LPB, fund-raiser back on friendly terms

By BOBBY LAMB

General terms of the new proposed agreement are outlined in a June 30 letter to Friends Chairman Bill Benedetto from LETA Chairman Thomas Hightower.

Hightower said terms of a formal agreement will be based on his letter to Benedetto.

“I think the relationship is going to be stronger as a result of the process that we’ve gone through,” Benedetto said Friday. “There’s no doubt LETA set their course.”

Friends should be a support group to LETA and LPB and follow its direction and coordinate activities, Benedetto said. He also said term limits and staggered terms to preserve some continuity on the Friends board is a good idea.

“That gives the opportunity for new people, new ideas and new enthusiasm,” Benedetto said.

“The Friends board came to the realization they do have an important role to play, and it was impossible for them to be effective without allowing us to coordinate all the fund-raising activities,” Hightower said.

Friends is a separate, non-profit group that has solicited donations for LPB since 1973.

In a meeting this week, the Friends board voted to allow the 1993 agreement to lapse by waiving a right to a hearing before LETA, which Hightower requested in his June 30 letter.

The Friends board also acquiesced to one of two alternatives presented to Friends that allows the group to forge

the new agreement with LETA.

Without acquiescing to LETA’s demands for more control, the only alternative of Friends would have been to exist as a volunteer organization serving an LPB foundation, Hightower’s letter said.

To reduce overhead costs, LETA had proposed that future fund-raising activities be administered in-house by LPB staff members and conducted through the Foundation for Excellence in LPB. The foundation is a 1½-year-old volunteer non-profit group originally set up by LETA to receive and hold LPB grants and endowments.

Friends board members sought to salvage Friends’ relationship with LETA and LPB in a June 29 closed meeting with LETA board members.

The closed meeting followed the resignation of Friends of LPB President Quinn Rainwater and Director of Major Gift-Giving Sandy Lacour.

Their resignations came at the request of the Friends board’s executive committee.

During LETA’s Friday meeting, Hightower read part of a Friends resolution addressing the resignations.

However, he refrained from reading portions of the resolution addressing conditions of the resignations, citing personnel matters.

Hightower repeated assertions that LETA’s concerns about Friends’ relationship revolved around a structural and not a personnel problem.

“I’m not going to get into personnel matters. It’s a private organization. That’s a private matter,” Benedetto said.