CALL TO ORDER:
Norrgard called the retreat to order at 5:10 p.m. in the Conference Room of Ramsey County Public Works, 1425 Paul Kirkwold Drive in Arden Hills.

FEBRUARY BUSINESS MEETING:
Due to a lack of pressing issues, the regularly scheduled meeting on February 16, 2005 was canceled. The Library Board’s next scheduled business meeting will be held on March 16, 2005.

BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS:
Two-Year Budget—Nemitz reported that the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners recently adopted a new two-year budget process, and the County’s goals and objectives for 2005-2006 were revised. She noted that competition for bond dollars will increase, because Ramsey County may begin bonding for road construction projects. Nemitz stated that the Library is ready to proceed with a request for Phase 2 of the Library Board’s capital plan as part of the 2006 budget request.

Budget Outlook—Nemitz indicated that information for the 2006-2007 budget planning process has not yet been released by Ramsey County, and negotiated salary increases and insurance premiums are still being determined. The State of Minnesota recently reported that the projected deficit is slightly less than earlier projections, but there is no information available on how the State deficit may impact the County’s budget. Library staff have begun preparing preliminary lists of budget priorities for the upcoming budget request. Kessel requested that a condensed five-year budget projection be included as part of the budget information prepared for the Library Board.

The Library has a growing list of deferred maintenance needs for the library facilities. A building audit is currently underway to determine priorities for these needs. Nemitz noted that the Library could ask Ramsey County for funding, or request that proceeds from the sale of the former library facility in North St. Paul be used to underwrite top priorities for deferred maintenance.

Staffing needs for the planned expansions at Maplewood, Roseville and Arden Hills need to be reviewed. Preliminary plans called for no additional staff at Maplewood, increased maintenance and janitorial staff only at Roseville, and additional customer service staff at Arden Hills. Exact needs will be determined once the design phase for each project is completed. A staffing analysis for all the library facilities may be warranted, including a cost-benefit analysis of the ratio of full-time versus part-time staff members. Nemitz is gathering information before making official recommendations to the Library Board. However, the current staff complement is extremely thin following years of increased business with no corresponding increase in staffing. Customer service is beginning to be affected, with items waiting longer to be shelved at the libraries, and new items being cataloged and processed for checkout more slowly.
CAPITAL BUDGET:
Maplewood—Preliminary cost estimates for the expansion of the library in Maplewood are approximately $1.6 million dollars over budget. The increase in cost is a result of poor soil conditions, correction strategies needed to maintain the integrity of the wetland, and the cost of temporarily relocating the library for up to fourteen months. The design committee was able to reduce that amount by half by trimming 2,200 square feet from the planned expansion without a major impact to the program goals. However, further cuts would be detrimental to the purpose of the planned expansion.
Due to this impasse, the design team began to consider whether building a new facility on a different site would be a more cost-effective use of the capital dollars available. The team proposed that a 60-day moratorium was needed in order to scout alternative sites in the Maplewood area and consider all of the options and ramifications. Closing the library without relocating during the construction process is another money-saving scenario, but would not be enough to bring the costs within budget. If it is determined that building on a different site is the best option, the current facility could potentially be sold to the County for the expansion of Environmental Health Department or other departments as needed. This option would also allow the library to remain open while a new facility is constructed.
Countty staff suggested that County Road D in Maplewood, south of Highway 61, may be a good alternative area to consider. Construction currently underway will connect County Road D to the east side of Highway 61.
Cox made a motion to approve a 60-day moratorium on the design process for the expansion of the library in Maplewood in order to explore alternate building sites in the area. Wolsfeld seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous vote of the Library Board. Wiessner recommended that the Library Board study the Excensus demographic data to determine potential alternative sites, and also to advise city officials regarding the exploration of alternative sites.
The Library Board also briefly discussed the possibility of using approved Phase 1 bond dollars to move ahead with the Roseville construction, in order to give the architects, library and Property Management staff time to consider alternatives for Maplewood. This option may be considered at a later date.
Norrgard was careful to note that the cost overruns at Maplewood are in no way the fault of the architects, who have worked in good faith with the design team to incorporate the targeted program elements. Previously unknown soil conditions and wetland factors were the primary cause of the cost overrun.
Arden Hills—Norrgard, Nemitz, and library managers Sandy Walsh and Lynn Wyman spent the day on February 24 at the State Legislature for Library Legislative Day. State Senator Satveer Chaudhary, whose district includes Arden Hills and New Brighton, proposed that funding for a new library/nature center collaboration be included in a State bonding bill.
Wiessner suggested that if such a scenario comes to fruition, the Library Board should not limit itself to the current site, but consider alternative sites as well. Anderson reminded the Board that the New Brighton City Manager had approached the Library Board about possible sites in that city.
The Library Board discussed the possible ramifications of supporting a state-funded library in Arden Hills. Nemitz asked the Library Board for permission to continue discussions with Senator Chaudhary, with the understanding that no commitment is being made at the present time. The Board members agreed to allow further preliminary discussions.
Six-Year Capital Plan—Based on current facilities planning and progress to date on Phase 1 of the Library Capital Improvement Plan, Nemitz recommended that constructing the expansion in Roseville be moved up one year to 2006, and design of the new library in Arden Hills postponed one year to 2007, with construction to follow in 2008. The Board concurred with this recommendation, making a point to emphasize that the decision is based on budget cycle reasons, not due to program or priority concerns.
DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Annual Meeting—Anderson suggested that a nominating committee be created. The Board discussed this suggestion, which could be implemented on an ad hoc basis. This subject will be raised at a later meeting if necessary.

Number of Board Members—Wolsfeld previously suggested that the Library Board be increased to include nine members from the current seven-member Board. Cox noted that increasing the Board size might result in longer meetings, as additional opinions are offered on each subject. Achieving sufficient numbers for a quorum is rarely an issue, although occasionally staff do verify with Board members that they plan to attend, when the absence of multiple members is known beforehand. Wolsfeld indicated that her suggestion was based on increasing the pool of talent on the Board, and division of labor during this increasingly busy time of capital planning.

Anderson suggested that increasing the Board’s size to nine members, when the County Board has only seven members and includes the City of St. Paul, may be difficult to justify. He suggested either remaining at seven members, or increasing significantly to include representatives from all suburban Ramsey County communities. Having more diversity on the Board could also be an added benefit to expanding in size.

Cox suggested that the Trustees each “adopt a library,” as suggested by the strategic planning consultant used last year. Now that the Library Board will be at its full complement of seven members, this suggestion would be possible. The Board discussed the duties that this type of ambassador position would include. Wolsfeld suggested that the idea be postponed, in order to give new director Nemitz time to set a direction for the Library.

Anderson made a motion to table the issue until September. Cox seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously by the Library Board. Nemitz will draft guidelines for the ambassador idea.

The Board members proposed re-instituting the tour and overview of each library during the Library Board yearly meeting at each location, with the tour being held before the meeting.

Role in Lobbying/Fundraising—Nemitz reminded the Board that the legislative/lobbying role of the Board members is also very important. Also, the Library Board had previously planned to make visiting city councils in suburban Ramsey County an annual occurrence, but this has not happened since the first visits in 2002. The Board members affirmed that they were in favor of annual visits to each council, with several Library Board members sharing this duty.

Wiessner suggested that the Board should hold public meetings as part of the facilities planning process. Nemitz concurring, stating that gathering public input about the direction for Arden Hills should be the first priority. The meetings could also be held in a venue where they could be telecast on cable TV.

The Board members also discussed fundraising, and the need to focus resources on this. Issues including whether an employee dedicated to fundraising should be hired, would this employee be hired by the Library or the Friends, or should a consultant be hired, were all mentioned. A decision on this issue was not reached during the retreat.

Meeting Length—Should the Board continue to have two hours as the goal for each meeting’s length? The Board members agreed that this should continue, with a second meeting each month as an option if the agenda gets too large.

STRATEGIC PLANNING:

Quarterly Reporting—Nemitz suggested moving to a format of quarterly reporting for financial, statistical and work planning data. She indicated that the longer time frame would give the Board a more accurate picture of trends, etc., than the currently monthly reporting model. The quarterly reports would include narrative explanations for key issues or notable variances. The Board members agreed to this proposal.
Director’s Report—Under Nemitz’s proposal, the Director’s Report to the Library Board would continue to be written monthly. However, the format would change to include updates on Ramsey County issues, legislative issues, updates on MELSA and Friends activities, community updates and library trends, as well as more anecdotal information about staff. Fewer day-to-day library activities would be highlighted, focusing instead on policy and trend information appropriate for the Library Board level.

Strategic Plan—Nemitz proposed that, in addition to the Implementation Plan reviewed by the Library Board in December, a workplan with specific tasks, timelines, and effectiveness measures be created. The workplan will be the checklist followed by staff to implement the Strategic Plan. The Board concurred with this suggestion, with Anderson noting that the Library Director has the authority to revise the implementation plan and workplan as necessary.

Future Board Development—This issue was postponed to a later date.

NEXT MEETING:
The Library Board’s next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 16, 2005, in the Library’s Administrative Offices in Shoreview, 4570 North Victoria Street, beginning at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:
Norrgard adjourned the retreat at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Larson
Library Board Coordinator