LIBRARY BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:
Matthew Anderson, Victoria Cox, Bruce Kessel, David Norrgard, Burton Nygren, Lori-Anne Williams

LIBRARY BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:
Roberta Weltzin

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:
Susan Nemitz, Library Director; Mary Larson, Library Board Coordinator; Sandy Walsh, Library Manager; Julie Neville, Building Services Manager; Kristi Saksvig, Library Communications Manager

OTHERS PRESENT:
Jan Parker, Ramsey County Commissioner

CALL TO ORDER:
Norrgard called the retreat to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Library Administrative Offices in Shoreview, 4570 North Victoria Street.

FACILITIES PLANNING—NORTHWEST AREA:
Norrgard asked each of the Library Board members to share their key thoughts and concerns regarding library facilities planning for the northwest area of suburban Ramsey County.

Kessel:
- location
- services
- costs
- community vs. neighborhood libraries (can’t afford library on every corner)

Anderson:
- financing of new libraries (task force recommendations #3 & #4 appear to require new funding)
- encouraged by interest from other counties
- interested in creating multi-county library—bigger than regional

Nygren:
- more concerned with services than number of libraries
- technology, adequate staff important
- focus on being community gathering place, especially for children and teens
- partnerships

Cox:
- mixed bag of site options
- partnerships with for-profits (housing, retail, community agencies)
- tri-county library too complicated to fund, administer
- more locations ideal, not financially feasible

Williams:
- location vital—put in high traffic areas
- hours of services vs. number of libraries—can’t be community gathering place if not open
Weltzin: (related to Norrgard via telephone prior to meeting)
• clearly identify service level needed
• no need to rush to judgment—take time to make right decision

Norrgard:
• focus on system as a whole, not individual libraries
• have 20-year focus, how to operate on a cost basis
• need bigger collections, more hours
• automobile community, libraries should be in traffic areas
• larger sites and flexible buildings needed to address future needs

Nemitz indicated that the task force process was not a perfect one, evidenced by the evaluations included in the Library Board’s packet of information. She shared her own observations:

• community wants to keep current sites and configurations—sees library loss as symbolic loss of community
• based on usage, libraries in Mounds View and Arden Hills both viable, though poorly sited
• no clear viable alternative locations
• highways create geographic barriers
• there will be growth in TCAAP and New Brighton

Nemitz reported that a cost analysis of closing both Arden Hills and Mounds View, building a new $5.8 million dollar facility, using the current staffing and operating budgets, would result in 7 extra hours of service per week. The perception that pooling the resources from the two smaller libraries would be sufficient for a large regional library is not accurate. Furthermore, closing one or more libraries would have political consequences.

The Board discussed the aging of the population. This impacts the services offered by the libraries, but not necessarily the locations. Predicting how aging baby-boomers will use the libraries is difficult. Flexible buildings with shorter life spans will likely be the norm. Technology will be key in new facilities.

Commissioner Parker noted that the County will be absorbing more budgetary cuts from the federal and state governments. Although this will be difficult, the Library has traditionally had good support from the County and the community. Cox noted that the Library should pursue more non-County funding sources.

Nygren pointed to the Washington County Library in Woodbury as having many successful partnerships, both within its facility and nearby. Cox suggested that the Library Board members visit other libraries in the Twin Cities to learn about innovations and partnerships that are successful elsewhere. Commissioner Parker noted that the County Board would be more likely to fund a new, innovative library than another status-quo library. Nemitz will schedule a tour of other new Twin Cities libraries. Sites suggested were the new Stillwater Library, which uses RFID, the new Rondo Library in St. Paul, and the new downtown Minneapolis Central Library.

Norrgard asked for two volunteers to attend a multi-county library board meeting. Anderson and Williams volunteered to attend, as well as Commissioner Parker. Representatives from Anoka, Hennepin and Washington Counties will also be attending.

Anderson suggested that the Library Board needs more time to comprehensively study all the valid issues raised by the Task Force before making any decision. He noted that focusing on partnerships will be key, and asked staff to pull together recommendations for a future meeting.

The Board discussed how to interest potential partners, when no details are currently available. Commissioner Parker suggested that the Library Board focus on why partnerships are important, to help determine which partnerships should be pursued. The concept of a suburban service center for Ramsey County residents has been discussed for sometime at the County Board level. This could be a potential partner for the Library, depending on the location of the service center.
Nemitz noted that the Ramsey County Library system is an extremely successful model for library systems. Our operation is lean and efficient, and great at providing basic library services. We focus on customer service and resources, not facilities. We have not focused on garnering prestige, simply on meeting the needs of our customers.

**NEXT STEPS:**
The Board discussed the next steps that are needed to move forward with facilities planning for the northwest area. The following steps were outlined:

1. Define needed services (services/programs should define facilities)
2. Explore partnerships
3. Broader focus (county, region)
4. Technology (efficiency, relevancy)
5. Sustainability, financial stewardship (environmental)
6. Access to facilities/adequate parking
7. Join/gathering place
8. Maintain core mission (patron focus)
9. Commitment to excellence (unique, motivating, shining star)
10. What do we give up (not do) in order to excel in other areas?

Nemitz recommended that the Board focus on the Roseville expansion in the near term, with planning for the northwest area to be completed in the next 12-18 months. The Board concurred with this recommendation, and asked Nemitz to bring an implementation plan for this process to the next meeting.

**MEETING ADJOURNED 9:00 p.m.**

**Next meeting: March 15, 2006, RCL – North St. Paul, 7:00 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Larson
Library Board Coordinator