CITY OF OREGON CITY
LIBRARY BOARD WORK SESSION
MINUTES

Virtual Meeting
Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 5:45 PM

This meeting will be held online via Zoom; please contact dbutcher@orcity.org for the meeting link.

CALL TO ORDER

David Goldberg called the meeting to order at 5:40 pm.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: David Goldberg, Cynthia Andrews, Heidi Blackwell, Nick Dierckman, Larry Osborne, Kari Linder

Members Excused: Elizabeth Zinter

Staff Present: Greg Williams, Library Director, Denise Butcher, Library Operations Manager

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Strategic Planning Committee Update

David Goldberg shared that he, Cynthia Andrews, Greg Williams, and Denise Butcher had met several times to discuss the existing strategic plan and shared respect for the work of those who created it.

Cynthia acknowledged the work and efforts of those who worked on the last iteration of the strategic plan since the plan addressed the needs of the library at the time. Cynthia acknowledged that the world was a very different place now. Cynthia addressed the goal of separating the strategic and operational components and acknowledged the staff effort it would take to update the operational portion.

David suggested each Board Member take on a specific strategic objective to be their focus and seconded Cynthia's assessment of focusing on a multi-year strategic plan and a one-to-two year operational plan to be developed by staff, approved by the Board, and implemented. David reported that this two-part focus was the subject of the first Strategic Planning Committee meeting.

David reported that the second meeting focused on examining and revising the language of the document and reworking the strategic focuses.

Greg thanked David and Cynthia for their input and discussion in the meetings and supported separating the operational from the strategic. Greg cited the flexibility the two-part plan gave staff to adjust to changing situations.

Larry Osborne and Nick Dierckman voiced their support for the reworked document.

Nick provided context that he had suggested a tactical plan that would focus on longer term goals and actionable steps to accomplish these during the formation of the last strategic plan. Nick stated that the Riverwalk project had been ongoing at the time of the last plan's writing and had successfully used core values for communicating with community members, which was why a core values section had been included in the last version of the plan.

David discussed the process of parsing down the previous sections on mission, vision, core values and distilling these down to the purpose and aspiration of the library.

Cynthia mentioned that one of the guidelines was to make the document more succinct and approachable.

Nick spoke in support of the mission statement and the approach in which the document was revised.

David invited discussions, additions, and revisions to the strategic plan.

David spoke on reworking the wording of the five strategic focuses, noting that focus three experienced substantial changes from a focus on imagination to a focus on collection, programming, services, and staff that reflected the diverse community.

Greg spoke in favor of making the strategic plan document focus on larger scope items.

David spoke about continuing to finesse the document based on the Board's feedback and ideas, approving the plan, and working with staff to create an 18 month tactical plan to meet the strategic plan focuses.

Larry voiced a desire to retain the word comfortable in focus four and felt its inclusion was important to counter perceptions that libraries were cold places.

David suggested phrases of "safe and comfortable," "comfortable and accessible facilities," or "comfortable services".

Greg added that the removal of comfortable was in response to COVID and near post COVID era safety measures leading to the removal, rearrangement, and alteration of things that might be considered comfortable, including furniture.

There was general discussion of the word choice of "comfortable" vs "welcoming" with "safe and welcoming" agreed upon.

Greg highlighted a draft graphic of the five focuses and expressed hope that a modified version of this might be used to communicate what the strategic plan was about as well as having a one-page summary document available for access in the library. Greg had received positive feedback on one page highlight documents in other venues for communicating large scale documents.

2. Community Room Use Policy

Greg Williams introduced the current challenge of meeting space, particularly after-hours meeting space, being very limited in availability. Greg acknowledged that at the expansion of the library, it was hoped that the library space would meet some of this need. Greg reflected that the existing policy parameters were for open hours use and available on a case-by-case basis with Director approval after-hours while not specifying what criteria to consider in making approval decisions and that this lack of clarity created potential equity and operational issues.

Greg stated that the security concerns stemmed from after-hours reservations and these had been addressed to date by having staff present. These were not budgeted staff hours, so after-hours presence had generally been Denise or the Director, who were both salaried. Greg reflected that this is manageable on an infrequent basis, but it would not be sustainable if usage picked up, even if that was just to give equitable access to City Neighborhood Associations (NAs) and County Community Planning Organizations (CPOs) within the library service area.

Kari Linder asked how many requests were submitted and if that number was slower due to COVID. Greg clarified that the room was currently not open to requests as it was still being used for furniture storage, and that safety protocols for in person programming were still being ironed out, and that historically pre-COVID the majority of requests came from NAs. Denise confirmed this and added that there were occasionally requests for birthday parties (which had been denied) and political town hall type meetings (which had been approved). Heidi Blackwell shared that her NA had been told that they could use the meeting space at the Police building.

Greg said that he had recently participated in a walk through with the insurance representative examining the City's potential after-hours meeting spaces nd the security needs associated with each, including the Commission Chambers at Old City Hall, new Police Station, and Community Development building.

David Goldberg asked if Pioneer Center was part of the prospective meeting spaces. Greg said that as he understood it, Pioneer Center rented out their space, so the situation was a little different with their venue and his understanding was that the cost of staff present for after-hours events was built into their rental rate.

David asked if there were questions.

Nick Dierckman stated that his concern was with determining the appropriate users of the space. Nick asked if there was a current definition of public entity that could use the space under current policy.

Greg said more than public entities were eligible for using the room, and there was a priority list that prioritized library use (to include programming and Board and Friends use), City use, non-profits, and other organizations with goals of educational, cultural, intellectual, social or civic betterment of Oregon City and surrounding areas.

Kari asked about the feasibility of not offering after-hours meeting space and what staff proposed.

Greg stated that when the bond measure that funded the library was put forward, voters were told the library would have community space available after-hours and thought that a blanket policy of no after-hours meeting space would cause upset.

Denise Butcher added that at the time the vote went out, there was a promise made of after-hours meeting availability, and the security concerns of after-hours events had not been identified or considered. Denise offered an example of an occasion where a NA had an after-hours meeting during which a member of the public entered the library and refused to leave the bathroom. As community members could not be expected to be enforcers of library policy for such situations, it was determined that staff needed to remain on premise.

Larry Osborne asked if the library was prohibited from charging for the use of the room.

Greg stated that the current policy stated that there was no charge for the room and that his understanding was that most metro area libraries did not charge for use of their spaces. Greg noted the library's policy could be changed.

David voiced support for having one day a week where the library was open very late and meetings could occur during staffed hours. David noted that library hours currently ran till seven and that provided time for post work hours meetings and thought that expanding library hours would mitigate the after-hours staffing questions while providing access.

Nick pointed out that extending hours would also necessitate increased staff hours to keep services running and stated that he was not sure what the demand on staff would be.

Kari noted that staff presence did not wholly address the security concerns and Nick pointed out that a lot of the issues were also present in normal operating hours.

David brought up the hiring of the security staff member. Greg said the position was scheduled to come online soon, however the hours allotted for in that position did not encompass all hours the library was open.

Greg mentioned potentially training volunteers or designated people from the groups using the meeting rooms in policy and security expectations as a condition of using the room. Greg specified building entry and exit as a prime area of concern.

David asked if there were any City policies regarding the public's use of meeting spaces.

Greg responded that Parks and Recreation was the only other department he knew of that routinely had their meeting spaces used for public meetings and that they had a reservation procedure and policy. Greg anticipated the development of procedures for other meeting spaces the city might make available and identified establishing as much consistency with other department booking procedures as possible as a goal. Greg expressed hope that policy consistency would increase the ease of use for community members.

Nick spoke positively about a tour of the meeting facilities at the Public Works building and mentioned that the preliminary information he had received indicated that their facilities would not be available after-hours. Nick observed that Pioneer Center and the Library both felt like they should be more accessible to the public.

Nick thought that with budget considerations in the new budget, it might be possible to make after-hours access work. Nick inquired as to the possibility of finding staff to staff it. Greg thought having the budget to support staff hours would make it easier but there were still staffing challenges with the irregularity of hours and the limits of hours staff could work per week. Greg also addressed the potential challenge of staffing extra hours with a primarily on-call staff. Denise pointed out that with the current building policy, Denise and Greg could be present solo, but anyone else needed at least two staff in the building. Denise recognized that part time and on-call staff would not have the same authority that Denise or Greg would have to handle security concerns.

David pointed out that the group could take additional time to think and explore possibilities. David suggested taking staff suggestions. David echoed Kari's initial question about why it was needed and affirmed that if that was the agreement put before the community, it needed to be upheld.

Nick asked for clarification regarding building modifications to limit the accessible area around the community room.

Denise said that the exterior door in the community room had been modified from an emergency exit only door to an entrance/exit door. This was done to limit the likelihood of the sliding doors being mis-set. Nick confirmed that this had been done already.

Greg said that there was a roll down gate that blocked access past the elevator, which would normally be turned off, but left the bathrooms and an alarmed staff door accessible. Greg expressed concern with the sliding door's security. Denise expressed concern that the unlockable glass door between the two sliding doors may still be used as an exit. Denise explained that it was unlockable for fire reasons.

Heidi Blackwell added that the college and school district had after-hours meeting spaces and thought that looking at their policies and personnel might be helpful. Kari said Lake Oswego had similar building policies and had implemented no holiday usage, pricing rubrics, and implemented building monitors to provide after-hours assistance.

Greg expressed curiosity about the building monitor idea, particularly the possibility of such a position functioning across departments and possibly being a shared budget cost.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

None

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

3. Vote on the strategic plan
4. Authorize staff to generate tactical plan

ADJOURNMENT

David Goldberg adjourned the meeting at 6:30 pm.