
Minutes of the Ramsey County Library Board July 22, 2020

LIBRARY BOARD PRESENT:

Claire Chang, Marisol Chiclana-Ayala, Sida Ly-Xiong, Sylvia Neblett, Gwen Willems, Steve Woods

LIBRARY BOARD ABSENT:

Deb Berry

STAFF PRESENT:

Jill Boldenow, Library Director; Mary Larson, Library Board Coordinator; Carol Jackson, Shoreview Library Manager; Lynn Wyman, Deputy Director

OTHERS PRESENT:

K. Berglund

CALL TO ORDER:

Neblett called the virtual meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom video conference.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chang made a motion to approve the agenda for July 22, 2020, as presented. Ly-Xiong seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Woods made a motion to approve the minutes of June 17, 2020 as presented. Chang seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Summer Break @ Home with Your Library – Kids and teens are loving the RCL Summer Break! Already, 888 people have requested 1,543 Summer Learning Program participation bags, which each contain a free book. In addition to these bags, we have begun to distribute Read. Make. Do kits and Maker Teen @ Home kits. Kudos to everyone for a great group effort! Children's and teen librarians have produced creative kits and a thoughtful distribution plan. The kits all sport fun, colorful designs. These and other elements of the Summer Learning Program are made possible by the sponsorship of the Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries. Thanks, all!

Virtual Programs – The Library has over 100 virtual events queued up for the summer. Check out the events calendar on rclreads.org. One highlight is that we are participating in the One Book | One Minnesota program, a statewide book club that invites Minnesotans of all ages to read and discuss a common title. The current title is *A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota*, edited by Sun Yung Shin and featuring essays by Minnesota writers of color. In July and August, we will host book club discussions and a reading with Carolyn Holbrook, one of the book's writers. Our copies are all circulating, but the book is available as a free download on Ebooks Minnesota through August 23.

FRIENDS OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY LIBRARIES REPORT:

Just as Ramsey County Library needed to quickly pivot to develop modified services due to the pandemic, so too did the Friends. While it has been discouraging to cancel much-loved events, we remain 100% committed to providing financial and volunteer support to Ramsey County Library and we are keeping our focus on the opportunities as we look to the future.

The Friends staff, board and volunteers are currently hard at work on:

- Personal phone connections with Friends members, processing 2020 membership renewals, and welcoming 18 lapsed members back
- COVID-19 Preparedness Plan to lay out the guidelines for Friends staff and limited volunteers to enter RCL buildings
- Robust online sales at Maplewood and Roseville and new plans for additional online book sale venues to offset revenue losses due to the bookstore closures and cancellation of our fall book sale
- Exploring virtual alternatives for the Friends 2020 Author Luncheon and the 2021 Gala
- Putting the finishing touches on new planned giving materials and expanding our Legacy Circle Program.
- Creating new opportunities for business partnerships
- Seeking new and creative ways to share the Friends impact with library patrons including:
 - Stickers and tags with the Friends logo created for the Summer Learning Program participant bags and take-home kits
 - Friends notes/flyers to add to curbside pick-up bags from online sales
 - Acknowledgment of Friends funded programs and resources in the Explore modified newsletter

We miss interacting with library staff and look forward to the time when it is safe for library operations to open to the public.

TRUSTEE TOPIC HIGHLIGHT – OPEN MEETING LAW:

The Library Board's Executive Committee proposes to discuss a Trustee topic at each Board meeting. This may be a review of something from the orientation packet or another source that helps to illuminate Trustee roles. This month, the Neblett led a discussion related to Minnesota's Open Meeting Law. The three purposes of the law are:

- To prohibit actions being taken at a secret meeting where it is impossible for the public to be informed or to determine improper influences.
- To assure the public's right to be informed.
- To assure the public's right to share their opinions.

Rules regarding quorum were also discussed, along with email communications.

2021 LIBRARY OPERATING BUDGET:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on County revenues, the County Manager will propose a modified 2021 budget. At the Library Board's June meeting, the Director and Board discussed strategies to address possible reductions to the Library's operating budget. On June 24, the Director met with the County Manager's budget team.

In addition to the proposed reductions already discussed, the County Manager proposed the permanent elimination of adult late fees, similar to what was approved for children and teen materials as of January 2020. Since the start of the pandemic and implementation of curbside services at the Library, adult late fees have been temporarily suspended. If continued into 2021, an estimated \$190,000 in revenue from adult late fees would need to be absorbed or offset. The Library's Fund Balance could be utilized for this in 2021, with additional levy support requested during the 2022-2023 budget process. The Library's Fund Balance is being reviewed to determine its ability to support the proposed obligations.

The Library Board discussed the recommendation, and whether the change would impact workload and FTE. Boldenow noted that the issue was discussed during the previous budget cycle when juvenile fines were under consideration. Staff workload is not affected since the majority of library fines are collected during the self-checkout process or via online payments.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP) BUDGET:

Every two years, the County develops a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget to support capital projects through bond financing. In 2019, the Library requested CIP funds to support a renovation of the library in Maplewood. This major project, with a total budget of \$3.77 million, was recommended and approved for CIP funding by the County Board. This project was to be funded in part with Library fund balance (\$1 million) and funds from bonding in 2021 (\$2.77 million).

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on housing insecurity, the County Manager is proposing to reprioritize bond-financed projects. At this meeting, the Library Director will update the Board on the proposal to fund the renovation at the Library in Maplewood entirely through Library fund balance instead of bond funds.

The Board members discussed whether the Maplewood renovation should continue, and potential timing of the project. Boldenow noted that the project design is currently in the conceptual stage, and service modifications during the pandemic as well as the incorporation of a Ramsey County Service Center in the facility would need to be included in the final design. She noted that our facilities could be even more agile, with more self-service features located near the entrance.

The Library Board also discussed the feasibility of drawing down the Library's Fund Balance to finance the Maplewood renovation. Board members expressed concern about spending down the Fund Balance. Additional discussions will be scheduled at future meetings.

MODIFIED LIBRARY SERVICES & COUNTY SERVICE CENTERS:

The latest weekly report tracking modified Library services shows significant growth in curbside service at every library week after week. Public computing, home delivery, and virtual programs and digital resources address key barriers to access for many patrons. In addition to the services listed in this report, staff are distributing creative kits for kids and teens throughout summer. Staff have managed record numbers of returns and phone calls as well. Overall, Library staff are rising to meet increased service demands of various sorts every day.

Staff is are exploring process changes to address unsustainable service growth. Next week or soon thereafter, we will shift to in-person holds pickup and self-checkout in the lobby at RCL-Roseville only. This is a pilot project that will inform whether we move to this model elsewhere.

July 27 is the tentative date for introducing Workforce programming on weekdays in the community program rooms at RCL-Roseville and RCL-Maplewood. Workforce Solutions is partnering with us and three sites at Saint Paul Public Library to ramp up resources for jobs seekers at this time of unprecedented unemployment.

In August, we will also see the integration of Ramsey County Navigators and Financial Assistance staff at three of our libraries: RCL-Maplewood, Shoreview, and Roseville. This is a pilot seeking to connect residents to a wide variety of County services—virtually, through assistance completing forms, or through meeting a Financial Services counselor in the library.

The Library Board discussed how the Service Centers will be evaluated, including the impact on Library staff and services. Staff noted that a resident survey is scheduled for November.

COUNTY MANAGER MEETING AGENDA:

Ramsey County Manager Ryan O'Connor will attend the Library Board's August 19, 2020 meeting. Library Board members discussed the agenda and timeframe for this meeting. The Board members determined that Library Board and County Board roles and responsibilities and the relationship between the Boards should be the topic.

The Library Board also discussed whether a facilitator should be identified, but decided against that option so that all members can participate in the discussion. Neblett and Chang will work together to develop talking points for the conversation, which will be scheduled for one hour of the meeting. Staff will forward the conversation outline to the County Manager prior to the meeting.

NEXT MEETING:

August 19, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

Neblett adjourned the virtual meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Larson
Library Board Coordinator