It was number 1 on the capital list just before the economic downturn and has safety issues which place it in the "emergency" category.

As our County financial advisors have suggested, there is extra borrowing capacity within our budget and our current tax rate. We should take this opportunity to construct the Crozet library now, while we can take advantage of the remaining bit of reduced project costs and the extremely low borrowing cost, half of the rate several years ago. Before making this decision, we must be assured that our revenue values are within the anticipated range. The only good reason to postpone would be if real estate values fell again in 2011, to prevent the County from entering debt it could not pay back.