
Minutes of the Ramsey County Library Board September 16, 2020

LIBRARY BOARD PRESENT:

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

STAFF PRESENT:

Jill Boldenow, Library Director; Mary Larson, Library Board Coordinator; Lynn Wyman, Deputy Director; Jeff Eide, Senior Library Manager; Chuck Wettergren, Digital Services Manager; Carol Jackson, Shoreview Library Manager; Monica Stratton, Maplewood Library Manager

OTHERS PRESENT:

Ryan O'Connor, Ramsey County Manager; 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

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:

Woods made a motion to approve the agenda for September 16, 2020, as presented. Willems seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

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

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Summer Learning Program – A grateful parent wrote last week to say, “COVID-19 upended our lives in many ways this summer, but the *Read. Make. Do.* kits were a silver lining during an otherwise difficult and challenging time. It was an absolute joy watching my daughter learn, discover, and create.” Participants Julia and Nick also sent their thanks.

In all, patrons picked up 904 *Read. Make. Do.* kits this summer. *Maker Teen* kits were also a hit, with 878 distributed. We also distributed over 3,000 Summer Learning Program participation bags, which included a free book, to kids and teens. Teens in the program wrote over 2,400 book reviews. Our online platform, Beanstack, tracked three summer challenges engaging pre-K children, kids, and teens. In total, these participants read and logged over 10,300 books this summer! Kudos to RCL's children's and teen librarians and all the staff who supported the Summer Learning Program! Thanks, too, to the Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries for their generous financial support of this program.

2021 Supplementary Budget Process – On September 3, 2020, I joined colleagues in the Economic Growth and Community Investment service team to present to the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners as part of the 2021 supplementary budget process. I described the Library's current modified services and acknowledged the big lift from Library staff and colleagues to meet resident needs at this time.

The supplementary budget process is typically focused on performance measures. I discussed one key performance measure in depth—the number of youth with active library accounts—and the strategies used to raise this measure. I spoke about the Library’s efforts to advance racial equity and community engagement, and I highlighted an Open Data Portal story, [“Ramsey County Library by the Numbers,”](#) which showcases the Library’s vital resources for all ages.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on County revenues, the County Manager has proposed a modified 2021 budget. The proposed changes to the Library’s operations budget include:

- A decrease in revenue of \$190,000 in 2021 to reflect the elimination of fines on adult materials.
- A decrease in levy funding of \$332,537 in 2021, to be offset by reducing the Library’s personnel budget by \$166,537 and using \$166,000 from fund balance.

The County also reprioritized capital projects to be funded by bonds in 2021. The County recommends that the renovation of the Library in Maplewood be funded with Library fund balance, not bond funds as previously planned.

FRIENDS OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY LIBRARIES REPORT:

The **Friends volunteers** answer to the pandemic and cancellation of the annual book sale at Shoreview? Hold a socially distanced curbside bag sale! Sales are going very well--\$1,400 so far--a great help in reaching our 2020 goal of \$130,000 for RCL grants. This sale is also getting recently weeded books into the hands of enthusiastic readers throughout the community and making so many people happy.

Here are just a few comments:

"I picked up my two bags this morning. Some new authors. Some old friends. And not one book I have read before. Thank you Friends! Christmas in September!"

"I got lots of good books and will be back for more. Thanks"

"RCL Friends volunteers are the BEST!"

Thank you, **Shoreview Kowalski's!** We were running low on bags and Kowalski’s came to the rescue by donating grocery bags for the Curbside Bag Sale.

COUNTY MANAGER MEETING:

Ramsey County Library Board members welcomed Ramsey County Manager Ryan O’Connor for discussion on the roles of the County and the Library Board. Board members introduced themselves, and O’Connor outlined his background with the County before being hired as County Manager in 2018.

O’Connor indicated that Ramsey County adopted a new mission, vision and goals in 2015, and implemented four service teams to encourage collaboration between County departments. He noted that libraries are one of the most trusted institutions in community, evidenced by the wildly successful MNSure navigators located at RCL. The collaboration illustrated that residents welcomed the opportunity receive County services outside the downtown area, and spearheaded the Residents First initiative that now includes service centers in the three regional Ramsey County libraries.

The Library Board members voiced their support for the service centers, noting that Ramsey County Library has an extensive history with community engagement initiatives and equity training for staff. They shared concerns about the impact of providing the new services on library patrons and asked to be included in future planning.

O'Connor and the Library Board discussed creating a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to clarify the roles of the County Board and the Library Board. He noted that Ramsey County District Courts and the County Board signed an MOU in 2019. The Library Board members expressed interest in meeting with the County Board to further clarify roles and responsibilities. Deputy County Manager Johanna Berg and Library Director Jill Boldenow will take the lead on keeping the Library Board involved and informed on discussions related to service centers in the libraries.

LIBRARY FINES AND FEES POLICY:

At the Library Board's August meeting, the Board directed staff to revise the Fines and Fees policy to reflect the suspension of overdue fines for all materials. This documents a practice that the Library instituted in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Library suspended overdue fines in recognition of the fact that some patrons should not or cannot travel to the Library for health or other pandemic-related reasons. The fines suspension prevents residents from accumulating fines or losing borrowing privileges under the circumstances.

The revised Fines and Fees policy reflects the overdue fines suspension. The Board will review this policy again on its normal cycle at the end of 2021. Foregoing overdue fines in 2021 will 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.

Ly-Xiong made a motion to approve the updated Fines and Fees Policy. Willems seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

LIBRARY ACCOUNTS POLICY:

With the Library Board approval of the Fines and Fees policy revision, staff recommend a revision of the Library Accounts policy as well. This revision removes the reference to Fine-Free accounts, which are not needed and would be a confusing designation to include under these circumstances.

Chiclana-Ayala made a motion to approve the updated Library Accounts Policy. Ly-Xiong seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL AND SALARY REVIEW:

The Library Board went into Executive Session to discuss the 2020 performance appraisal and salary review for Library Director Jill Boldenow. Following the conclusion of the Executive Session, Berry made a motion to award Boldenow a merit increase of 2% added to her base salary, effective September 12, 2020. Chang seconded the motion, which was approved via majority roll call vote, with Chiclana-Ayala dissenting.

NEXT MEETING:

October 21, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

Following a motion by Woods and a second by Berry, Neblett adjourned the virtual meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Larson
Library Board Coordinator