July 22, 2017

Minutes of a special meeting of the Board of Library Trustees of the Village of Oak Park held on Saturday, July 22 2017 in the Scoville Room of the Main Library.

Roll Call and Call to Order
Present: Library Trustees Foss, Fruth, Glavin, Harris, Kelenson, Millan, and Mohanraj
Absent: None

Also present: David Seleb, Executive Director; Lori Pulliam, Manager of Experiences and Initiatives, Public Services; Elizabeth Marszalik, Manager of Experiences and Initiatives, Materials Services; Jodi Kolo, Manager for Communications Services; Sharon Grimm, Staff Learning Coordinator; Kathleen Spale, Assistant Manager for Materials Services

Introduction
David Seleb shared background on what brought him and the library to the Harwood Institute. He was asked in 2013 by an ALA staff member who is also a member of the Oak Park community to attend the first library-specific session in Washington, DC. Seleb said the experience was very different for him than any other professional education session in his 28-year career history. It enabled him to see our work in a very different way.

Seleb described the potential he saw for bringing the approach to strategic planning, replacing a traditional approach of staff generating assumptions about what was best and ending up with a list of actions.

Seleb said the difference is the quintessential Harwood question: what kind of community do you want to live in?

Seleb said he needed to ask himself and staff, “are you prepared for change? Because you can only ask this question if you are prepared for change and then prepared to act.”

Seleb said Harwood uses public knowledge for transformation in communities.
Seleb said another important Harwood tool, the innovation space, is one the library has used internally. It enables reflection about learning and why that learning is important.

Seleb said sixteen managers, assistant managers, and other library staffers so far have become formally trained in Harwood, either at in-person conferences or through eight-week virtual courses.

Sarah Glavin asked what had been the most influential piece of information learned through Harwood.

Seleb replied everything the library has done in the last three years has been tied to the approach. Harwood changed thinking about how we plan our work and respond to the community.

Janet Kelenson said Harwood introduced the concept of turning outward.

Matt Fruth said using Harwood has made the strategic planning process more fluid, flexible, and meaningful with opportunities for adjustments on an annual basis.

The Three A’s of Public Life
Kathleen Spale and Sharon Grimm introduced three Harwood videos on “the Three As of Public Life: Authority, Authenticity, Accountability.” Self-assessment questions were answered from the perspective of the library, not the individual, then discussed.

As a new trustee, Maryanne Mohanraj said she felt she needed more time to be able to answer the assessments accurately from the library’s point of view rather than her own.

Ted Foss, referencing the ALA “Libraries Transform” publicity campaign, said it sounded like communities are transforming libraries as well as libraries transforming communities.

Glavin said intentions were reflected yet she wanted more data around these conversations to determine whose voice is not yet at the table.

Mohanraj said she heard the library is great for the people who get here, but what about others?
Kelenson said there are a lot of people who like the concept of the library, but don’t use the library, and to recognize both groups as opportunities and realities.

Seleb said he has been asked by library peers how he has had success with community and local government partnerships. He replied his intention was never to make outcomes about the library, but to make them about the community. The relationships are never about us but about what the community needs and where needs intersect with library services and resources.

Carmenza Millan said she appreciated the history of Harwood. She said she used to be one of those people not touched by the library. There are people who want nothing from us and we have to be at peace with that.

Grimm said Harwood suggests ways to get input from people who are not willing to talk to an organization directly, including having a large cross-section of the community and building relationships with new groups that do reach hard-to-capture voices.

Mohanraj said there are two types of non-users, those that don’t need library services, and those that have barriers, such as distrust, to library services.

Matt Fruth said there is a third non-user group that does not know what the library does.

Seleb said that there are those who don’t agree on approaches that support broader approaches to equity of service.

Kelenson said she is pleased with time taken to build bridges and to meet with other trustees outside of Oak Park.

Christian Harris said he was challenged by the Harwood definitions of authority and authenticity and originally had them switched. He also asked everyone to remember that some patrons may be battling historical barriers to access, using an “I remember when…” example.

BREAK
After a break, Seleb reviewed community aspirations and strategic priorities, noting the current action plan is rooted in those.

Millan suggested the library consider using the “frontline feedback app” for staff to collect real-time information at desks.

Foss said it is difficult not to react strongly to intense comments.

Seleb said he recognized the challenge of getting aspirations of the whole community. He said the library always responds to comments. But that does not mean the library takes a specific action (start or stop) on every comment shared.

He said we listen and include comments in the totality of resources to make strategic decisions. Strategic priorities help set overall priorities. Committing to public knowledge to inform those priorities better ensures achieving what the community wants vs. what we internally want.

Seleb said this fall the plan is again to present strategic objectives and budget recommendations at the same time to the Board, since one informs the other.

Seleb asked for trustee feedback on:
- The library’s commitment to Harwood
- The library’s commitment to its strategic priorities
- Opportunities (near and long-term)

Harris asked how many people work at the library, and what is the percentage breakdown of men vs. women.

Millan asked for clarification on defining diversity.

Mohanraj asked when is the time to have conversations about equity in hiring, something she said schools are also talking about.
Kelenson asked if the group could frame this as what is the diversity of staff in relation to the diversity of the community?

Elizabeth Marszalik said that she is part of an ALA task force addressing diversity in libraries, and work is being started related to research on the topic. There is a meeting on October 16.

Seleb said the library can share information, based on what is self-reported, about staff diversity.

Millan asked if Harwood tools are time-tested.

Seleb said yes, nearly thirty years of experience and use in communities across the United States and in other countries.

Glavin said she wants to see how Harwood feedback is recorded, and she asked if there are defined drivers and if the library budget is informed by those drivers.

Mohanraj said services should be not only numbers oriented but also need driven.

Seleb said it is not about only inputs and outputs but about outcomes and impacts.

Glavin said she wants to know what the library does not know, to ensure the board is not in an echo chamber.

**Innovation Space**

**Grimm: What are we learning?**

- Home delivery of books needs to be promoted.
- Library staff needs to better understand how the board is learning about the library.
- Quantified vs. qualified/anecdotal information - we need both for budgeting.
- Can we use Facebook to get a different set of public perspectives?
- We depend on the power of listening over time.
- Isolated conversations need to work together.
Seleb: the Board needs to work together to decide how to make decisions, how to get information, how to prioritize and allocate resources, and how to make strategic decisions.

- It takes time to build public knowledge.
- We need programs that address more than one strategic priority.
- Talking about finances with the whole board is a good process for working together on priorities.
- Monthly reports communicate successes in strategic priorities.
- I want to see pain points, more visual reporting.
- I like getting immediate information via email from David.
- As a new trustee, I am impatient with myself in the process.
- As a new trustee, I want to get a better grasp on what is different than it was five years ago.
  - Seleb: there are things you can see (Multicultural Collection, Fine Free), there are things you cannot see but you can experience (building decisions) all that come from Harwood and commitments to engagement, learning, and stewardship.
  - Kelenson: we have new mission and vision statements.
  - Kolo: we now talk about the why and the impact, not just the what

**Seleb: What is the most important thing to happen next?**

- Harris: Collection of data for informed decisions
  - Mohanraj: Who are we talking to?
  - Glavin: What are opportunities? Deficits?
- Seleb: Budget discussion begins in August
  - Most money is committed to expenses for staff, library materials, and fixed costs
  - Can have more discussion on what is achievable with the balance