

**MINUTES**  
**PARK RIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

20 S. Prospect Avenue, Park Ridge, IL 60068  
Planning and Operations Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
held via videoconference - Tuesday, July 14, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Kennedy called the meeting Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

President Kennedy explained that the Library Board was meeting via videoconference and stated that he authorized the Board to meet remotely as per Illinois Public Act 101-0640 which, among other matters, amends Section 7 of the Open Meetings Act to allow meetings of members of a public body subject to the Act to occur without a quorum being physically present at the meeting due to COVID-19.

**ROLL CALL**

**Trustees Present:** Gareth Kennedy, President; Lauren Rapisand, Vice-President; Joshua Kiem, Secretary; (via videoconference) Stevan Dobrilovic, Treasurer; Karen Burkum; Alexandria Hanba; Patrick Lamb; Michael Reardon; David Somheil

**Others Present:** Heidi Smith, Library Director; Alyson Doubek, Library Finance Manager

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

Chair Karen Burkum called the Planning and Operations Committee of the Whole meeting to order.

Committee Chair Burkum made a

**MOTION:** to approve the minutes of June 9, 2020

Trustee Somheil seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Yes: Burkum, Dobrilovic, Hanba, Kennedy, Kiem, Lamb, Rapisand, Reardon, Somheil

**Motion passed.**

**Strategic Plan Discussion**

James La Rue and Elizabeth Martin, consultants of La Rue & Associates presented preliminary findings of the Library's Strategic Plan. He explained that the Board's role in this discussion is to provide direction and feedback on the initiatives identified through the community interviews and staff discussions. He explained nothing had to be decided today, and understands that Board members may need additional processing time.

He presented a mind map that outlines the highlighting key initiatives formed based on community interviews. These include:

- Encourage individual growth and lifelong learning
  - Build a healthy and sustainable private sector
  - Build a healthy and sustainable public and social sector
  - Alignment and development
  - Engage College-aged people
1. Encourage individual growth and lifelong learning - includes things that fall under the traditional Library role, areas where the Library is uniquely qualified to lead.
    - Green Initiatives – Library can lead by example by efforts to make the building reflect sustainability as a priority; provide demonstration of green technologies
    - Resources
      - Maintain core services (traditional role)
      - Expand digital materials and programming/meetings
    - Mental health outreach – concerns about isolation – team up with existing partners

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2. Private sector — during the 2008-2010 recession Libraries played a key role in these areas. That experience can help position libraries to once again assist the community in the wake of COVID-19 as these services are very much in demand.
  - Assistance with employment searches, workforce development, access to technology and training
  - Business Development to create and grow businesses. In the wake of COVID-19 This could be a partnership opportunity with other community or government entities.
  - Volunteer opportunities – cross generational tutoring
3. Alignment and development – Ms. Martin of La Rue & Associates explained that the key to this initiative is engagement – forming ongoing relationships. If we lay the seeds for development today, development and fundraising will eventually grow from those efforts. Libraries are transformational not transactional. Fundraising requires a lot of back end support.

Director Smith explained that the Board will have to review policies, procedures, reporting and it will be important to align everything towards this new work. Once the strategy is clear, we will need to audit practices and policies.

Conducting a communications audit is necessary to examine if the messages we are promoting are aligned in the strategic plan. This will form a new narrative around Park Ridge Public Library and will determine what impact you make, and what outcomes will result from the new direction and programs. Those stories can be told through media, social media, library publications.

Part of this effort also should include seeking out grant opportunities, which could help fund new programs or initiatives. The Library should develop an award strategy – local, region, state, national opportunities.

Once the Library is ready to move on to fundraising, they have to be certain to have the proper policies in place in terms of planned giving, naming rights and other topics.

4. Build healthy and sustainable public and social sector
  - Citizen’s academy – Leadership development. Purpose is to recruit and engage the next generation of civic leaders. The Library serves as the keeper of the PR community agenda; convenes annual meeting. This would be a community effort, not solely library led.
  - Reboot Community Information Network
    - Community Calendar
    - Non-profit database
    - Volunteer Recruitment
    - Convene Annual Meeting of non-profits
  - Grow Information Literacy
    - Key information panels – suggested topics include health issues and voting
5. Engage college-aged people – new awareness, concern with social justice. Due to COVID-19 many may not be returning physically to school in the fall – how can we engage them and meet their needs. This is more specific than the other initiatives but thought it was an interesting finding.

Mr. LaRue suggested he initially estimated the time frame for implementing the plan to be 3 to 5 years; could be longer based on circumstances. It would be necessary to establish priorities and timeframes for the initiatives.

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Trustees discussed the presentation, commenting that the plan provided a lot of good information. Some expressed concern about the scope of some of the programs, and what the role of the library is in the community. They also discussed what Library staff's role would be in the programs and how that would fit into their existing responsibilities. Mr. LaRue suggested that the Library would serve as the convener, moderator, providing facilitated presentation and discussion.

Director Smith illustrated the point by explaining it could be envisioned by seeing the library as "collector" we make experts and knowledge available through facilitating, marketing. Ms. Martin said that by serving as the "convener" the Library is building relationships and partnerships that will benefit in the long run with development, grant opportunities and developing the Library's leadership position in community.

President Kennedy liked the idea of the Citizens' Academy. He said that developing community leaders is important. They Library can have a more strategic impact on our town, the program could be impactful if done the right way.

Treasurer Dobrilovic expressed concern about the Library serving in the Information Literacy role; with everything so politicized in today's environment he sees danger in the making judgements about whether information is biased or unbiased. Mr. LaRue explained that the Library is not generating content but is gathering, organizing and presenting to public info that is already available.

President Kennedy said that the plan should maintain the right balance for community, he did not see much emphasis on the mature adult population. He wants to make sure that portion of the community is considered.

Vice President Rapisand shared her concern that plan is too hefty. She wants a plan that is achievable. She also thinks that the fact that much of the community feedback occurred during COVID may have influenced the findings.

Chair Burkum was pleased with the plan. She felt it was very thorough, and that it sets the Library up as a leader.

Secretary Kiem also had concern that we are trying to form a trajectory out of last four months of chaos. He thinks it is an ambitious menu, but doesn't think any of it is off base for what the Library ought to be.

Trustee Reardon suggested that the Board and Director Smith review and identify priorities and timeframes for the initiatives for further Board discussion.

Trustee Lamb stated that the plan is a great strategic perspective on the role of the Library in the community. He would like to see a plan for moving forward in manageable pieces.

Trustee Somheil liked the menu of options. The plan allows the Library to build more engagement and education in the broader civic context. He asked what the top recurring themes were from the stakeholder interviews.

Mr. LaRue mentioned Green Initiatives/Sustainability; Economic Recovery; Public Finance. He said the Library has an opportunity to help shape what the post-COVID normal can be. There is a desire to get involved and understand how to change things.

Secretary Kiem said the idea of the plan is to identify areas to areas where Library can add value, how we can make the Library more valuable to our community.

President Kennedy would like to see more incorporation of Friends of the Library and how they can be strategically engaged.

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There was general consensus among Trustees that they would like more time to review, digest and provide appropriate feedback on the plan.

Mr. LaRue said the next step would be to prepare the final report which would include demographics, background of plan, initiatives, and the Library's Values, Mission and Vision. There was consensus to postpone discussion of the Values, Mission and Vision to a later date.

**Extension of overdue fine grace period**

Director Smith stated that the previous month, the Board had approved an overdue fine grace period through July 31 with the understanding that she would request the Board to consider interim strategies to apply for circulation, good customer service – set to expire end of this month. Instruction to come back with another recommendation. She reported that she did look into other options for fine grace periods. Options included:

- No fines occur during specified time period for anyone no matter what
- XX days past overdue fine –grace period for that item with that due date – reinforce due date mentality

The only way patrons could pay overdue fines is through the web site. Not everyone may feel comfortable doing that, or have access to do so. Director Smith's recommendation is stay course with current practice – no overdue fines incurred on any materials during this time period, extended through August 31.

She reported that she has assembled a team of Library staff to prepare for the fine free discussion at the August meeting. They are addressing concerns, considerations, and best practices. At that time, the Board can determine which direction to go with regard to fines.

Trustee Lamb asked if there was any data tracking the number of overdue books and what the impact is on returns. Director Smith replied that she can look into various forecasting options.

Treasurer Dobrilovic asked about the typical quarantine period for materials. Director Smith replied that we are now at 3 days, it was 7 days. We are caught up with returns now – there was a big surge of returns around July 1 due date – it's possible we may have another surge around July 22 date. Treasurer Dobrilovic asked if it was possible to prepare report that states how many books are at least 7 days overdue so we can have a sense of how many books have not been returned.

Trustee Lamb doesn't believe the issue is generating revenue. The issue is returning product so next citizen can get it. Fines are intended to remind patrons that others are entitled to the book or item.

President Kennedy asked about reopening – he pointed out that Des Plaines Library is opening their building. Once the Library opens, more people may return at that time. Having an idea of when the Library building might reopen would help him decide this in the larger context.

Director Smith explained that the Library has rolled out a new service/extension of service roughly every two weeks as we have been able to. First, we established contact free pickup, then added returns, extended service hours for returns and virtual service desk. Starting 7/15 – the Library will be opening for computer appointments; 7/17 – exploration library materials will be available. The Library is opting in for inter library loan resource sharing on 7/21. She felt that it did not seem prudent to set up and roll out large-scale services concurrently. She explained that the resource sharing tremendously increases number of items available to community, and she felt that was a larger priority of the community.

After 7/21 Director Smith does not have specific timeline, she identifying the next step within 2 weeks following 7/21, based on feedback, demand and what current biggest need or priority is at that time.

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She pointed out the lobby only has capacity for 4 people – 2 of those are staff. We have to think about how general access will happen to maximize pickup convenience and availability. She suggested the Library may have to revert to its setup during renovation. Rules and guidelines will need to be adapted to provide the safest possible environment for community and staff. The next goal would be looking to expand access.

Secretary Kiem said that he visited the Des Plaines Library, and said their physical space is significantly larger and is not a comparison. He expressed concern with opening to the public at this time, and appreciated more materials being available.

Trustee Reardon is in favor of resuming fines. Without some sort of understanding of what is being returned or what the workload is for staff, he supported resuming fines.

Director Smith stated that consistency would really be helpful at this time. During the 16 days of June (from the time the Library started accepting returns) staff processed 22,555 returns.

Treasurer Dobrilovic expressed concern that if we announce there are no fines, people will continue to retain materials that others are trying to get.

Trustee Somheil asked if there was another way to incentive returns. A campaign with a positive message – setting expectations, “be a good neighbor.”

Chair Burkum believes it is a PR issue. She supports extending the amnesty through August 31. Everyone is dealing with something different, not easy. She supports Director Smith in her recommendation.

Trustee Hanba agrees – given what is happening in the economy now, it doesn’t seem like the right thing to do.

Vice President Rapisand agrees; she does not want to add additional stress to patrons – supports extending amnesty one more month.

President Kennedy stated the penalty (fine) is fundamental to getting items returned in a timely fashion. Initially the intent was to create flexibility during this time. The issue is it appears it’s going to last much longer than expected.

President Kennedy made a

**MOTION:** extend grace period for daily overdue fines through August 31

Trustee Hanba seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Yes: Burkum, Dobrilovic, Hanba, Kiem, Rapisand, Somheil

No: Kennedy, Lamb, Reardon

**Motion passed.**

Treasurer Dobrilovic requested that Director Smith gather information about number of items overdue 10 days or more as requested and present it at the Board meeting next week.

**Discuss public use of library patio**

Chair Burkum explained that the Library patio/lawn had been used for peaceful protest. Director Smith reported that she talked to City Manager Joe Gilmore regarding use of patio/lawn. Based on the Constitution and the right to assemble, permission is not required to convene on public property. The Library could defer to the City when a formal reservation process for patio is applicable, aligned with request to use the lawn.

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President Kennedy asked if the patio and lawn were city property or library property. Director Smith replied that the City owns entire property and grounds. The City recently paid to renovate space, and maintains grounds. She would defer to City if a member of the public were to make request to use the lawn, and including the patio made sense.

Trustee Lamb pointed out that if the City owns the property and in terms of safety, crowd control, the City is better equipped than library/library staff to manage any situation that may arise.

There was consensus to move forward with clarification that City is responsible, no further discussion needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.