

BML Strategic Planning Minutes, August 30, 2022

Convened at 4:48 in the Community Meeting Room

Present: Starr LaTronica, Kate O'Connor, Beth Johnson, Howard Burrows, Leo Schiff, Ann Varilly, Jeanne Walsh

- Agenda changes: none
- Public comments: none
- Minutes of July 19 approved as submitted

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Planning progress

- Micro-forums

In-person forum in the library on 8/24/22

Several themes and insights emerged:

- Opportunities to mix and mingle in-person at the library
- Promotion and marketing
- Reaching beyond the library to connect with community members where they gather (e.g. Turning Point) or live (e.g., West Brattleboro)
- We should be asking for community input more than every five years.

Discussion of the themes from the 8/24 forum:

People were clear that they wanted opportunities to connect with others at the library. Events are valued. This is connected to the theme of promotion and marketing: we need good marketing to let people know what's going on. We also need to let people know about basic services and policies; for example, many people aren't aware that we stopped charging fines.

How do we measure marketing success for events? Maybe have surveys at the end, and track things like attendance depending on time of day. There

might also be less-measurable benefits: programs can inspire interest in the library even among people who don't attend.

People want us to facilitate community. It's more than just information and resources. They want community connection. That's a good thing for us to hear.

Surveying/engaging the community is also marketing, e.g. some people learned from the survey that we have museum passes.

We have a big glass window, maybe we could use it in a rotating way, with or without screens. We used big banners successfully during pandemic. We could also use the big-screen TV in the window, running it at night when we're closed.

The events/service announcements at the Manchester, VT library are worth checking out. They also have a community meeting room that can be accessed after hours without entering the main part of the library. Could we close off the community meeting room section at Brooks the same way?

We can get out of the library sometimes and meet people in their preferred gathering places to deliver service and carry information about the library.

Regarding a presence West Brattleboro: maybe a one-day drop at a West B location where folks could pick things up at their convenience. Starr is in conversation with the fire chief about a possible location there. Bookmobile versus branch library: both are expensive, but a mobile unit is also marketing, like a moving billboard. How about 24/7 pickup, as in Keene? Locked box so you can pick up your books at your convenience. There are vending machines for a lot of money (\$50,000). The theme was expanding access, and people like that idea. However, at the forum, community-building was the stronger theme.

Public Zoom forum on 8/25/22

Small group, similar themes.

Rotary forum scheduled for 8/31/22

Kate and Leo will be there bright and early!

Forward notes from micro-forums to Greg?

Yes.

Any other forums?

Starr and Beth are working to connect with Sarah at the Senior Center. We noted that, of all the demographics, seniors had the lowest approval rating for the library, though it was still generally positive, percentage-wise.

Parking is tricky. People don't all know that we have free parking in the back. Also, the back ramp and the sidewalks are difficult to manage. On the positive side, we have a downtown library!

- Final retreat in late September organized by Greg for trustees and staff

Attendance at the event is voluntary. That's when we'll begin pulling things together into a planning document. We haven't yet chosen a date.

After that meeting, the committee will draft the final version of the document, including goals, objectives, and work plan.

Starr shared the 2020-2023 plan of the Association for Library Service to Children as an example.

A 5-year document these days is too far out. We need to stay agile. What about contingencies? How do we plan for that?

We can plan regular check-ins throughout the life of the plan and see how it's going. If new ideas come, we can see how it fits with the mission and values and also how it fits with the work plan. The Tool Library was good example: we wanted to jump on it, and it was consistent with our mission, so we took it on.

In the future, we can consult our new plan to confirm that it's an appropriate project, assess the staff impact, and adjust the work plan.

This can be a process of ongoing planning and adjustment for contingencies and opportunities. Maybe take out dates? But we'll want to check back to see when we *set* the goals. Maybe we'll have *many* dates.

Howard has ideas informed by discussions with librarians and consultants in our area. He will write up his ideas and submit them ahead of time—in the next week or two—so we have time to consider them before we begin drafting the plan.

Starr will poll the committee and Greg to choose a date and time for the final retreat. Maybe downstairs on a Thursday evening after we're closed, 6:00-9:00, or in the Selectboard meeting room at the Municipal Center on a morning, 9:00-noon. Starr will check on availability of the spaces and will send proposed days and times.

Next warned committee meeting: October 4th

Adjourned at 5:50.