

Library Town Hall Summary

- After pushback from residents to their initial decision in July to leave Pamunkey Regional Library (PRL), the Board of Supervisors have imposed a **deadline of December 31, 2024** to negotiate a regional library contract with Hanover and Goochland County.
- The Board has advised that if “good faith” negotiations fail with Hanover and Goochland, their decision to leave PRL will be finalized come January 01, 2025. Official leave date would be January 01, 2027.
- Though they have stated that they can improve library services with an independent library, the Board have failed to provide a cost/benefit analysis that shows this is the case or any five-year plan showing the costs to county residents annually for library services.
- The Board asked the Library of Virginia’s Library Development and Networking Committee to provide an estimate on what it would cost the county to replicate the services residents currently receive with PRL and in addition to stating that not all costs could be included due to the need for the county to negotiate some contracts separately, the costs that could be accrued already tallied over \$1.1 million.
- For comparison, PRL allocated \$799,608 to collections alone this fiscal year; these are items that KW residents have access to with their PRL card regardless of which branch library they are stored in. This one shared cost is more than the entirety that KW County paid for library services to include staff salaries at \$602,907.
- **Cost sharing is the reason counties enter regional agreements.** The majority of the shared costs for PRL are paid for by Hanover County, as they provide the highest contribution to PRL due to population size.

What does the Board say they are seeking in negotiations with Hanover and Goochland?

Though the Board has not been specific about their definition of what “good faith” efforts regarding negotiations means and stated that a conservative fiscal mindset is their motivation for this decision, Board Vice-Chair, Justin Catlett, stated the following issues the Board has with PRL.

- **Lack of fiscal transparency from PRL**
 - PRL posts budget requests and finalized budgets on their website and provides a written justification for any increase to the Boards of each county months before budgets are finalized each year.
 - They also post finance reports every month showing every expense that the library has made for those 30 days.
 - An audit was finalized by an independent auditor in June of 2024, which found no irregularities, and this was provided to the King William Board of Supervisors.
 - The Board has not specified what they find lacking in PRL’s financial transparency.
 - It is also unclear how the Board plans on improving PRL’s level of transparency with an independent library. The county’s other agencies do not post monthly expenses on the county website as PRL does.
- **No means of addressing citizen concerns**
 - The Board has not specified what citizen concerns PRL has ignored.
 - PRL’s acting director, Jaime Stoops, can be reached by both phone and email to discuss any issues patrons may have.

- There is a library board meeting every month where residents can address the PRL Board of Trustees if they feel staff are ignoring their concerns.
- It remains unclear how the KW Board of Supervisors plan to improve this method of communication, as citizen concerns regarding an independent library have not been addressed thoroughly at the local level.
- **Lack of ownership of library resources**
 - No one county currently owns items in the collection because no one county paid for any collection item in full.
 - Through a calculation based on population size, Hanover currently pays for 72% of the costs associated with the collection, with Goochland and King William paying 16% and 12%.
 - **With an independent library, the county would own every item, but they'd also have to pay 100% of the costs, meaning residents would have access to fewer resources.**
- **Inability to curate their own collection**
 - PRL's collection is curated by collections librarians who take into account prior circulation and county demographics to decide which items will be stored in each branch library.
 - This is assessed consistently and changes are made accordingly with rotation of materials being commonplace.
 - The Board of Supervisors has failed to specify the issues they currently have with the items in either the Upper King William or West Point Branches.
- **Inability to create library programs for King William County**
 - PRL programs are already created by the branch staff locally.
 - Programs for the UKW and WP Branches are created by staff from King William.
 - Branch staff also regularly gets input from King William patrons for library programs.
 - As this is already the case, the Board has failed to specify what issues they have with current library programs that they feel only an independent library can fix.
- **Clear and set departure terms**
 - Departure terms already state that a county has to provide a 2-year notice prior to leaving PRL.
 - Counties who exit the system cannot take the collection in their libraries unless they pay for them in full, as they did not do so at initial purchase.
 - The Board has failed to provide any further specifications they require.