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## Minutes of the Ramsey County Library Board August 19, 2020

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**LIBRARY BOARD PRESENT:**

Deb Berry, Claire Chang, Marisol Chiclana-Ayala, Sida Ly-Xiong, Gwen Willems, Steve Woods

**LIBRARY BOARD ABSENT:**

Sylvia Neblett

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Jill Boldenow, Library Director; Mary Larson, Library Board Coordinator; Lynn Wyman, Deputy Director; Jeff Eide, Senior Library Manager

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Mary Jo McGuire, Ramsey County Commissioner; Cyndi Cook, Friends of the Ramsey County Library Executive Director; Johanna Berg, Deputy Ramsey County Manager; Jean Krueger, Ramsey County Property Management Director; Jennifer McMaster, Ramsey County Project Manager

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**CALL TO ORDER:**

Willems called the virtual meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. via Zoom video conference.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No public comment.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Chiclana-Ayala made a motion to approve the agenda for August 19, 2020, as presented. Berry seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Berry made a motion to approve the minutes of July 22, 2020 as presented. Chang seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

All libraries will be closed Monday, September 7, 2020.

**Grab & Go Service at RCL-Roseville** – On July 27, we shifted from curbside pickup to Grab & Go holds pickup service at the library in Roseville. This library allows up to five patrons at a time to enter the building to access the holds shelf and self-check-out terminals. Grab & Go is a more efficient circulation process—and much needed at our busiest site. Staff described the shift as a “game-changer.” Patrons who need or prefer curbside pickup may request that their held materials be sent to any other library location.

**Service Growth** – Last week (August 3-9, 2020), Ramsey County Library had a total circulation of 22,617 physical items. This includes items checked out via Grab & Go service at RCL-Roseville and items checked out via curbside pickup at the other six Library locations. In comparison, the first week of modified Library services (March 23-29, 2020) had a total circulation of 5,036 items. Circulation increased 449% since week one.

The Library launched public computing appointments the week of June 1-7, accommodating 92 appointments. Since then, the Library increased the available computers at RCL-Roseville from seven to seventeen. Last week (August 3-9, 2020), we had 408 computer appointments. This represents a 443% increase from week one.

During this modified service period, the Library has consistently seen large e-resource circulation. Circulation of e-resources (e-books, e-audiobooks, and e-magazines) from March through July, 2020, averaged over 55,000 per month. In comparison, the same time period in 2019 had an average circulation of about 39,000 e-resources per month. The increase in 2020 is 41%.

At the same time, staff have initiated all new virtual and take-home programming to deliver Summer Learning Program and other services. These are just some highlights – among many examples of outstanding service provision. Thank you to staff throughout Ramsey County Library for meeting growing and changing service demands through excellent service design, delivery, and modification.

**Community Career Labs Open at Libraries** – RCL-Maplewood and RCL-Roseville are among the six sites now hosting Community Career Labs in partnership with Ramsey County Workforce Solutions. The Career Labs, open weekdays, provide free workforce support to job seekers experiencing adverse job and economic impact as a result of COVID-19. Other Career Lab sites are now open at Saint Paul Public Library’s Dayton’s Bluff, Rice Street, Rondo Community Library, and Sun Ray locations. Other sites will be opening as well.

The Community Career Labs provide reservation-based computer access, printing and copying, digital literacy programs, job search and resume assistance, and other workforce support programs through 2020. All sites require face coverings and social distancing. Career Labs are funded from the federal CARES Act. Reservations for Ramsey County Library Career Labs are taken at 651-266-8500. Saint Paul Public Library location reservations are taken at 651-793-1699.

**County Service Centers Opening August 17** – County navigators and embedded experts in financial services and other areas will begin staffing County service centers on August 17 at libraries in Roseville, Maplewood, and Shoreview, in addition to centers at the Plato Building and East Building in downtown St. Paul.

#### **FRIENDS OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY LIBRARIES REPORT:**

##### **New in 2020: Curbside \$5.00 Bag Sale**

The global pandemic may have temporarily closed down the Friends used bookstore operations and cancelled our annual used book sale at Shoreview, but the Friends intrepid volunteers are not to be stopped and are working on alternative book sales following COVID-19 safe practices. We will be offering pre-bagged selections of books to be reserved in advance by genre and paid for curbside in September at Shoreview. Friends’ members receive an extra perk—buy one bag and get one free!

##### **Coming Soon – Friends Virtual Used Bookstore**

While the libraries and Friends used bookstores have been closed to the public during the pandemic, the Friends bookstore volunteers have been working diligently and socially distanced to create a collection of used books and media materials that will be available for purchase online and picked up curbside at the Shoreview Library. Watch for details on our website: [www.rclfriends.org](http://www.rclfriends.org) or follow us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

#### **CTEP AGREEMENT WITH ST. PAUL NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK:**

Since 2010, Ramsey County Library has entered into annual agreements with St. Paul Neighborhood Network to serve as a host site for the Community Technology Empowerment Project (CTEP) AmeriCorps Program. The Library hosts CTEP AmeriCorps members who provide digital literacy and job search programming for teens and adults at libraries and in the community.

CTEP members serve full-time for a year beginning in September. They receive a stipend, a health care option, and an educational award upon completion of service.

Ramsey County Library pays a stipend of \$9,200 per first year member, and \$10,000 for second year members. For the 2020-2021 program we were awarded four CTEP member positions, one first year member and three second year members for a total payment of \$39,200. The Library Board must approve expenditures of \$25,000 or more.

Berry made a motion to approve the Library Director to sign the 2020-2021 Host Site Agreement with St. Paul Neighborhood Network and host four CTEP AmeriCorps members at a cost not to exceed \$39,200. Chang seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**WRITE OFF UNCOLLECTIBLE DEBT:**

According to the Library's Accounts Receivable procedures, when an account is determined to be uncollectible, the account may be written off the Library's financial accounting records and no longer recognized as an account receivable for financial reporting purposes. The write-off of a receivable should be considered only when one or more of the following criteria have been met:

- At least six years have elapsed since the debt was incurred;
- All reasonable and appropriate collection efforts have been exhausted;
- The Library determines that further collection efforts are not in the best economic interests of the County;
- No reasonable expectation of payment can be expected.

The Library shall obtain approval from the Ramsey County Finance Department to write-off uncollectible accounts. Write-off of individual debts \$1,000.00 or more must be approved by the Library Board.

The Library identified 4,281 patron accounts meeting the criteria for write-off, totaling \$65,747.16. Two of these accounts totaling \$3,275.99 exceeded the \$1,000 threshold requiring Library Board approval and 58.8% are \$10 or less. The proposed write-offs will be forwarded to the County Finance Department as outlined in the Library's Accounts Receivable procedures.

Berry made a motion to approve the write-off of two accounts totaling \$3,275.99 exceeding the \$1,000 threshold and authorize Library staff to forward the write-off of uncollectible debt in the amount of \$65,747.16 to the Ramsey County Finance Department as outlined in the Library's Accounts Receivable procedures. Chang seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**2020 SECOND QUARTER REPORTS:**

On a quarterly basis, Library staff presents several reports to the Library Board for information and discussion. The reports include:

- Workplan Report – prepared by Jill Boldenow, Library Director
- Financial Report – prepared by Mary Larson, Financial Manager
- Statistical Report – prepared by Jeff Eide, Senior Library Manager
- Incident Report – prepared by Mickey Ladich, Property Manager

The Library Board accepted the second quarter reports as presented.

**LIBRARY FINES AND FEES POLICY:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused serious financial and health crises for residents, with disproportionate impacts on people of color. Since March, the Library has suspended overdue fines in recognition of the fact that some patrons should not or cannot travel to the Library for health or other reasons. The fines suspension prevents residents from accumulating fines or losing borrowing privileges under the circumstances.

Library staff propose to extend the elimination of overdue fines through 2021. We recommend that the Board revise the Fines and Fees policy to reflect this. The Board may review and revise this policy again on its normal cycle at the end of 2021.

This policy change—to suspend all overdue fines—would expand on the Board’s previous decision to eliminate overdue fines on children’s and teen materials as of January 1, 2020. That policy revision focused on youth and parents in order to support literacy and student success and to hold youth harmless for overdue fines and suspended privileges that were often not in their control.

All patrons would experience relief from a policy change that eliminates overdue fines on all materials. Foregoing overdue fines in 2021 would decrease Library revenue by approximately \$190,000. The Library proposes to offset this by utilizing fund balance. The Library would continue to charge patrons fees for lost or damaged items. If approved, Library staff will bring a draft policy revision to the Board for approval before the end of the year.

The Library Board members indicated their support for with the proposal, noting that elimination of late fees follows a national trend in libraries. Procedural and budget impacts were briefly discussed. Commissioner McGuire indicated that Ramsey County is working to eliminate fees for County services to remove barriers for low income residents.

Berry made a motion to direct staff to draft a revised Fines and Fees policy for Library Board action before the end of the year. Chiclana-Ayala seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll-call vote.

#### **RENOVATION PROJECT AT RCL-MAPLEWOOD:**

The Library has scheduled a remodeling project at RCL-Maplewood in 2020-2021 with a budget of \$3.7 million. The project is based on a pre-design analysis by MSR Design that outlined issues, solutions, and budget requirements. Input was gathered from the community, library users and staff, and was the most urgent of all the projects identified in the facilities master plan.

As noted at the Library Board’s July 2020 meeting, the financing for this project has changed. Originally 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, the County Manager is reprioritizing bond-financed projects. The County proposes that the renovation at the Library in Maplewood be funded through Library fund balance.

Boldenow reviewed this project at the meeting, noting that issues with the current facility include noise, staff sightlines, worn furnishings and finishes, underutilized lobby use, and children and teen collection areas. The vacant café space also needs to be included in the renovation. She outlined the recommendations for changes in the pre-design report from MSR. Boldenow will work with Property Management to produce a project timeline to bring to a future Board meeting.

The Library Board members discussed the need for flexibility in the facility, and budget concerns including use of fund balance and timing of the project.

#### **RAMSEY COUNTY UPDATES:**

Commissioner McGuire reported that the new navigators started August 17 at several locations including the three regional libraries in Ramsey County. The County is working on several issues related to the pandemic, including food insecurity, homelessness, job insecurity, etc. She noted that residents are grateful for library services being offered during the pandemic.

**NEXT MEETING:**

September 16, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Following a motion by Chiclana-Ayala and a second by Berry, Willems adjourned the virtual meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Larson  
Library Board Coordinator