

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 – September 8, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

President Rapisand explained that the Library Board was meeting via videoconference and stated that she 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: Lauren Rapisand, President; Karen Burkum, Vice-President; David Somheil, Secretary;
(via videoconference) Stevan Dobrilovic, Treasurer; Alexandria Hanba; Josh Kiem; Joseph Steinfels; Deepika Thiagarajan

Trustees Absent: Michael Reardon

Others Present: Heidi Smith, Library Director; Alyson Doubek, Library Finance Manager. (Note: Alderman Melidosian was not available as he attended the Special City Council Meeting.)

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

Committee Chair Karen Burkum called the Planning and Operations Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

President Rapisand made a

MOTION: to approve the minutes of August 11, 2020

Secretary Somheil seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Yes: Burkum, Dobrilovic, Kiem, Rapisand, Somheil, Steinfels, Thiagarajan

Abstain: Hanba

Absent: Reardon

Motion passed.

Review 2021-2025 strategic plan draft summary

Committee Chair Burkum stated that the comments she received from Board members regarding the mission and vision had philosophical differences, which made it difficult to compile and summarize.

Director Smith reviewed the strategic plan summary, noting that there was not much difference from the previous version. She had incorporated suggestions from trustees, consolidated and summarized them. For example, under Growth & Learning, she summarized rather than provided specific projects. The summary also added alternatives for highlight different ways the Board could approach the plan. The Board is not funding the plan at this point, but she provided options for how the Board could move forward. The memo also provides an example timeline on how we might begin to break out major initiatives and plan them out in a way that times them against each other but to try to show the progression that we envision happening. This is an example timeline – so much depends on the direction the board wishes to go, funding, and community interest.

Co-chair Burkum summarized some of the philosophical differences and comments received from the trustees. The majority supported strategy of focusing on community at large. One comment was that there should be more of a focus in the individual.

The plan is built on the Library's role in the community. Should the Library be an active member of community or passive member of community? Traditionally, libraries have been somewhat passive. The trend is that Libraries are evolving into more of a leader in community. Co-chair Burkum noted that the Board won't be able to get to good actionable plan if they can't agree on basics.

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 – September 8, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

President Rapisand asked for further clarification on the individual vs community focus. The comment received stated that it appears that the individual patron is a missing piece of the vision; it seems to be overly focused on the community and discussion.

Trustee Kiem recalled the planning session held with LaRue, where there was an activity that asked where library is now and where it is going. He sees it as a matrix of active/passive – individual/community. The Board should consider a plan of record to decide to move in a particular direction or stay where we are.

President Rapisand requested the proposed mission statement be read aloud:

PRPL is a trusted and valued partner and leader in facilitating the goals and aspirations of the community. With engagement at its center, the Library stimulates and informs discussion of and work on community issues using the strengths of the community. The Library is a true crossroads of engagement, information, tradition and innovation.

President Rapisand asked the Board for feedback as to whether they felt there was a need to incorporate more focus on the individual or if the focus was too heavy on community?

Treasurer Dobrilovic stated that he understood community in the context to mean that the Library would try to engage a greater percentage of people in community in the library; making effort to attract people who don't have library cards, to engage in the library and become regular patrons. To be more active in reaching out to the broader community, to people who may not come in to the Library as regularly. He suggested a "Talk to the Library" campaign, to start an engagement with the broader community to determine what people want and need in terms of programs and materials. He feels this would require additional resources from the library, the Board would have to find money for this over time and that may not be something board is comfortable doing right now.

President Rapisand said that she and Trustee Kiem had expressed interest in assisting Chair Burkum with wordsmithing the mission statement. She offered to work with her in refining the statement.

Trustee Steinfels expressed concerns on passive vs. active. He raised the concept of neutral organizations of society – library is place where anyone can go to obtain information and research regardless of their views. By using statements like "we ask," "we connect," "we lead," it begins to beg the question what do we ask, etc. If the Library is truly a bastion of neutrality, we have to be careful with language. He doesn't want any residents to not identify with the mission statement.

Director Smith reminded the trustees to be mindful of Open Meetings Act rules in communicating with each other. Regarding neutrality, there is a great deal of scholarship on the subject of library neutrality. Libraries are for all no matter what their viewpoints are. Being neutral in that sense doesn't mean that the library doesn't stand for other values such as inclusion, or wanting to be community centric, or how it designs its services. She will share some resources with the Board.

President Rapisand reminded the trustees she had sent out an email about suggestions regarding the Library's values; she said if the Board could pin down the values, they could form the basis for mission and vision.

Approve next fiscal year operating goals

The City of Park Ridge has proposed transitioning to a calendar fiscal year. This will be discussed further in Budget and Finance Committee. With regard to the timeline, this will affect the Library's budget plan and strategic planning process. This would create another 2021 year - SY21 (stub) from May 1, 2021 – Dec 31, 2021. Typically, the operating goals are presented to the Board, then the budget is then developed based on them.

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 – September 8, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

Director Smith reviewed the Proposed FY21-S Operating Budget Goals:

1. 2021-2025 Strategic Plan service enhancements (pending Strategic Plan approval)
 - a. Staff development about strengthening collection equity, diversity and inclusion
 - b. Demand-based growth and assessment of digital collections
 - c. Remote learning support including support of students home from college
 - d. Increased support for job seekers and businesses
2. 2021-2025 Strategic Plan alignment (pending Strategic Plan approval)
 - a. Complete policy review
 - b. Organic growth and staff development about community outcomes focus in planning, assessment, reporting and communications
 - c. Evaluate and plan for engagement staffing
3. Staff salary plan: phase 2
 - a. Based on FY20 staff audit and market pay study
 - b. Evaluate 2020 and 2021 survey data
 - c. Includes merit increases or bonuses based on performance and the 2020 salary ranges, changes to minimum wage and relief of minimum wage compression
4. Long-term facility plan
 - a. Pending the FY2021 facility needs assessment

The draft summary budget is based on these goals. It is still in the draft phase; in October board will have to pass resolution for 2020 levy which will be based on strategic plan, operating goals, and draft budget.

President Rapisand suggested that action was not required at this time; she wished to wait until the Budget and Finance meeting to hear from Director Smith and Treasurer Dobrilovic as to what the process will be and what the time frame is for approval and planning.

Approve overdue fines strategy

Director Smith noted that the Board had several robust discussions on this subject. She said she had received feedback from Trustees that there had been a lot of discussion about data and numbers, it would be helpful to refocus on the why - why are libraries doing this, why do we think it's a good thing. The decision for the Board came down to concerns about a loss of revenue and the issue of accountability.

In terms of tax dollars, she offered the following:

- Fine revenue has seen a dramatic decrease – as electronic resources continue to grow in use, the Library will continue to see reduction. However, it is still a lot of money, and we need to consider what happens when we don't have that money. Options include:
 - Non-salary across the board reduction in spending
 - Reduce accumulations

In terms of accountability, there has been no definitive study or example that would tell us how this would work at PRPL. Having a fine free trial seemed to make sense so we could gather Park Ridge data. This would allow us to:

- See if the number of overdue items increases
- Observe any change in the average days for items to be returned reduces
- Survey patrons about the experience
- Do the trial ahead of CCS revisiting the question of becoming fine free consortium – would have data we could share with CCS

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 – September 8, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

The Library planned for reduced spending in FY21; those reductions in spending could offset the trial. She recommends moving forward with trial.

President Rapisand explained that she had initially not been in favor of this policy but after further discussion and research, she is moving towards supporting it. This is something that has been recommended by the ALA – they have studied the issue, they know the industry. She believes this will be the future of libraries; but asked if now is the time for Park Ridge. Another consideration is the increasing number of members of the consortium members that are now fine free. She feels the Board should either decide yes and implement the program or table it or hold off for now. She doesn't want to say no definitively.

Treasurer Dobrilovic said that he had originally raised idea of trial period. The Board likes to make decisions based on as much data as we can generate, data that is relevant to our library. He believed that a trial period would be the best way to gather data to allow the Board to make an educated and informed decision on if fine free is for us or not. Subsequently, he spoke to community members, and found that those he spoke to did not support fine free, and did not understand why library would go fine free. He supports waiting until situation normalizes and reconsider in the future.

Trustee Steinfels asked when trial period would start? He asked if we did a trial at this time, if the data would be valid, questioning how "normal" things would be.

Trustee Hanba agrees with holding off. She heard from community members who were not in favor of this proposal. She does not think the Board is ready for a decision.

Director Smith pointed out that this is not something that should be decided based solely on the current situation. The Library is currently not charging overdue fines. Charging and collecting fines at the Library at this time – as the Library is not currently accepting cash – could increase the number of transactions that have to happen, and increase person to person and interactions. Staff is working hard to not max out with capacity, but collecting fines at this time is a concern. If the Board does decide to table implementing a fine free policy, she is asking the Board to extend the overdue fine grace period for an additional few months – at least through flu season or until Illinois COVID numbers improve.

Chair Burkum did not feel strongly about this policy initially. She canvassed residents who also did not feel strongly about it. She is in favor of the idea of a test. She had block on her account for an overdue book that had been returned but was in quarantine at the Library. She talked to librarian and got it taken care of, but she sees how this could be an issue. She suggested reducing time before block goes on account, she felt that account block would be effective. She said that Director Smith and staff have put a lot of time into this, done extensive research, and provided the answers the Board was seeking. They are the professionals. She urged the Board to allow the test to move forward.

Secretary Somheil said that he appreciates data staff has provided and Trustee input. He had been on fence, leaning toward supporting fine free. He said that President Rapisand made some good points about uniqueness of situation. He hasn't seen a lot of great data or direct commentary outside of some interactions. It leads back to how we organize and lead – if we are going to move forward, we need that input. His choice to delay and get feedback to determine if this is the right decision for Park Ridge, is this the direction we should go. It's important to educate patrons. He supports a delay.

Trustee Kiem wondered why Park Ridge is unique or different from other libraries who are implementing fine free.

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 – September 8, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

He suggested taking a step back and evaluating from neutral standpoint. He is against fees for things that don't affect operation of the Library. This is what the professional librarians think this is what we should do, he is inclined to try it.

Treasurer Dobrilovic asked Secretary Somheil what his thoughts were on soliciting feedback from patrons. Somheil suggested an education campaign and a formal survey; getting more facts on whether this is something the Park Ridge community wants.

Chair Burkum stated that it is the Trustee's job to make these decisions. They should not have to do a poll vote for these decisions.

Trustee Thiagarajan noted that 0.75% of the budget is not significant, especially since Director Smith has suggested how to make up revenue. She supports either trial option or an "all in" policy change.

Trustee Steinfels said he was fascinated with idea of the survey. He doesn't understand the urgency of doing this now. He expressed concern about the timing, of conducting a trial at this time and if we would get valid data. He is leaning against this. He remembers checking out books as child, paying fines, learning responsibility.

Chair Burkum noted that the Board has been discussing this issue for quite some time. Director Smith responded to Trustee Steinfel's "Why now?" question, noting that other topics have been delayed; it's not as though it couldn't have been set aside. The matter is not necessarily urgent, but a lot of factors could be positively affected by this decision. One is current COVID considerations. Going fine free would help to limit transactions, interactions and duration. Another is the swiftness that other consortium members have moved forward with this. When discussed in January, 9 libraries in the consortium were fine free; it has shot up to 20. One aspect of the trial would be to collect data and patron feedback with patrons reacting to an experience they are having.

In an effort to move the discussion forward, President Rapisand asked for a straw poll of which Board members would support a trial to gather more agenda. She would like to put this on the agenda for a vote next week if there is support for a fine free trial. The results of the poll were 5 in favor, 3 opposed.

Straw Poll: Yes: Burkum, Kiem, Rapisand, Somheil, Thiagarajan
 No: Dobrilovic, Hanba, Steinfels
 Absent: Reardon

The Board concurred that the item should be on the agenda for the Board meeting next week as Old Business.

Hearing no objections, Chair Burkum adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m.