

## Minutes of the Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees November 17, 2021

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**LIBRARY TRUSTEES PRESENT:**

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

**LIBRARY TRUSTEES ABSENT:**

Deb Berry, Sida Ly-Xiong

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Karen Saltis, Interim Library Director; Pang Yang, Deputy Director; Mary Larson, Library Board Coordinator; Jeff Eide, Roseville Senior Library Manager; Monica Stratton, Maplewood Library Manager; Carol Jackson, Shoreview Library Manager; Chuck Wettergren, Digital Services Manager; Nathan Coan, Digital Services Associate

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County Commissioner and Liaison to the Library Board of Trustees; Kristi Saksvig, EGCI Communications Manager; Tony Lutgen, EGCI Accounting Manager; Mary Worley, Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries Director

**CALL TO ORDER:**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Woods made a motion to approve the agenda for November 17, 2021, as presented. Chiclana-Ayala seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Willems made a motion to approve the minutes of October 20, 2021 as presented. Chiclana-Ayala seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

In addition to her written report, Saltis noted:

- AP Midwest LLC has been selected as the Part 1 design-build vendor for the Ramsey County Library in Maplewood renovation project.
- Ramsey County Library staff have a vaccination rate of 91%, the highest reported among Ramsey County departments.
- Children's play structures and other interactives will be available starting in January 2022.

**Maplewood Renovation update:** The contract for the design/build firm is expected to be finalized and approved at the November 16<sup>th</sup> Ramsey County Board meeting. The Property Management Project Manager has asked the contractor to develop a draft schedule of upcoming activities. This schedule will include several meetings and topics. The Library

Board of Trustees' subcommittee will participate in these activities as will staff. Additional community involvement is expected to be incorporated by the firm.

**IT Consolidation:** Work has been completed at the libraries in Maplewood and Shoreview to update their network infrastructure supporting public computing. Audits have been completed to begin consolidation of staff printers and copiers. Audits have also been completed to provide replacements for public copiers and printers.

**Administrative Assistant Hiring:** Two rounds of interviews have been conducted for the administrative assistant position. Final steps in the hiring process are occurring and an announcement of the successful candidate and start date will be shared soon.

**Self-Check Request for Proposals (RFP) Update:** Vendor interviews were conducted for the updated self-checkout stations. The committee will recommend a vendor and contract negotiations will commence. More detailed information will be shared in the future.

**Service Delivery Modification:** The Children's Team recommended a service change whereby in person, indoor programming would resume for ages 5-11 effective January 1, 2022. Attendance will be limited to 15 via the library's online registration software. Outdoor programming and take-home kits will continue as appropriate to give a wide variety of programming options for families.

Programs directed towards audiences 4 and under will not occur indoors. Programming for this age group may include outdoor or self-directed, passive programs. Examples of these programs may include, but is not limited to:

- Story Trails, a walk with large sized printed picture books to stroll and read outdoors.
- Outdoor programming that is socially distanced in compliance with safety mandates.
- Indoor passive programs where kids are invited to participate in a self-directed activity while in the library building.

The team also recommends the return of play structures and other literacy rich activities, including but not limited to puppets and puzzles.

**Program Partnership with Parks and Recreation:** Beginning November 1, Ramsey County Library is once again partnering with Parks and Recreation to present *Fall into Winter with Parks*. This program uses the Beanstack application to encourage kids (and their grownups) to earn badges by visiting five Ramsey County parks. The program runs through spring and will be promoted on our website, social media, and via flyers in our buildings. This program is intended to encourage people to get out and enjoy parks over the winter, and to encourage year-round Beanstack use for kids.

**Celebratory Virtual Event:** As was reported last month, the project *This was 2020: Minnesotans Write About Pandemics and Social Justice in a Historic Year* won the Minnesota Author Project's award in the Communities Create category. A celebratory virtual event was held on Tuesday, November 9<sup>th</sup>. Seven of the published authors highlighted their work during the event which was facilitated by Paul Lai, librarian and adult program lead.

**Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries Virtual Author Talk:** Nancy Pearl is a best-selling author, American librarian, and literary critic. She was interviewed during a virtual author talk by a dynamic panel of Ramsey County Library librarians: Andrea Hermanson, Carol Jackson, and Ann Wahlstrom. Thank you for supporting this wonderful event!

**Countywide Update:** Ramsey County implemented a COVID-19 staff vaccination mandate effective November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

Those staff choosing not to be vaccinated must test regularly. Statistics are provided weekly by Human Resources. Individual departmental statistics are not shared.

*As we move into the season of Thanksgiving, I'd like to express my gratitude to the wonderful and dedicated staff at the Ramsey County Library who continue to arrive each day with a passion to serve the community. Suburban Ramsey County residents benefit from your work within the library system. You are **SO appreciated!***

*Additionally, I extend my thanks to the Library Board of Trustees who support the work of the library and selflessly give of their time and talents. **Thank you!***

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

##### **Virtual Author Talk with Nancy Pearl – November 10, 2021**

Nancy is a best-selling author, librarian, and literary critic, but first and foremost, she is a reader and has spent her life promoting reading as one of the most beneficial and joyful experiences anyone can have. We had an engaging virtual discussion with panel of our talented librarians, Andrea Hermanson, Ann Wahlstrom, and Carol Jackson.

##### **Shoreview Book Sale December 4, 2021**

Our Shoreview Bookstore volunteer team are planning a one-day book sale at the Shoreview Library on Saturday December 4<sup>th</sup>.

##### **Friends Used Bookstore and Book Carts Are All Open**

We are accepting gently used donations of books and media at our Roseville and Maplewood locations only.

##### **Friends Online Auction February 17-24, 2022**

Save the dates to have fun shopping while you help us add new items to the Ramsey County Library lending collection. The Friends Online Auction will feature items such as dining and sightseeing experiences, artwork, autographed books, food and wine, sports, travel, and themed gift baskets. Watch for additional information in coming months.

#### **2021 THIRD QUARTER REPORTS:**

On a quarterly basis, Library staff presents several reports to the Library Board for information and discussion. The following reports were briefly summarized for the Library Trustees:

- Workplan Report – prepared by Karen Saltis, Interim Library Director
- Financial Report – prepared by Mary Larson, Accounting Support Supervisor
- Statistical Report – prepared by Jeff Eide, Senior Library Manager
- Incident Report – prepared by Mickey Ladich, Property Manager (not present)

#### **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. The Library shall document the reasons for the write-off and make such documentation available for review by the Finance Department. Write-off of individual debts \$1,000.00 or more must be approved by the Library Board.

The Library identified 23,873 patron accounts meeting the criteria for write-off, totaling \$342,972.14. Two of these accounts totaling \$3,017.04 exceeded the \$1,000 threshold requiring Library Board approval and 62.7% 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.

Woods made a motion to approve the write-off of two Library accounts totaling \$3,017.04 exceeding the \$1,000 threshold and authorize Library staff to forward the write-off of uncollectible debt in the amount of \$342,972.14 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.

**SIRSIDYNIX MANAGED SERVICES AGREEMENT EXTENSION:**

Under a Managed Services Agreement, SirsiDynix provides Ramsey County Library (RCL) a variety of business applications and services, but at its core is the Horizon integrated library system (ILS). The ILS combines a relational database along with a suite of applications to manage functions like circulation, cataloging, serials control, acquisitions, and patron accounts. In addition to the ILS, SirsiDynix provides specialized business applications that interact with Horizon, including the Library's telephone messaging, mobile app, system analytics and third-party integration. Thirdparty integration includes hosted servers and connections for the Library's new website/catalog, self-checks, material handling systems, RFID applications, online payment systems and user authentication for online resources.

The current SirsiDynix agreement, due to expire in March 2022, was approved in 2017 when RCL moved from a locally hosted solution to a subscription as a service (SaaS) model. After consulting with Ramsey County Procurement and the Ramsey County Attorney's office, they have recommended that the Library Board authorize a contract extension with SirsiDynix with the same terms and conditions as the current contract. The extension would include annual renewals for up to five years. The current contract costs are approximately \$114,000 per year, with approximately \$6,000 reimbursed annually from MELSA for MnLINK services and RCL Mobile.

Although the current business applications and services provided by SirsiDynix continue to meet the Library's needs, an additional five-year agreement will allow the Library an opportunity to review ongoing use of SirsiDynix's products. This may include a solicitation process to ensure these critical systems continue to meet the Library's goals and support emerging County initiatives around potential alignment of business applications and initiatives across departments.

Because the ILS and associated services impact so many peripheral systems, any review or solicitation will have to consider the potential of having to replace or update several independent business applications and would likely take at least 18 to 24 months. To take full advantage of this renewed term, a review of Horizon and related applications will begin in 2022. This will allow the Library time to address the complex nature of IT-related projects (and the everchanging best practices) and engage with other departments about potential alignment or integration.

Chang made a motion to approve a contract extension with SirsiDynix to allow up to five additional annual renewals of the current master contract and authorize the Library Director to sign the agreement. Contract extension subject to review by the Ramsey County Attorney's Office. Chiclana-Ayala seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**MAPLEWOOD RENOVATION PROJECT UPDATE:**

At the September Library Board meeting, Neblett and Woods volunteered to serve as Library Board representatives on the Maplewood Renovation Project team. The Trustees developed the following draft charge for the project team for Library Board consideration:

*Committee will work with staff to ensure libraries are welcoming public facilities where people want to gather to cultivate learning, inspire curiosity, and connect our community. In the immediate term this could include strategic plan input addressing deferred maintenance and forward-looking building needs.*

*Committee shall provide the Trustees and Library Director (or designee) with recommendations at critical input points during the design-build process for the Maplewood Renovation Project.*

The Library Trustees discussed the draft charge, and thanked Woods and Neblett for volunteering to represent the Library Board.

Chiclana-Ayala made a motion to approve the draft charge for the Maplewood Renovation Project team. Chang seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

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

Jeff Eide, Senior Library Manager at the Ramsey County Library in Roseville, compiled a report showing comparisons between RCL the MELSA libraries, and other library systems of similar populations and total income. Due to the pandemic affecting 2020 statistics, the report included data from both 2019 and 2020 for reference.

Trends lines for major service areas such as circulation, borrowers, visits, and program attendance were included, and outreach contacts was added as a new major service area. Data specific to RCL was noted, as well as comparisons with other MELSA libraries and national peer libraries. For the ninth consecutive year, Ramsey County Library was designated as a Library Journal Star Library, one of just three libraries in Minnesota to receive the award.

**MAPLEWOOD BRANCH UPDATE:**

Monica Stratton, Library Manager, was present to give the Library Board an overview of the Ramsey County Library in Maplewood. Stratton shared her sincere appreciation to her staff for the resiliency, flexibility, and willingness to adapt during the pandemic. She also welcomed the Ramsey County Service Center staff to RCL-Maplewood, and called out Tasha Nins, Children’s Librarian, for being asked to serve on the 2021 Caldecott Committee, which selects the best children’s picture book of the year by the American Library Association. It is a highly prestigious committee appointment. Stratton also noted that former RCL-Maplewood Children’s Librarian Tami Lee has accepted the position of State Librarian with the Minnesota Department of Education.

Unlike other libraries in RCL, Stratton noted the Maplewood has been slower to bounce back to pre-pandemic traffic levels. The upcoming renovation beginning in 2022 will be an opportunity to better serve the community. Youthprise is again offering meals for children through RCL-Maplewood, with more than 1,300 meals already distributed in 2021 compared to a total of 1,000 meals in all of 2020. Stratton indicated that community resource advocates, Ramsey County Social Services, and the Maplewood Police Department began discussing ways to provide social services at RCLMaplewood. Saltis thanked Stratton and the Maplewood staff for their work. Neblett suggested more community outreach, with Commissioner Reinhardt recommending the YMCAs in Maplewood and White Bear Lake as potential partners.

**Trends in the Service Area:**

- A demographics report from the 2020 census for the city of Maplewood indicates a decline in the city’s traditionally white population and a rise in the BIPOC population.
- Estimated demographics reflect a slight decline in the poverty level.
- Maplewood is seeing a decline in numbers as a place of work for the public; this number will likely be further affected by the pandemic which saw several larger stores both inside and outside the mall close due to the economic fallout from Covid.

**Library Issues and Service Trends:**

- Circulation continues to decline – exacerbated due to pandemic.
- Visits to the library have flatlined since we reopened in May and are drastically lower than pre-pandemic numbers.
- Meeting rooms and spaces are currently unavailable to the public due to County Service Center needs.
- Staffing changes have impacted youth services at Maplewood; librarian Tasha Nins has been working from home since March 2020 and librarian Tami Lee recently resigned RCL to take the lead position at the MN Department of Education.

- Summer Reading Program participation for the younger age bracket (11 and younger) continues to decline. Staff met to brainstorm ideas for engaging ISD 622 families in an effort to make known what services the library has to offer children, youth and families during the summer. However, without children’s librarians (see above) this effort has been put on pause.
- We continue to see both mental health issues and housing issues with our daily patrons. Library and navigator staff recently met with county social services, Maplewood police outreach staff, and representatives from People, Incorporated and Radius Health (two service-based outreach programs in the St. Paul area) to explore ways we can partner to help those that enter our space.

**LIBRARY DIRECTOR HIRING PROCESS:**

Willems reported that the process is moving along, with input from the Library Board Trustees on the Library Director job description shared with Ramsey County Human Resources. Once a revised copy is received for review, final comments will be gathered and the salary range and hiring process timeline will be developed. Staff from Ramsey County Human Resources will attend the December meeting to update the Library Board of Trustees on the hiring process. Willems asked the Trustees to consider which steps in the process they would like to assist with, including review of the applications received, first round interviews, and finalist interviews. Neblett suggested that the Trustees email Willems regarding their preferred roles in the hiring process.

**STRATEGIC PLANNING UPDATE:**

Eide previously reported that he had contacted multiple community engagement firms from the Ramsey County Master Contract list and shared the statement of work developed by the Library. Two proposals were received, and Eide will reach out to additional vendors in the next week with interviews planned for late November. The recommended vendor will be on the December agenda for contract approval.

The Library Board Trustees discussed their preferred format for strategic plans, with some preferring more in-depth documents of multiple pages and others favoring the outline format. With the hiring process now underway, Eide recommended waiting for the new director’s input on the final format.

**LIBRARY BOARD TRUSTEE VACANCY:**

Chiclana-Ayala reported that she has decided not to apply for a third term on the Library Board of Trustees. Since she will not be attending the December meeting, this meeting will be her last meeting as a Trustee.

The Trustees and Commissioner Reinhardt thanked Chiclana-Ayala for her six years of service as a Library Board Trustee.

**NEXT MEETING** –December 15, 2021, 6:30 p.m., online via Zoom communication software.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Neblett adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Mary Larson  
Library Board of Trustees Coordinator