

We're going to be diving deeper into Board Vice-Chair, Justin Catlett's, research presentation from last night's meeting. This will include multiple posts in the coming days, as needed.

To provide some background, King William is currently a part of the Pamunkey Regional Library system, alongside Hanover and Goochland Counties. KW operates two branches: Upper King William (UKW) and West Point (WP). The county pays \$602,907 in total for library services. PRL requested an increase this past year to operate both libraries for maximum hours that totaled to \$652,645. The Board chose not to fully fund PRL's request, which led to a reduction of hours for both branches.

Each county in PRL pays to staff their own branches, maintenance of their building, and provides the building for their branches. Each county also provides a percentage towards shared services, including collections, administration, and technical services. This percentage is calculated based on the population of each county. Due to their population size, Hanover County pays for 72% of shared services. This means King William gets to utilize everything that encompasses shared services, but only pays for 12% of it (numbers attached).

The library provides access to books, hotspots, laptops, launchpads, Vox Books, talking books, DVDs, magazines, newspapers, talk totes, online databases, ebooks, eAudiobooks, streaming services, and programs.

The KW Board of Supervisors held a closed meeting on Monday, July 8th where they discussed PRL, and then came out into open session and voted to leave PRL. The attached statement was released on July 9th. It quotes Board Chair, Lindsay Robinson as stating: "By operating our own County library, we feel we can improve services, and do it cheaper and more efficiently. We will do all we can to see there is no interruption in library services as we transition from regional to local."

Mr. Catlett's presentation referenced 7 different library systems in Virginia. 4 of them paid more than even PRL's fully funded request for King William, so we will not be breaking those down, as per the Board's statement, they stated their intent was to operate a library for less money than the county pays now.

The below numbers come Mr. Catlett's presentation and the Library of Virginia's 2023 bibliostats reported by each library in the state.

[https://www.lva.virginia.gov/.../docs/2023/turnover\\_2023.pdf](https://www.lva.virginia.gov/.../docs/2023/turnover_2023.pdf)

- King William pays \$602,907 to access the 1,678,781 total materials PRL has in their collection.

- Fuvanna County Library's operating budget is listed at \$598,503; total materials: 108,465
- Heritage Public Library (a regional system) operating budget is listed at \$512,880; total materials: 78,635
- Russell County Public Library's operating budget is listed at \$529,365; total materials: 111,963

As the numbers show, each of the libraries that pay a fraction less don't come anywhere close to the access King William residents have with PRL.

Mr. Catlett's presentation states that surrounding counties operate independent county libraries successfully. It's true that there are independent libraries around the state, that fact has never been denied.

However, the adjective of doing so "successfully" is a relative term. KW wouldn't be starting out from zero library services to those provided by the independent library. The comparison of whether it is successful would be a comparison to what library users already have access to right now with PRL and what we pay for it.

Based on the bullet points from the presentation, the focus of the Board seems to be on ownership of resources, having more control over the collection that King William residents have access to, and being able to more readily address patron concerns.

In terms of ownership of resources, it would not provide any tangible change for library patrons. No individual King William resident would own a book in an independent county library any more than they own a book in a PRL-run library.

The Board would have more control over which titles would be included in an independent library's collection. As we have cited in the past, complaints made to the Board about PRL are centered around materials these individuals find inappropriate.

The statement about being able to more readily address patron concerns does require more information because we are unsure what requests King William patrons are currently making to PRL that are being ignored. Is this a continuation of the complaints about book titles or something else?

Mr. Catlett also states that an independent library would allow King William to immediately alter programs to tailor to the county's population. But our libraries already have that freedom with PRL.

Neither the PRL Library Board nor the library director dictate what programs each branch library will have. Library programs are created by the programming specialists and librarians

at each individual branch and they do so based on what they believe will work in their communities.

Just last week we posted about library programs that UKW Library implemented because a group of homeschooling families in KW asked them to. The programs were immediately formed and scheduled.

All staff at WP and UKW welcome suggestions for programs for patrons and they actually prefer it: it makes it easier to come up with ideas when people tell you what they want. What programs have KW residents been denied from having by PRL? Has the Board received complaints about staff denying these requests?

If so, they should share that information immediately because acting Library Director, Jaime Stoops, should be made aware so she can address this directly with the UKW and WP staff that is ignoring patron requests; that is certainly not PRL's policy.

A Town Hall with PRL, the Library of Virginia, and the Board of Supervisors would provide the opportunity to share these concerns and for residents to ask their own questions. It would also give residents the ability to compare numbers directly with those who provided them: PRL, LVA, and Mr. Catlett.

We urge the Board to schedule a Town Hall with all these parties as soon as possible to provide more transparency and limit existing confusion.

Proposed Representation (Hanover Representation Increased by 1)							
Locality	2020 Pop.	% Total Pop.	FY24 Budget	% Total Local Budget FY24	% Total Local Budget FY25	Proposed Representatives	Proposed % of Vote
Goochland	24,727	16.2%	\$593,803	14%	16%	2	22%
Hanover	109,979	72.1%	\$3,3697,976	70%	72%	5	56%
King William	17,810	11.7%	\$602,907	11%	12%	2	22%

Notes:

1. King & Queen County represented 5% of the shared operating budget in FY24 (withdrawing 6/30/24).
2. Current Representation Hanover 4, Goochland 2, King William 2, King & Queen 2.
3. The percentage of total budget does not include the in-kind services provided by Hanover County as stated in paragraph 6 of the agreement. Utilizing the value of the FY22 in-kind services would increase Hanover County's share of the total Locality budget by approximately 5.8% in FY24.

King William County Government Press Release  
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## BOS Looking Ahead to New, Better Library Opportunities

The decision to vote to leave the Pamunkey Regional Library (PRL) System by the King William County Board of Supervisors at its meeting on July 8 was made with an idea to create new and better opportunities for the residents.

The BOS has asked Hanover and Goochland counties to allow King William to opt out of the PRL system a year earlier than the member agreement allows. If that permission is granted, the BOS will immediately begin to implement a plan to provide library services to replace the reliance on the regional entity.

The decision was made in Open Session with a 5-0 vote after the BOS came out of Closed Session following discussion of the current agreement with the Pamunkey Regional Library System.

"Providing library services to our community is a priority for the Board of Supervisors," commented BOS Chair Lindsay Robinson. "By operating our own County library, we feel we can improve services, and do it cheaper and more efficiently. We will do all we can to see there is no interruption in library services as we transition from regional to local."

The BOS pays the PRL almost \$603,000 a year to operate two branches in King William County, one on Sharon Road and the other in West Point. The Supervisors have already charged County Staff with exploring possibilities of using County facilities to replace the operations currently at Sharon Road.

Residents have complained for the last 18 months at BOS meetings the PRL was not responsive to concerns. They were looking for the BOS to step in and address various issues, and the move to create an independent library system operated as a County department was the logical answer.

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"We have the direct link to our citizens, so we should be operating the library as we do other areas of government," Robinson said. "When citizens have concerns, we can address them immediately. We won't have to wait for a regional representative to find time to respond."

In eventually assuming the operation of the library services, no increased or hidden fees are anticipated. A new library system will allow expansion of technology services, as well as broader choices for patrons who cover the spectrum of young and old.

The PRL will continue to oversee operations at both branches until a transition is made. The branch in West Point was recently renovated, and County and Town officials are expected to discuss the future of services at that location.

The Board of Supervisors is also planning to have a community meeting later this fall in both Aylett and West Point to receive citizen input on the future of library services.

## Independent Public Libraries in Virginia Budget Comparisons FY23

- Caroline
  - 4 Branches (approx. 22k sqft total)
  - Population - 30,342
  - Budget - \$694,971
- Colonial Heights
  - 20k sqft facility
  - Population – 17,246
  - Budget - \$871,077
- Fluvanna
  - 20k sqft facility
  - Population – 27,202
  - Budget - \$598,503
- Heritage (New Kent & Charles City)
  - 2 Branches – 9K sqft, 10K sqft
  - Population – 30,349
  - Budget - \$512,880
- Powhatan
  - 18k sqft facility
  - Population – 30,305
  - Budget - \$711,253
- Pulaski
  - 9k sqft facility
  - Population – 34,211
  - Budget - \$858,222
- Russell
  - 10k sqft facility
  - Population – 26,958
  - Budget - \$529,365



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## Conclusion during personal research

- Numerous counties surrounding and far from KW operate successful libraries with larger facilities and populations for what we contribute to PRL.
- Independent libraries own and operate their facilities and all materials within. KW does not own any materials for the contribution it has spent from the beginning.
- Independent libraries curate their own collection based on the requests of their population not a collective. Thus, being able to provide a more direct collection of not only materials but programs.
- Independent libraries could alter programs as they see the desire of population change i.e., children's program is introduced and run with very little engagement but main visiting demographic during that time is young adult or elderly population the program can immediately be altered to offer a more beneficial program for the visiting population not wasting resources and prioritizing citizens.



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## Recommendation



- In the end, it is still my stance that King William can operate an Independent Library System which includes a King William County branch and West Point branch. However, given the items and issues brought to light I do concede that the projection to move toward independence in 2025 is overzealous.
- I propose that the Board vote to rescind the early opt out resolution made in July. From there our Board enter into negotiations with the governing bodies of Hanover and Goochland counties for a new library agreement that addresses items such as collection ownership, fiscal transparency, clear and set departure terms, means and methods of addressing all citizen concerns, etc. With the goal of executing a new regional library agreement with the PRL.
- At the same time King William will continue to develop an independent library model in the event negotiations fail or the PRL refuses to establish an updated agreement, then we revert to the independency path setting that as the 2-year notification date per the current agreement in place.
- This will give the Boards the ability to reach an agreement that is beneficial to each locality addressing individual concerns and provide a tangible return on the investment made each year. This will also provide accountability to the system and give the citizens a program they can have pride in but also comfort knowing their collective concerns are addressed.

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