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## Minutes of the Ramsey County Library Board December 16, 2020

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**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

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Mary Jo McGuire, Ramsey County Commissioner; Karen Saltis, Ramsey County Human Services; Paula Mielke, Falcon Heights resident; Kim Vanderwall, Roseville resident

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**CALL TO ORDER:**

Neblett called the virtual meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. via Zoom video conference. Karen Saltis was introduced as the Interim Library Director effective January 6, 2021.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No public comment.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Willems made a motion to approve the minutes of November 18, 2020 as presented. Chiclana-Ayala seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

**Important Dates** – All libraries are closed December 24, December 25, and January 1. All libraries close at 5:00 p.m. on December 31.

**Ramsey County Library named a Star Library** – For the eighth consecutive year, RCL has been named a Star Library by *Library Journal*. This designation is given to libraries with a high index rating based on per capita library visits, print and e-circulation, program attendance, public internet computer use, WiFi sessions, and access of other online content. We were among thirty-two libraries nationally with budgets between \$10-\$30 million to be honored. Minnesota libraries honored in other budget categories were Ely Public Library and Two Harbors Public Library.

**Thank you!** – As we approach the end of 2020, there is much to reflect on. First, I want to express my profound gratitude to Library staff, Board Members, Friends, volunteers, and others for their service in this difficult year. I recognize all that you have done and the impact you have made on residents. Just this week, we heard from two patrons whose families greatly appreciate Ramsey County Library services and staff dedication this year.

*One said, "While being largely homebound since March, my kids have participated in summer reading programs from home through the gift of a book each, they have engaged in at-home creative activities, and I have supported my mental health through (many, many) digital audiobooks while I take daily walks. Prior to the pandemic, we also benefitted through the Paws to Read program and used the library as a quiet space for group study projects...I must also mention that the librarians and staff that I have had the occasion or need to consult are always knowledgeable, helpful, flexible, and welcoming – in person and over the phone. The library's value to*

*us is incalculable and while I don't often pause to reflect, I just wanted you to know how grateful we are for you all.*

*Another commented, "I wanted to write to let you know how much my family appreciates the library's efforts to provide books during COVID. Books were second only to food during our family's efforts to socially distance over the last eight months. My husband drove a 6 hour round trip to pick up books every other week (we were staying with and taking care of elderly parents). It was the bright point in my 10 year old daughter's summer and one of the few pleasures that we were able to still indulge in during an otherwise chaotic year. We appreciate the dedication of the staff that made this possible and hope that you all have a healthy and happy holiday season."*

Because I am moving to a new position in January, 2021, I am also reflecting on my career at Ramsey County Library. I have so much appreciation for this opportunity to work with terrific individuals and teams over these years to support learning, community, and equity.

I offer my best wishes to you and yours in 2021 and beyond, for good health and well-being, and continued success delivering transformative library services! Thank you.

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

**2020 Grant Commitment Fulfilled** - The Friends have fulfilled our \$130,000 grant commitment to RCL which supports the Library collection (including digital materials in high demand due to the COVID-19 modified services); in-person and virtual programming and other resources for adults, teens and children; the Summer Learning Program, and other programs and services.

**Virtual Happy Hour with William Kent Krueger** - 76 households dialed in via Zoom to enjoy a lively conversation in November between chart-topping novelist William Kent Krueger and Board Member Frank Harris. Attendees received a party pack with recipe cards and photo props and were treated to fun author trivia during the welcome session. Board President Ann Trapnell and Development Committee Chair Kate Huebsch announced the launch of the Friends new *Ruth Palmer Award*. We greatly appreciate the generosity of participants and donors for helping to raise more than \$2,500 to support the Library.

**Friends Used Bookstore Goes Virtual** - Our Virtual Used Bookstore is now open for business! Books of many genres, videos, games, music CDs and audiobooks are available to browse, order online and pick up "grab and go" style at the library in Shoreview. Click the tab "Buy and Donate Books" on the Friends website and follow the prompts to the Virtual Used Bookstore.

**Planned Giving, Legacy Circle, and Ruth Palmer Award** - The Development Committee has been working in high gear in 2020. They recently completed a significant renewal of our planned giving materials, enhanced the Legacy Circle Program, and launched the new *Ruth Palmer Award*. The Legacy Circle now has 20 confirmed members who have included the Friends in their will or estate planning. In the spring of 2021, Friends members will begin nominations for the first *Ruth Palmer Award* and Legacy Circle members will select the winner to be announced in the fall.

**Friends to Hold Online Auction in February** - Due to the pandemic, we are not able to safely hold the annual Friends Gala in 2021. However, we're bringing back the online silent auction to support the Library from the comfort of your own home. The online auction opens Thursday, February 18 and runs through Thursday, February 25. Plan to do some shopping and liven up the gray winter days while supporting Ramsey County Library. Watch for auction item news in January and February on our website [www.rclfriends.org](http://www.rclfriends.org) and via our e-news and social media.

**Thank You to Northeast Bank, the Friends 2021 Signature Sponsor!**

**MAPLEWOOD RENOVATION PROJECT:**

Library staff continue to work with Ramsey County Property Management to develop a project plan to guide the renovation project at RCL-Maplewood. The Library has a pre-design for a renovation, but there are additional considerations that the pre-design does not address including repurposing the vacant café space and accommodating county service center programming.

It is recommended that the Library pursue a design-build delivery method that accommodates an additional pre-design phase to determine the needs and methods for incorporating service center elements, possibly through an addition. Property Management is close to releasing a Request for Solicitations. The Library Board discussed the possibility of adding more stop options to the contract based on funding availability and other factors. Boldenow noted that the Library Board should appoint a representative to the proposal review and interview team for the finalists in the solicitation process.

A preliminary schedule for this project is:

- RFP release: Early January, 2021
- Solicitation responses due: End of January, 2021
- Anticipated start date: April, 2021
- Pre-design phase: through July or August, 2021
- Implementation: Fall, 2021

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP) BUDGET REQUESTS:**

Every two years, Ramsey County develops a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget to support capital projects through bond financing. Requests for 2022-2023 CIP funds are due December 28, 2020. The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners will approve CIP project funding at the end of the year in 2021. Funds for budget year 2022 projects can be spent in the spring of 2022; funds for budget year 2023 projects can be spent in the spring of 2023.

Library staff propose requesting CIP funds for the following projects:

- At RCL-Maplewood, design and renovate spaces north of the lobby, including the Community Room and former café. The project purpose is to increase capacity to serve large groups, improve flexibility to support various sized events, and repurpose currently unused space. This is not in the scope of the currently funded renovation project. This project will coordinate with any building changes that support county service center operations—a project that would be funded separately.
- At RCL-Roseville, design and renovate space on the first floor to house a new digital learning center. The project purpose is to create a highly visible space to engage visitors with maker and digital literacy programming, to address the excess demand for bookable programming spaces, and to safely house and secure specialized program equipment. This project may be located in a newly enclosed atrium space or in the current café space, which is vacant following termination of the lease by the coffee shop franchisee.

**BENCHMARKING RAMSEY COUNTY LIBRARY TO OTHER COMPARABLE LIBRARIES:**

Jeff Eide, Senior Library Manager at the Ramsey County Library in Roseville, compiles a report each year showing comparisons between Ramsey County Library (RCL), the MELSA libraries, and other library systems of similar populations served and total income. Data used in the report is from 2019.

Eide noted that circulation of books has declined, but is offset by growth in electronic books. DVD usage has also declined, but still accounts for more than 20% of checkout statistics for the year. RCL is at or near the top in statistics tracking overall circulation, visits, and program attendance when compared with local and national peers.

Ramsey County Library was named a Star Library for the 8<sup>th</sup> year in a row by the Library Journal Index for 2019. The Index rates library visits, circulation, program attendance, public Internet computer use and wi-fi sessions to determine its ratings.

The Library Board discussed the statistical report, including the impact of the pandemic on 2020 usage numbers. Board members questioned whether Library Director salaries were available for comparison in the databases used by Eide to prepare the report, and asked for information to be provided at the next Library Board meeting as part of the Director Search update.

#### **RAMSEY COUNTY CONDUCT POLICY:**

Ramsey County is drafting a policy regarding conduct at County buildings and properties. The Library currently has a conduct policy (the “Library Use” policy) guiding acceptable behavior in Library spaces, which have some unique legal requirements. At the November meeting, the Library Board discussed whether the County policy should exclude the Library in order to retain existing Library policy and staff procedures; or whether the County policy will replace the Library Use policy and related staff procedures.

Boldenow reported that the County is pursuing a single Conduct Policy, to avoid confusion at the service centers located within Library facilities. Library-specific clauses including banning procedures are still under discussion for the County policy. Library Board members reiterated their desire for a separate Library policy, citing American Library Association recommendations and other concerns.

#### **TASK FORCE UPDATE:**

Willems reported that the task force created to address Library Board and Ramsey County roles and responsibilities is comprised of herself, Chiclana-Ayala, and Woods representing the Library Board. County staff are represented by Lidiya Girma and Elizabeth Tolzmann, and the County Board representatives are Commissioners McGuire, Frethem, and Matas-Castillo. The group has three meetings scheduled through the end of January, at which time the Task Force recommendations will come to the Library Board for discussion.

#### **LIBRARY DIRECTOR SEARCH PROCESS:**

Library Director Jill Boldenow is resigning from Ramsey County Library, with her last day to be January 5, 2021. Karen Saltis will serve as the Interim Library Director during the search process, starting January 6. Saltis, the Director of Administration for Health & Wellness, and has been with Ramsey County since 1989 in a variety of roles, and has also served as a school board member. Boldenow will meet with Saltis to go over the director duties, and Library Board Chair Sylvia Neblett will put together an orientation packet on the Library Board’s roles and responsibilities.

#### **GOLD CARD PRESENTATION AND FAREWELL TO BOLDENOW:**

After a break at the conclusion of the Library Board’s business meeting, former Board members Paula Mielke and Kim Vanderwall joined the Library Board in presenting a Ramsey County Library Gold Card to Jill Boldenow for her service as Library Director from 2016-2020.

During her tenure as Library Director, Boldenow led the development of the 2019-2029 Facilities Master Plan, the launch of a new digital library at rclreads.org, and the introduction of the Popup Library and expanded community engagement initiatives. She led policy changes to remove barriers to library access, including the elimination of overdue fees for library materials. Her swift response to the COVID-19 pandemic helped continue library offerings through modified services that are keeping both staff and patrons safe.

The Library Board members thanked her for her service and wished Boldenow good luck in her new position.

**NEXT MEETING:**

January 20, 2021 – 6:30 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Following a motion by Woods and a second by Chiclana-Ayala, Neblett adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Larson  
Library Board Coordinator