

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **“THE COMMUNITY DESERVES BETTER THAN THIS” - PUBLIC LIBRARY WORKERS CONDEMN NEW STAFFLESS MODEL AT TIMBERLAND REGIONAL LIBRARY**

*Staff urged the Board of Trustees to reverse the library administration’s decision to remove staff from the Naselle branch and expressed worry that the unstaffed model could spread to other library branches*

**North Mason, WA** — On Wednesday evening 9/25/24, during the public comment section of the monthly Board of Trustees meeting for the Timberland Regional Library (TRL), a representative from the library workers union read a statement calling on the Board to take immediate action to preserve full library services for the Naselle community, following a recent announcement from TRL’s administration that the Naselle library branch would be switching to a staffless model beginning October 1st.

**“Without library workers, Naselle can no longer be called a library,”** read Mike Boyer, a union representative for AFSCME Local 3758-B, which represents most frontline staff at TRL. “The community deserves better than this, and we speak up now to reverse and prevent this unstaffed model from spreading to other branches.”

On August 29th, 2024, TRL put out a press release announcing the end of fully-staffed library services at Naselle and a new “self-service” model known as EAH, which will require community members to sign up for an electronic key fob to access the Naselle library building. Since the announcement, community members have reacted with dismay and outrage, with one editorial in the *Chinook Observer* calling the policy changes “sickening and despicable.”

Now, library staff are weighing in with their concerns. “We are a rural library district, providing a lifeline to places without many other services. Taking away library workers is devastating to those communities. Imagine needing to print a resume, not knowing how, and no one is there to help. Imagine wanting to share how much your child enjoyed a book you borrowed, and no one is there to listen. Imagine a tourist finding the library is restricted to only those who register beforehand for a key card. Worst of all, imagine that unhoused people and those with an unstable home situation can never access the Naselle library, since they cannot give the required address verification.”

At the 9/25/24 Board meeting, the Board declined to discuss or take action to delay the implementation of a staffless Naselle library branch. Board of Trustees member Brian Mittge asked to have the topic of EAH staffless libraries added as a discussion topic to a future Board of Trustees meeting. The next TRL Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 23, 2024.

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