

Minutes of the Ramsey County Library Board July 21, 2021

LIBRARY TRUSTEES PRESENT:

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

LIBRARY TRUSTEES ABSENT:

Steve Woods

STAFF PRESENT:

Karen Saltis, Interim Library Director; Pang Yang, Deputy Director; Mary Larson, Library Board Coordinator; Chuck Wettergren, Digital Services Manager; Jeff Eide, Senior Library Manager; Carrie Lyons, Library Manager; Carol Jackson, Library Manager

OTHERS PRESENT:

Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County Commissioner and Liaison to the Library Board of Trustees; Lynn Belgea, Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries; Kristi Saksvig, EGCI Communications Director; Pa Na Lor, EGCI Communications Associate

CALL TO ORDER:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT:

The Library Board Trustees thanked Les Siphema for the written comments mailed to them each month.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Neblett made a motion to approve the agenda for July 21, 2021, as presented. Berry seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Larson noted that the June minutes should be amended to clarify the potential start date for in person children's programming. Willems made a motion to approve the minutes of June 16, 2021 as amended. Chiclana-Ayala seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

In addition to the written report submitted, Saltis noted that Library staff worked with Property Management and Housing Stability staff to assist an unsheltered individual living near one of the Libraries into Ramsey County's Mary Hall shelter.

The cooling center plan for Libraries may be activated this week if an Excessive Heat Watch is issued for nighttime temperatures. The Library cooling centers were last utilized in July 2016.

Special Note: Pang and I are placing an emphasis on empowering formal and informal leaders across the department to create options and make decisions as we work together to emerge from the pandemic and address the multitude of operational items that lie ahead. Staff at all levels have been engaged on workgroups such as service delivery redesign, incident reporting revisions, and the This Was 2020 Book project. Project Charters including goal statements, project plans, scope, benefits, and team members are utilized for each group.

Service Delivery Redesign: Below are a couple examples of service delivery adjustments that are occurring:

- **Grab Bags Become "Shelf Help": (Special thanks to Ann Wahlstrom for the content below)**
- Now that we have our patrons back in our branches, we're sunseting the Grab Bag program and turning it into "Shelf Help"!

- Shelf Help is a new reference service that will allow patrons to request a curated, emailed booklist based on their personal reading, listening, or watching habits. Shelf Help forms can be found in the exact same place on our website as the Grab Bags form . . . in fact, we've kept the pictures the same for now so it's easy for everyone to find.
- Now that our buildings are open for browsing, we need to turn our focus back on assisting patrons in the buildings. The kids team alone pulled more than 18,000 books (!!!!) since January 1 as part of the Grab Bags program and we simply can't keep up with that volume now that we have patrons back in person. We don't want to completely lose the service people have come to appreciate though, so we're modifying it to a booklist.
- Thanks to Erica Redden (teens), Meg Robertson (adults), and Ann Wahlstrom (kids) who are coordinating the effort to create booklists as part of this program.
- **Tech Help: (Special thanks to Jason Lyons for the content below)**
Tech help will continue in July/August by phone appointment on Tuesday/Wednesday (no change). However, on Thursday Tech Help will be offered by Zoom appointment instead of by phone. Patrons can sign up for ½ hour time slots.

Coming in August, Erica Redden will share with the Library Board what the teen area has learned during the pandemic and how they are incorporating those learnings into current and future programming. Stay tuned!

Conduct Policy Update: The County Manager's Policy and Planning division gave a final call out to key departments for input into the draft conduct policy. A small team of library staff provided feedback in addition to that previously provided by the Library Board. Next steps involve additional review by the EGCI Deputy County Manager and Policy Director. The approved final policy will be sent to the County Manager's Executive Team for awareness and subsequently posted to the county website mid to late July. I will share the final policy in the future with the Library Board. Staff will participate in creating/revising site specific procedures from July to October. The County Manager's compliance division will review and approve the procedures and work with site teams to create a training plan during mid-October to mid-November. Staff training is scheduled to occur mid-November through mid-December.

IT Consolidation Update: The consolidation efforts have two major areas. One is migrating infrastructure supporting library staff and operations, while the other is public computing. The priority of consolidation has focused on staff and operations. Major tasks, including moving staff computers and phones have been completed. Remaining equipment that requires special considerations around network configurations and server upgrades include self-check stations, security cameras, digital signage, RFID security gates, telephone messaging and automated material handlers (book sorting systems).

Self-check stations should be completed by the end of July. A new server was stood up in the County network and self-check PCs are being replaced at each library location. For security cameras, the Library is moving to a system managed by Property Management. Maplewood cameras were successfully migrated as a trial, and once a larger central server is installed, cameras at all the library locations will be connected.

The other major area of consolidation still pending will be migrating and updating public computing. Planning around public computing has been merged into a larger discussion related to the Residents First Program.

Maplewood Renovation Update: The Request for Proposals for the Maplewood renovation project was issued on July 14th and the pre-solicitation meeting is scheduled for July 29th with an anticipated contract start date of mid-October. Subsequently, pre-design work will commence and conclude early March 2022 with pre-design completed and project scope determined. Phase I and Phase II are scheduled for mid-March 2022 through the end of 2023. Construction is expected April 2023-December 2023. Staff and community input are part of the process.

Partnerships with County Departments: The Library continues to strengthen partnerships with other Ramsey County Departments. Below is a highlight of efforts that are occurring:

Workforce Solutions: Ongoing monthly leadership meetings have occurred since February. Discussions include how we can partner to continue offering on-site job assistance for patrons, connecting patrons who utilize job related library programs with additional resources in Workforce Solutions, and sharing information regarding the Workforce Solutions sponsored program, Right Track, to employ young adults in the Library paid for by American Rescue Plan dollars.

Community Economic Development (CED): Library and CED leadership met to strategize how we can build a stronger partnership. We will cross promote small business activities and plan to continue routine meetings to enhance our connections to the business community.

Information & Public Records Administration—Enterprise Services: Service Center staff will be accompanying Library outreach workers as a two-month pilot to make connections in the community and offer additional services. Evaluation of the experience will occur at the conclusion of the pilot.

Countywide Updates:

The **Technology Equity Team** is a countywide, inter-departmental partnership formed to develop a unified approach to advancing digital and technological equity. Pang Yang is the Library representative on this group. This body of work will have a fundamental focus on technology and tools needed for consistent and effective support, as well as producing community focused solutions to ensure residents' access to technology and information meaningfully, fairly, and equitably.

The team has adopted a framework developed by the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) to operate and build recommendations. The NDIA framework states: Digital inclusion refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of information and communication technologies. The five elements identified within the NDIA framework that make Digital Inclusion possible are:

1. Access to broadband internet service,
2. Internet enabled devices that meet the needs,
3. Access to digital literacy,
4. Quality technical support, and
5. Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration.

The Library is glad to be part of this team to provide input on this important work. More information will be provided in upcoming months.

FRIENDS OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY LIBRARIES REPORT:

Friends Executive Director search

The Friends Executive Director position was posted in June and the Board has begun conducting interviews in July. The new director announcement will be coming soon!

Thank you to the Roseville Area Community Foundation for supporting the RCL Summer Learning Program!

Friends Online Book Basket Auction and Virtual Author Talk

Thank you to the Shoreview Friends bookstore volunteers, Peggy, Miriam, and Marilyn, who curated 40+ themed book baskets for the *Friends Book Basket Mini Auction*. The online auction was held in July in conjunction with the *Friends Virtual Author Talk*, a wonderful evening with acclaimed authors, Jenna Blum and Lorna Landvik. This summer fundraiser raised over \$2,000. Proceeds support Ramsey County Library programming online and at the RCL locations in Maplewood, Mounds View, New Brighton, North St. Paul, Roseville, Shoreview, and White Bear Lake when in person programming resumes.

Friends Bookstores

Now that RCL is open and restrictions have been lifted, the Friends bookstore volunteers are back in action and the following used bookstores and book carts opened on July 1, 2021.

- Mounds View Used Book Cart
- Roseville Used Bookstore
- Shoreview Used Bookstore
- White Bear Lake Used Book Cart

While the Maplewood Used Bookstore will not be opening until October, the Maplewood volunteer team will be offering One Day Sales of gift quality books throughout the month of July starting on Monday, July 5. Hours during the month of July:

Mondays 10:00 am – 4:00 pm
Wednesdays 2:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Saturdays 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

We continue to offer the Virtual Used Bookstore option as well, where you can browse books online and purchase for grab-and-go pickup at RCL-Shoreview.

From June 1, 2021, until the fall the Friends will not be able to accept donations of books, DVDs, puzzles and games at any Ramsey County Library location as we have surpassed our storage capacity. We are grateful for the generous community donations of books!

Thank you to our 2021 Partners:

Northeast Bank
Roseville Area Community
Foundation
Silver Lake Smile Family Dentistry
Twin Cities Pioneer Press
John & Mary Bachhuber
Courtney & Andrew Billing
Mary & Wayne Carter
Cathy Croghan & Kathy Robbins
Jeff & Paula DeZellar
Mary Disch

Lambers & Alicia Fisher
Richard & Mary Fowler
Elizabeth & William Frank
Judith Froehling
Nancy & Jim Guerino
Frank & Jayne Harris
John W. Harris
Pamela Harris
Barbara Heinemann
Kate & Rob Huebsch
Steven Johnson & Susan Iverson

Forum Kamdar
Susan Miller
Wallace & Nancy Olson
Sheff & Deirdre Otis
Ron & Sandi Riach
Kris Robertson-Smith
Dr. Krishna Saxena
Swami & Lalitha Sundaram
John & Ann Trapnell
Susan Vandenberg
Rong Yang & Haifeng Xiao

AUDIO VISUAL MATERIALS CONTRACT EXTENSION:

Ramsey County Library obtains the bulk of its DVDs and music CDs through a primary audio-visual materials vendor, currently Baker & Taylor. The term of Baker & Taylor’s contract will expire on July 31, 2021, with no renewals remaining. The Library Board approved a one-year emergency extension last year due to the pandemic.

In accordance with Ramsey County policy, a solicitation process would typically begin for a new vendor. Following discussions between Library and Procurement staff, it was determined that additional time was desired to evaluate whether a Request for Proposals (RFP) would better serve the Library’s needs versus a Request for Bids (RFB). The RFP allows for consideration of factors other than cost, where the RFB awards the contract to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder.

Due to the time needed to evaluate the solicitation type, a backlog of pandemic-related solicitation requests, and a staffing shortage in Procurement that was only recently filled, it was determined that the solicitation process could not be completed in a timely manner. The Library Board has the authority to extend the current contract for another year with the same terms, which Baker & Taylor has agreed to do.

Willems made a motion to authorize the Library Director to approve the extension of the primary audio-visual materials contract with Baker & Taylor for a one-year period to run from August 1, 2021 through July 31, 2022, with all terms and conditions of the original contract to remain in force. Chiclana-Ayala seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

ECF GRANT APPLICATION:

Ramsey County Library is investigating applying for monies made available through the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF). The ECF program was created under the American Rescue Plan Act in 2021 to provide funding for schools and libraries to address lack of home connectivity that became evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. These funds would potentially pay for eligible equipment and/or services for library patrons who lack connected devices and/or broadband access.

Equipment and services covered by the ECF program includes:

1. Wi-Fi hotspots
2. Modems
3. Routers
4. Devices that combine a modem and router
5. Connected devices (laptops, tablets, etc.) – no desktop PCs, cell phones or software
6. Broadband connectivity and internet access

Ramsey County Library is working with St. Paul Public Library and Ramsey County Workforce Solutions to develop a collaborative and unified approach to addressing the needs of patrons meeting the program criteria while at the same time supporting the Ramsey County Technical Equity framework. The grant program is administered via E-rate, with the total dollar amount of the request yet to be determined.

The ECF application filing window will close on August 13, 2021. Requests for funding are for eligible equipment and services between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022. A competitive bidding process is not required, but applicants must certify they have complied with all applicable local and state procurement requirements. Saltis and Wettergren provided background information on the grant requirements and funding process.

Neblett made a motion to authorize Ramsey County Library to submit a request to fund eligible equipment and services for library patrons who lack appropriate equipment and access. Because of the limited window of opportunity, authorize the Library Director to approve any related requests for purchased over \$25,000. Any purchases would be contingent on being approved for and receiving funding. Chiclana-Ayala seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

COMMUNICATIONS OVERVIEW:

Kristi Saksvig, Communications Director for Ramsey County's Economic Growth and Community Investment (EGCI) Service Team, and Pa Na Lor, Communications Associate, were present to give an overview of the communications division and its work on behalf of the Library.

Saksvig thanked Lor for her hard work during the pandemic, when Communications staff worked closely with Library and County staff to keep the public informed about the changing service models. Lor and Saksvig listed the various methods used by Communications to accomplish their goals, and the print and electronic resources they utilize. They highlighted the awards received by their team for Library-related communications campaigns. New initiatives since the last overview in 2019 include: Service Centers, Career Labs, Library/Parks scavenger hunt, Dial-A-Story, grab bags, Read.Make.Do. kits, Teen Maker kits, and home delivery.

The Library Board Trustees discussed patron communication preferences and suggested creating a printed annual report with Library highlights for those who don't use social media or visit the Ramsey County Data Portal.

FUTURE LIBRARY BOARD MEETINGS:

Since March 2020, Ramsey County Library Board meetings have been held remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with the declared state and local emergencies. On Thursday, May 6, Governor Walz signed HF820, ensuring counties can conduct their open meetings remotely until July 1, 2021. Minnesota's state-wide peacetime emergency declaration expired on June 30, while the local declaration has not yet been revoked, but is being actively evaluated. The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resumed in-person meetings in June.

Earlier this month, the Ramsey County Attorney's Office recommended that all County boards and committees subject to the Open Meeting Law return to in-person meetings as soon as possible, and no later than August 1. Since the Library Board's July 21st meeting had already been announced as a remote meeting, in-person meetings will resume in August.

At the Library Board's May meeting, the resumption of in-person meetings was discussed, with staff proposing that onsite meetings during the second half of 2021 be held in the Community Program Room at Roseville. It is the largest, most centrally located meeting location, and is available since public usage of Library meeting spaces has not yet resumed. The Community Program Rooms at Maplewood and Shoreview are currently being used as a Workforce Solutions Career Lab and for public computing, respectively. The Library Board will return to meetings at various Ramsey County Library locations in 2022.

Commissioner Reinhardt noted that Minnesota's Open Meeting Law has specific requirements for Board members to attend the meetings remotely, which includes advertising the remote location and allowing members of the public to attend at the remote site. A medical accommodation can be made for up to 60 days after in-person meetings resume.

The Library Board Trustees asked for clarification on whether staff and the public also need to attend in person or can attend remotely, and whether meetings need to be live-streamed. The Trustees also requested that branch and project reports resume with staff presenting to the Library Board.

STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE:

Ramsey County Library's current strategic plan expires at the end of 2021. A draft strategic planning process schedule prepared by Saltis was discussed by the Library Board. Saltis reported that the data from the Jam board activity at the Library Board's June meeting was used to prepare a successful proposal for Community Engagement grant funds from Ramsey County in the amount of \$25,000. The funds must be used or encumbered by December 31, 2021.

The Library Board Trustees asked for more time to provide input into the strategic planning process schedule. They also discussed whether a subcommittee should be formed to keep the process moving and recommended that the Maplewood renovation and the ongoing need for County spaces within Maplewood be included in the new plan.

TASK FORCE UPDATE:

Ly-Xiong reported that the facilitator hired for the meeting between the Library Board and County staff has been meeting individually with participants to gather background information. The facilitated meeting will be scheduled in the next few weeks. Chiclana-Ayala expressed her disappointment at the delay in scheduling the facilitated meeting.

NEXT MEETING – July 21, 2021, 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ly-Xiong adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mary Larson
Library Board of Trustees Coordinator