BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
Matthew Anderson, Joan Bartell, Victoria Cox, Eugene Delaune, Bruce Kessel, David Norrgard

STAFF PRESENT:
Alice-Jo Carlson, Library Director; Mary Larson, Library Board Coordinator; Sandy Walsh, Lynn Wyman, Public Service Managers; Laura Johnson, Communication & Programming Manager

OTHERS PRESENT:
Jan Parker Wiessner, Ramsey County Commissioner

CALL TO ORDER:
Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Library Administrative Offices, 4570 North Victoria Street.

BUDGET WORKSHOP:
On January 14, 2003, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution directing the County Manager to implement strategies to immediately reduce County spending in anticipation of cuts in State financing. On January 23, 2003, all departments received their budget reduction targets. To allow for a gradual reduction and/or phase out of programs and services during 2003, departments were instructed to reduce spending by one-half of the total goal. Our budget reduction amount for 2003 is $323,500, 4% less than the 2002 budget, and for 2004 is $647,000, an 8% reduction from 2002.

In early January, in anticipation of cuts in State financing, Carlson began working with public services and administration staff to look at Library services and programs to determine savings and cost effectiveness, as well as additional sources of revenue. This challenge was viewed as an opportunity to make the Library system even stronger and better. The staff recommendation is based on a long-term strategic vision shared by staff and the Library Board.

The staff recommendation is as follows:
- Suspend service at the library in North St. Paul on June 1, 2003; retain staff to fill vacancies.
- Suspend service at the library in Arden Hills on January 1, 2004 and retain the staff.
- Effective January 1, 2004, use some of retained staff from the libraries in North St. Paul and Arden Hills to meet expected corresponding increases in demand for services in Maplewood and Shoreview.
- Obtain results from the next Ramsey County Leadership Academy project, a study of the viability of library service in North St. Paul. Based on the results of that study and other data, work with the City of North St. Paul on a partnership for appropriate and sustainable library service in their proposed civic campus.
- Between February 5 and June 1, 2003, locate a tenant for the North St. Paul building and negotiate a lease at market rate which would provide an additional source of revenue.
- Lower the fine threshold from $10 to $5.
- Consider increasing the adult daily overdue charge from 25¢ to 30¢ per day.
The rationale for the staff recommendation includes:

- The library in North St. Paul is lowest in circulation and traffic; the library in Arden Hills is second lowest.
- Age of Arden Hills and North St. Paul buildings.
- Expansion at North St. Paul is not feasible.
- Replacement of the library in Arden Hills is part of the Facilities and Strategic Plans.
- The North St. Paul service area overlaps the area served by library in Maplewood.
- Approximately 40% of the customers using the library in North St. Paul live in Washington County.
- Fewer public service hours lost and less impact on circulation and accessibility versus closing hours across the seven libraries.
- Increased revenue from library fines versus closing hours across the seven libraries.
- No layoffs and therefore no corresponding costs for unemployment compensation.
- Retention of staff will allow for expanded hours of service at other libraries.
- Suspension of service at North St. Paul allows for further investigation of partnership with City of North St. Paul.
- Suspension of service at Arden Hills will be somewhat earlier than planned for replacement of building, however, there is the opportunity of locating a short-term tenant for Arden Hills facility to produce temporary revenue for the Library, potentially alleviating the need for additional cuts.
- Retention of staff will allow for reopening new Arden Hills facility with minimal increases in FTE and/or personnel costs.

The Library Board brainstormed alternative revenue sources, including user fees for specific items or services, retail partnerships, naming rights for buildings or hours of service, for-profit information retrieval services, and pass-through costs for interlibrary loan service. The Board also discussed ways to lower expenses, such as energy efficient buildings, and prioritizing services offered to the public. Cox spoke in favor of the second option prepared by staff, cutting hours across the seven libraries rather than suspending service at two locations. She indicated that the public outcry over closing these facilities would be tremendous.

Anderson and Delaune opposed closing hours across the system, with Delaune stating that in order to defend this decision, it must be based on facts and statistics, not on politics.

Kessel made a motion to increase the adult daily overdue charge from 25¢ to 30¢ per day, and to lower the fine threshold from $10 to $5, both effective September 1, 2003. Norrgard seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Kessel also made a motion to study the feasibility of pass-through costs for interlibrary loan (ILL) services, and implementing user fees for ILL services after a number of free uses each year. Anderson seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Delaune made a motion, seconded by Anderson, to approve the staff recommendation for the anticipated budget reductions:

- Suspend service at the library in North St. Paul effective June 1, 2003, and retain the staff to fill vacancies at other libraries.
- Suspend service at the library in Arden Hills effective January 1, 2004, and retain the staff.
- Use some of the retained staff to expand hours of service at other libraries if feasible.
- Obatin results of the Leadership Academy project on the viability of library service in North St. Paul.
- Study options for leasing or selling the North St. Paul building, begin process of locating a tenant if that option is selected.
The motion was approved by majority vote, with Cox dissenting.

Delaune suggested that the appropriate city officials and Ramsey County Commissioners be notified immediately, and that communication planning be placed on the Library Board’s next meeting agenda.

Kessel suggested that the Library Board consider early demolition the existing Arden Hills facility if no short-term tenant could be located, to avoid paying utility and maintenance costs on a vacant building.

NEXT MEETING:
The next meeting of the Library Board will be held Wednesday, February 19, 2003, at the Ramsey County Library in Arden Hills, 1941 W. County Road E-2, beginning at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:
Following a motion by Kessel and a second by Bartell, Anderson adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Larson
Library Board Coordinator