LIBRARY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
Matthew Anderson, Victoria Cox, Bruce Kessel, Bridget Murray, David Norrgard, Roberta Weltzin, Susan Wolsfeld

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:
Alice-Jo Carlson, Library Director; Mary Larson, Library Board Coordinator; Laura Johnson, Communication and Programming Manager

CALL TO ORDER:
Cox called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Library Administrative Offices, 4570 North Victoria Street in Shoreview.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
There was no public comment.

2005 BUDGET PRIORITIES:
Cox prefaced the discussion by indicating that, in her opinion, the Library Board is trying to do too much with too little, and trying to second guess the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners. She stated that the Library Board should simply ask for what it needs to operate the existing facilities and the new library in North St. Paul, which is scheduled to open in January 2005. Cox also noted that the Library Board should put aside its feelings regarding the County Board’s actions last year to keep the library in Arden Hills open in 2004.

The Library Board also discussed the need to fund operations at the new library in North St. Paul in 2005, due to the joint powers agreement approved December 10, 2003, and the commitment of bond funding to construct and furnish the new facility.

Kessel noted that his highest budget priority for 2005 is restoring funding for books, and he would support the closing of a library or reduction of hours to achieve this goal.

Norrgard made a motion that the Ramsey County Library send formal letters to each member of the Ramsey County delegation to protest the new filtering law currently under consideration by the State legislature. Anderson seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously by the Library Board.

Cox indicated that she has spoken with two Ramsey County Commissioners, and both are expecting that the Library Board will be requesting additional operating funds for the new library in North St. Paul in the Library’s 2005 budget request. Anderson noted that at a County Board workshop in summer 2003, he indicated to the County Commissioners that additional staff would not be needed to operate the new North St. Paul facility because other facilities would be in suspension or under construction. However, the Library Board’s original capital improvement plan was not approved, and a new phased plan was adopted in October 2003, negating Anderson’s earlier statement. Carlson indicated that the County Board received estimated increased operating costs for North St. Paul, Roseville and Maplewood as part of their Board documentation during the capital project bond discussions.

The Library Board discussed library service at the current facility in Arden Hills. Norrgard indicated that Arden Hills patrons could easily be served by Ramsey County Libraries in Mounds View, Shoreview, or Roseville. Cox noted that the current Arden Hills site is ideal for an “environmental” library, and the Library Board would not be able to find another like it. Norrgard suggested that, if the Library Board decided not to operate Arden Hills in 2005, it be termed a suspension of service, since a new facility is currently in the Board’s approved capital improvement plan.
Norrgard made a motion to suspend service at the Ramsey County Library in Arden Hills effective January 1, 2005, subject to review on an annual basis. Funding for operational costs, including utilities, janitorial service, and books, will not be included in the 2005 levy target budget request, but personnel funding and the associated FTE staff will be retained. Reasons for choosing Arden Hills include:

- the building is not ADA-compliant;
- the building cannot be remodeled to accommodate needed improvements, including technology;
- several maintenance and repair issues would require a substantial amount of funding to remedy;
- currently the smallest facility and least circulation in the Ramsey County Library system;
- past consensus of Library Board to suspend service at one facility rather than lessen the quality of service provided at all locations.

Kessel seconded the motion, which was approved by majority vote with Anderson dissenting.

Kessel made a motion to include funding for the new library in North St. Paul in the 2005 levy target budget request. Cox seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Cox made a motion that the Library Board’s priorities for unfunded services or programs in 2005 budget request be as follows:

1. Books and other library materials ($200,000 or approximately three times levy target increase);
2. Substitute staff funding ($50,000);
3. Operating funds for library in Arden Hills ($69,250 + 2 FTE shifted to North St. Paul);
4. Filtering software ($20,000).

Wolsfeld seconded the motion, which was approved by majority vote with Anderson and Norrgard dissenting.

CITIZENS’ FORUM:
Norrgard reported that Ramsey County Manager David Twa will be speaking at the Citizens’ Forum meeting on Friday, May 7, at 8:30 a.m.

NEXT MEETING:
The Library Board’s next meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 21, 2004, at the Ramsey County Library in Maplewood, 1670 Beam Avenue, beginning a 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:
Cox adjourned the meeting at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Larson
Library Board Coordinator