Saturday, July 27, 2019

Minutes of the Special Meeting, Strategic Planning of the Board of Library Trustees of the Village of Oak Park held on Saturday, July 27, 2019 in the Scoville Room of the Main Library. The meeting was called to order by President Matt Fruth at 9:10 am.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
   - Present: Matthew Fruth, President; Theodore N. Foss, Vice President; Christian Harris, Finance Officer; Sarah Glavin, Secretary; Trustees Virginia Bloom-Scheirer, Colleen Burns, Mary Anne Mohanraj.
   - Absent: None
   - Also present: Executive Director David J. Seleb; Director of Operations Jeremy Andrykowski; Director of Communications Jodi Kolo; Director of Public Services and Programs Lori Pulliam.

2. Community Member and Visitor Comments: None.

3. Strategic Plan 2019 Priorities and Objectives: History of Development
   a. Harwood and Community Aspirations
   Seleb said the library has used the Harwood methodology and turning outward for about six years to inform its strategic planning. He said the community expects the library to work with individuals and organizations on projects that achieve action around shared aspirations. These aspirations include equity and education, housing and affordability, community empathy, civic and social engagement, public safety, and bridging different narratives around community progress.
   b. Vision and Mission
   Mohanraj said she feels the Harwood process brings people together but does not focus on who is left out. Harris said it is important to note that change can hurt people on both sides of an issue. Seleb said the Harwood approach is pragmatic and action-based. Seleb also said he and Rich Harwood have talked about obstacles to action and change in Oak Park.

   Seleb said there are area partners willing to advance opportunities. Seleb reminded trustees he is seeking their recommendations on whose voices are not yet at the table, and who should be invited to an upcoming two-and-a-half day Harwood training session to be held in Oak Park.

   Bloom-Scheirer asked for clarification on who to recommend for the training. Mohanraj said she hears that the community wants movement on equity, and notes schools’ institutional commitments (hiring, policy). Glavin said the library is making good progress on using staff in community engagement roles to identify and bring its services to people not yet engaged. She said the library should continue to move forward with this work, and noted from her participation on the Village of Oak Park’s iGov committee, she does not hear all other boards having these types of conversations.

   c. Strategic Priorities: Engagement, Learning, Stewardship
   Seleb said the Harwood approach helped define the library’s current strategic priorities of engagement, learning, and stewardship, as well as refine definitions and actions to support those priorities.

   The group took a break around 10:10 am, and resumed at 10:20 am.

4. Financial Position
   a. Levy and Revenue Assumptions
   Andrykowski presented information about the budget planning process. He shared the library’s budget planning calendar, sources of revenue, and details around fixed expenses.
Seleb said the Village of Oak Park levies on behalf of the library. He noted that in previous years, the library has been conservative in budget increases and requests.

Burns asked if the library has to formally present its budget at a Village Board meeting. Seleb replied no.

Foss asked if the library has to have a collaborative discussion with other Village boards about its budget. As a village library, Seleb said no, and that other Oak Park taxing body boards would need to be a part of that discussion and process.

Andrykowski noted the differences between a district, a city, and a village library: district libraries are independent, city libraries are departments within city government, and village libraries are a hybrid of the two.

Burns asked if Oak Park has always been a village library. Fruth replied yes.

**b. Expense Assumptions**

Harris asked about the internal process for budget requests, and how to better understand how the library arrives at amounts in line items. Fruth said he sees line item management as the role of library staff, and the board should look at the budget as a whole.

Bloom-Scheirer asked if there will be enough information about line item amounts to understand how spending works. Seleb says the leadership team would provide context and prioritize requests for the board.

Glavin said she wanted a tight narrative around budget requests.

Seleb noted the shift in board philosophy regarding the budget over his six years in Oak Park.

Mohanraj said now is a good time to re-evaluate spending.

**c. Bond Debt Retirement**

Fruth said there is a fine balance between what resources and potential impacts to offer to the community vs. what to give back.

Andrykowski said budgeting is about flexibility and accountability, and staff is working to plan 18 months ahead.

Fruth said trustees needs to be able to communicate what the library is doing and spending on.

Glavin asked if the library seeks out grants and independent funding. Seleb said there is no individual staff person dedicated to this, and there are individual grant opportunities through the state of Illinois and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Andrykowski shared information on Cook County’s annual tax distribution. He showed how appropriations spike twice yearly, tied to the county’s property tax payment schedule. He also compared that to how library operating expenses remain steady throughout the year. He noted how this contrast was important to conversation around the library’s fund balance.

Mohanraj said it is important to note that the library does not offer resources and experiences for fees. She added there is an equity cost with a fee model.

Fruth said when talking to trustees at libraries outside of Illinois, it is important to recall that state funding of libraries in Illinois has been stable.
The group took a break around 11:00 am, and resumed at 11:10 am.

d. Library Fund Balance
Seleb summarized two existing library policies related to budget planning on investment of public funds and the library’s fund balance.

Andrykowski said that an informal poll of area libraries revealed a wide range in fund balances – from 25% to 65% of operating budget. He added that the fund balance should support ongoing building maintenance and future projects.

Fruth shared history on the development of the library’s current fund balance policy.

5. Physical Infrastructure
   a. Capital Assets Study
Andrykowski referenced the capital assets study done in 2016 on the Main Library. Copies of the full report were distributed.

b. Capital Projects
Mohanraj asked what if any projects the library is already committed to. Andrykowski shared a partial list of projects to complete in the next two years, compiled from a 2016 capital asset study.

c. Facilities Master Plan
Mohanraj asked that staff keep an eye on what else is happening in the community related to maker spaces and gathering spaces so there is no duplication in efforts.

d. Library Fund Balance as Strategy
Seleb said that with retirement in 2020 of the library’s bond debt, the board has options to consider. Seleb also said there are no current plans to ask for more bond debt, and that for most capital improvements, money has come from the fund balance. Bloom-Scheirer asked about community perspectives on options. Fruth says that trustees will need talking points, regardless of which options are approved.

6. Strategic Plan 2020 Development: Priorities and Objectives
Seleb said that the board has made clear its priority of human resources, and that the library should continue to stay with, if not ahead of, the curve on Chicago minimum wage earnings, benefits, and pension contributions. Seleb shared estimated figures for projected human resources costs.

Mohanraj asked for clarification around a livable wage in Oak Park, and how to plan to keep up with inflation. She asked to see additional estimates for wage increases of 4%. Bloom-Scheirer asks to see projections of 3.5%. Andrykowski said any future tax levies need to maintain salary increases for the long term.

Mohanraj asked that a portion of the budget be allocated for equity retention and recruitment. She suggested herself, Bloom-Scheirer, and Harris as mentors for library staff of color.

Glavin suggested developing individual talent at the library, through a fellowship or summer hiring, and to supporting middle school and high school students who show an interest in the work as a future career path.

Burns asked what happens next with trustee suggestions in relation to budget planning.

Seleb said the library's leadership team will further discuss options, rank priorities, and bring information back to trustees.
Harris reiterated his request for a budget commitment to increase access to degrees in library science. He also asked for budget commitments to increasing library staff of color.

Glavin asked for budget support of procurement and a request for proposal (RFP) process that prioritizes diverse and local vendors. She also asked for continued innovation in efforts that support equity and environmental impacts.

Fruth asked for budget support of civic literacy partnerships with goals to help the community find reliable information about how government works, and who does what. Related, Bloom-Scheirer asked if the library streams webinars for the public. Glavin asked for efforts to support voting rights, election judges, and advocacy issues.

Burns asked for budget support of non-book related collections.

Bloom-Scheirer asked for budget support for spaces for middle and high school students that is not shared with younger children.

7. Adjournment
Fruth adjourned the meeting at 1:03 pm.