

## Minutes of the Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees December 15, 2021

---

**LIBRARY TRUSTEES PRESENT:**

Debra Berry, Sylvia Neblett, Sida Ly-Xiong, Gwen Willems, Steve Woods

**LIBRARY TRUSTEES ABSENT:**

Claire Chang, Marisol Chiclana-Ayala

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Karen Saltis, Interim Library Director; Pang Yang, Deputy Director; Mary Larson, outgoing Library Board Coordinator; Maggie Soukup, new Library Board Coordinator, Jeff Eide, Roseville Senior Library Manager; Monica Stratton, Maplewood Library Manager; Carol Jackson, Shoreview Library Manager; Chuck Wettergren, Digital Services Manager; Meg Robertson, New Brighton Library Manager

**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:**

Ly-Xiong called the meeting to order at 6:36 p.m. via Zoom video conference.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Neblett made a motion to approve the agenda for December 15, 2021, as presented. Willems seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Neblett made a motion to approve the minutes of November 17, 2021 as presented. Willems seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

In addition to her written report, Saltis noted:

- Today's board meeting will be Mary Larson's last meeting as the Library Board Coordinator. Saltis thanked Larson for her many years of service to the board and dedication to the library. In Larson's new role as the Accounting Support Supervisor, she may attend future board meetings to discuss financial related items.

- Staff vaccination update: only 1 staff person has not yet certified their vaccination status (1%); 2 staff are not vaccinated but testing weekly (2%); 105 staff are vaccinated (97%).
- Today marked the end of the Teen Holiday Card Drive. With all seven branches participating, 215 MakerTeen kits of supplies were picked up and 1,117 completed cards were returned. This is 75 more kits and 300 cards more than last year. The cards were delivered to Ramsey County Foster Care, MN Adopt, Face to Face, and Shoreview Senior Living.

#### **Administrative Assistant Hiring:**

Maggie Soukup's first day as Administrative Assistant was Monday, December 13, 2021. Maggie comes to Ramsey County Library from Metropolitan State University where she served as the Executive Assistant and Office Coordinator for the Marketing, Communications and Admissions Department. Maggie will serve as the board coordinator moving forward.

**IT Consolidation:** Roseville is the last library needing to migrate its public computing to updated network equipment provided by Information Services (IS). Roseville's migration is scheduled to take place in January. Public computing will remain isolated and managed separately from staff computing to maintain best practices. The Library's Digital Services team has been working with the Information Services desktop group to create an updated public image for its computers with standardized applications and management software that will continue to support patron access and printing. Information Services will provide a small number of test PCs (with a base image installed) to Digital Services for installation and testing at Roseville over the next few weeks. Following testing, expansion of updated PCs to other locations will depend on availability of equipment due to supply chain issues. Currently there is a three-to-four-month backlog. Other pending work includes consolidating remaining library business applications/systems on updated County equipment and network infrastructure. This encompasses library servers, printers, copiers, material handling systems, digital signage, and self-checkout. We expect most of this remaining work to be completed by early next year.

#### **Countywide Updates:**

1. **COVID-19 Vaccination Certification:** Ramsey County implemented a COVID-19 staff vaccination mandate effective November 1st, 2021. Those staff choosing not to be vaccinated must test regularly. Weekly updates are provided by Human Resources. At the time of this writing, one staff member had not complied with the certification requirement and two staff members are testing weekly. In cooperation with Human Resources, written reprimands will be delivered the week of December 13<sup>th</sup> for those who have not complied. Progressive discipline for noncompliance with the policy, up to and including termination, will be followed.
2. **2022/2023 Budget:** The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners will be voting on the biennial budget on Tuesday, December 21st. Internal and external communication plans have been developed related specifically to the permanent elimination of adult fines and fees and the closing time change at regional branches. All staff whose schedules will be impacted by the Monday-Thursday 8 p.m. closing time change have been notified of

their schedule adjustments as is required per union contracts. No staff hours were reduced as a result.

- 3. 2022-2024 Bargaining:** Collective bargaining between Ramsey County and many of its unions has been occurring since late summer with the hopes of having new contracts in place prior to the expiration of current agreements on December 31, 2021. The RCL has staff in two of the 23 collective bargaining units. Many language issues have been resolved, but economic issues remain unresolved. At this point the County and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) have agreed to enlist the assistance of a mediator to resolve remaining issues. Mediation dates have been scheduled for late December. It's very possible the contract will remain unresolved at the end of the year. The County is committed to reaching an agreement that satisfies all parties.

*As we close out 2021, I reflect on the fact that this year has been another one filled with many challenges. Thanks to staff, leaders, Library Board Trustees, and patrons for the dedication and grace you have shown as we've navigated reopening plans, reinstated mask mandates, staffing pressures, vaccination mandates, and a multitude of other items throughout the year!*

*I wish all of you a happy and healthy holiday season!*

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

##### **Friends Fundraising Campaign**

We have developed a twelve-month fundraising campaign to increase Friends membership and financial donations. We have purchased a direct mail list with 10,000 names from the library's service area with the following criteria: income, age, charitable giving, and book interest.

**Phase One:** Two year-end appeals totaling 10,666, were mailed on December 7, 2021 to the direct mail list and our current and lapsed membership lists. The Friends Board of Directors generously provided a \$6,200 matching grant opportunity to support the year-end appeals.

**Phase Two:** Letter introducing Ramsey County Library Director and/or Ramsey County Library Board Strategic Plan highlights will be mailed to 10,666 households in the spring/summer of 2022.

**Phase Three:** Flashy postcard will be sent to the 10,666 households advertising a fundraising/friendraising event to be determined in summer/fall of 2022.

**Phase Four:** Two year-end appeals will be sent to the 10,666 household group.

##### **Email Marketing Campaign**

An email marketing campaign to share stories of Friends volunteers, board members, committee members and library patrons with our membership is in the process of being developed. More detail to follow in upcoming reports.

### **Shoreview and Maplewood Book Sales December 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 2021**

The Shoreview Book Store volunteer team held a one-day book sale on December 4, 2021, and the Maplewood Book Store volunteers held a 2-day book sale the weekend of December 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> collectively raised over \$2,000 for the Friends.

### **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. Book donations will be accepted at the Shoreview Book Store in early January.

### **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.

### **RAMSEY COUNTY BOARD LIAISON**

Neblett suggested that an update from Commissioner Reinhard be officially added to the agenda moving forward. Commissioner Reinhardt verbally accepted the invitation to report out at each meeting should she have an update for the Library Board.

Neblett made a motion to accept both the Director's report as well as the Friends of the Ramsey County Libraries report, as presented. Berry seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

### **CONTRACT FOR SELF CHECKOUT MACHINES**

Ramsey County has completed its solicitation process seeking proposals to update the Ramsey County Library's self-check units. Following review of submitted proposals, interviews and product demonstrations, the evaluation team identified a vendor and Ramsey County Procurement has sent the Notice of Intent to Award letter. The vendor has submitted required documentation and final configurations and contract negotiations are in progress.

In accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 13.591, materials submitted in response to a solicitation do not become public record until the completion of the evaluation process. Pursuant to the statute, completion of the evaluation process occurs when the county has completed negotiating the contract with the selected vendor. To expedite the process and ensure funding is encumbered by the end of 2021, a request is being made to the Library Board delegating authority to the Library Director to sign the resulting contract with approval from Ramsey County Procurement and the Ramsey County Attorney's Office. The value of the contract will not exceed \$225,000 including the initial purchase and two additional years of maintenance. Funding for this solicitation is coming from two sources: from County Technology funding and 2018 Library reserves that will need to be encumbered by the end of 2021.

The new self-check systems will provide a much-updated user experience and support features that will provide a more intuitive, inclusive, and enhanced environment. Some of the features include:

- Turnkey support (hardware and software)
- Chip and PIN credit card readers on self-checks supporting payments
- Improved accessibility
- Larger touch screen monitors
- Customizable banners/content
- Patron account access
- Offline circulation
- Multiple language options
- Readers' advisory
- Simplified management by staff

Wettergren reported that the 21 existing self-check machines that will be replaced with this contract are over 10 years old. He explained that the new machines will have various functions that can be phased in over a period of time. Once the contract is approved, Wettergren stated that it will be 8-12 weeks until the new machines are installed and in use.

Woods made a motion to approve the delegation of authority to the Library Director to sign the finalized contract with the selected vendor with the understanding that the contract is subject to approval by Ramsey County Procurement and the Ramsey County Attorney's Office. Berry seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

### **CONTRACT FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING CONSULTANT**

Ramsey County Library's current strategic plan expires at the end of 2021. Jeff Eide, Senior Library Manager, contacted several community engagement/strategic planning firms under Ramsey County master contract. Multiple proposals were received, and interviews were held with the responding firms. Based on the interviews, the planning team recommends that the Library hire ACET, Inc., a woman- and minority-owned small business enterprise based in Minneapolis. The proposal amount is \$49,900, of which \$25,000 would be paid from a Ramsey County Community Engagement Grant, and the balance of \$24,900 would be paid from the Library's 2021 budget. Since the total cost exceeds the \$25,000 threshold for the Library Director's purchasing authority, Library Board approval is required.

The Trustees discussed the proposed timeline for the strategic planning process. Ly-Xiong agreed that the timeline may need to be adjusted in the future but reassured the Trustees that the process will still take 6-8 months to complete. It was also confirmed that there is nothing in the contract that would prohibit the planning process from taking place in-person, depending on the comfort level of the group.

Neblett made a motion to accept the proposal from ACET, Inc., a Ramsey County Master Contract vendor, to lead the strategic planning process and community engagement events at a total cost

not to exceed \$49,900, with \$25,000 paid from Ramsey County Community Engagement Grant funds, and the balance to be paid from Library 2021 operating funds, and to authorize the Library Director to approve the payment upon completion of services. Woods seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

### **CONTRACT FOR PRINTERS AND COPIERS**

Ramsey County Information Services launched the Coordinated Print Project this year and plans are under way to unify and modernize multi-function devices (print/copy/fax) across the County. The intent of this project is to support both staff and public access to these devices. Ramsey County Library (RCL) has been waiting to purchase replacements of its multi-function devices for the public until details around the project were clarified. RCL's existing devices have been in place since 2012 and will reach their end of life at the end of 2021.

The County's selected master contract vendor, Metro Sales, identified Ricoh IMC 4500 multi-function devices to be used at RCL. The unit cost is \$8,282 and the library supports eight devices throughout its buildings for a total value of \$66,256. These new devices will be an upgrade from the existing units, providing the option for color copies and future compatibility with Ramsey County's use of software called PaperCut for managing printing. With these units the Library will also expand fax service to all its locations to improve accessibility. The purchase would be funded from 2018 Library reserves earmarked for technology.

Wettergren explained that the proposed contract would replace all 8 copiers throughout Ramsey County Libraries. The current copiers do not print in color nor do they have faxing capabilities. The new copiers will have the option to print in color and fax.

Willems made a motion to approve the purchase of eight replacement multi-function devices that will align Ramsey County Library's technology to current standards identified by Ramsey County's Coordinated Print Project from master contract vendor Metro Sales at a projected cost of \$66,256, and to authorize the Library Director to approve the purchase utilizing 2018 Library year end reserve funding. Woods seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

### **FUTURE LIBRARY BOARD MEETINGS**

Since September 2021, the Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees has been meeting virtually based on guidance received from Ramsey County regarding formal meetings of boards and committees. The recommendation reflects the evolving nature of the ongoing pandemic and requires boards and committees to be flexible, nimble, and adaptable while prioritizing the health, safety and well-being of residents and staff in Ramsey County. While transmission rates are in the substantial or high CDC category (**Ramsey County is currently designated as "high"**), Ramsey County is encouraging staff and residents to meet virtually if possible due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

With transmission levels remaining at high levels, staff is recommending that the Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees continue to meet virtually, following the guidance from Ramsey County and the current practice of the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners. When the direction from

Ramsey County changes, the Library Board would follow the lead of the County Board in returning to in-person meetings.

Neblett made a motion to continue to hold Ramsey County Library Board of Trustees meetings virtually based on guidance from Ramsey County, following the lead of the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners in determining the return to in-person meetings. Willems seconded the motion, which was approved by majority roll call vote with Woods dissenting.

### **2022 HOLIDAY CALENDAR**

Each year, the Library staff prepares a holiday calendar for the upcoming year for Library Board approval. The calendar includes all the dates designated as paid holidays by Ramsey County, as well as other dates when the libraries are closed. Since 1993, the Library's calendar has included Staff Inservice Days. These days allow time for staff training as well as facilities-related projects such as painting or shifting the collection.

On June 8, 2021, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners proclaimed Juneteenth to be a paid holiday starting in the year 2022. Juneteenth falls annually on June 19th. With the addition of this holiday, Ramsey County Library staff examined its traditional holiday calendar with the goal of maintaining the same number of open library days to avoid a reduction in library services. And, aligning to the Ramsey County Strategic Priority of Advancing Racial and Health Equity, the holiday calendar was looked at through a racial equity lens. Three current library closure dates were considered: Easter, Christmas Eve, and one of the two annual staff inservice training days. (Easter and Christmas Eve are not paid holidays in Ramsey County. Ramsey County Library currently maintains one worksite for those who choose to work on Christmas Eve. There are usually 4-6 people who take this opportunity annually.)

Three MELSA libraries will be open on Easter 2022. All the MELSA Libraries will close on Christmas Eve. Hennepin, Ramsey and Saint Paul government agencies are the only institutions adding Juneteenth as a holiday. The Juneteenth holiday was effective in 2021 for Hennepin County and Saint Paul and will be effective in 2022 for Ramsey County.

Based on the comparative data from the other MELSA libraries, racial equity considerations, patron expectations, and the impact on scheduling, staff recommend that the 2022 Holiday Calendar include closing on the new Juneteenth federal holiday and opening on Easter to avoid a reduction in service to the public.

Neblett reported that this was the first public calendar she had seen that celebrated Juneteenth. She thanked Ramsey County for the acknowledgement.

Neblett made a motion to approve the 2022 Holiday Calendar as proposed. The motion was seconded by Woods, which was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

### **NEW BRIGHTON BRANCH UPDATE**

Meg Robertson, Library Branch Manager, was present to give the Library Board an update on the Ramsey County Library in New Brighton, MN. Robertson started off by thanking the “small, but mighty” staff at the New Brighton branch for continuing to provide exceptional service to their patrons. The staff is made up of 3 part time and 2 full time staff. In addition to the 5 staff members, a full time Library Associate position has been posted.

In addition to the written report, Robertson highlighted the partnership the New Brighton branch has with the Ramsey County Correctional Facility. The partnership enables individuals housed at the Ramsey County Correctional Facility access to library materials that are directly delivered to the facility. Individuals are given their own library cards during their stay and will have the opportunity to obtain a regular library card once they exit the facility. Robertson clarified that information about the individuals time at the correctional facility will be withheld when applying for a new card.

### **TRENDS IN THE SERVICE AREA**

- New Brighton Community Center (NBCC) returned to regular hours in September and started allowing Eagle’s Nest play without reservations. This has increased foot traffic in the building and modestly pushed up visitors to the library.
- Demographics are similar to last (2019) board report with mncompass stats indicating a slight increase of foreign-born residents in New Brighton (15% up from 13%).
- Looking forward to an early 2022 completion of the Midtown Village Redevelopment project bringing medium to high density housing within walking distance of the library. This development will include owner occupied townhomes, affordable senior housing and affordable family units using Section 42 funding (families earning 60% or less of Area Median Income).

### **LIBRARY ISSUES AND SERVICE TRENDS**

- New Brighton is now part of the “supply chain” for requests meaning that new items are no longer available to browsers at NB. This has been a major change for both our patrons used to finding new items available and for our circ staff who manage these requests for other branches. As a branch with limited collection offerings, no meeting rooms and fewer programming opportunities, this service enhancement is missed and is perceived by patrons as a degradation of service.
- Circulation statistics in context: Average checkout per week since the start of Express Service (May 2020) is 2,700 compared to an average checkout per week in 2019 of 4,050. Average visitors per month since the start of Express Service is 4,050 compared to an average of 8,500 for the same period in 2019. SRP Participation Numbers up from last year, still not at pre-pandemic levels
- Staffing has been difficult at this small branch. We currently have 5 people on staff, 3 part time and 2 full time to address a work week with 45 open building hours. A part time librarian vacancy that has been open since June is being addressed by a full time posting for a library associate position which should work well for this small branch with flexible needs.



- We have had some incidents relating to a patron experiencing homelessness and mental illness. I continue to work with Ramsey County Mental Health and New Brighton Public Safety to best address the needs of this patron and the needs of other patrons.
- A portion of our fireplace reading area continues to be closed to the public due to storage issues of unused furniture (seating density changes, computer).

### **LIBRARY DIRECTOR HIRING PROCESS**

Board chair Ly-Xiong reported that the Library Director position had been posted. After reviewing the timeline of the search, the formal review date was pushed back by 1 week. Application review will begin at the end of December however, applications will be accepted until the position has been filled. Ly-Xiong asked the Trustees to reach out to her directly to discuss their involvement in the interview process. Pending the application review and the interview process, Ly-Xiong is hopeful to have the position filled by February.

### **MAPLEWOOD RENOVATION UPDATE**

Yang reported that the kickoff meeting on December 10 went well. During the meeting the project scope, priorities, and timeline were discussed. The renovation is getting a slightly later start than anticipated, but Yang does not believe this will alter the anticipated completion date. The next meeting is scheduled for January 7. At the January meeting the team will take a closer look at the 2018 pre-design, organization of the current collection, workflow for staff including reference desk locations and the impact the pandemic has had on patrons use of the facilities.

The Trustees discussed the various roles of the Library Board, county employees, and project managers for the renovation project. Woods acknowledged that he and Neblett are serving as representatives for the Library Board on this project and reiterated their commitment to relay information and updates back to the Trustees. He asked the Board to identify interaction points to ensure adequate communication occurs throughout the process. Ly-Xiong requested information on decisions and discussions regarding the multi-purpose community room usage as well as the outdoor space. Stratton confirmed that the renovation budget, based on the 2018 pre-design plan, does not cover outdoor spaces, the community room, or the vacant coffee shop space currently being used for the Ramsey County service center.

The Trustees also discussed the budget for the redesign and how it will be negatively impacted by the increase of building costs and delay of the supplies. Saltis shared that prioritization on this project will be key and allow for possibly identifying additional, alternate funding solutions.

### **ROOM RESERVATIONS**

The Trustees and Board Liaison discussed the logistics around reserving community rooms at Ramsey County Libraries. Some reported that they were unable to secure a standing reservation due to Library policy which limits room bookings to 60 days in advance. Ly-Xiong asked Saltis and Yang to look into the policies and procedures regarding room reservations. Larson reported that the Libraries do allow extended bookings for groups that are designated as library or county partners.

She suggested that a process for identifying the partners would streamline the booking process and allow for a wider range of groups to access the service.

**NEXT MEETING** – January 19, 2022, 6:30 p.m., online via Zoom communication software.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Ly-Xiong adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.