

Memo Date: 8-11-2021

To: Cottage Grove Village Board of Trustees

From: Library Planning Committee Chair Cindi Kelm-Nelson

RE: Formal establishment of a Library Board

In Part 2 of the Library Planning Committee's recommendation to the Village Board (July 5, 2021), we recommend establishing a formal Library Board in compliance with Wisconsin State Statute Chapter 43. We arrived at this recommendation with guidance from the Department of Public Instruction, Dane County Library Services, South Central Library Services, local librarians and library directors (Belleville, Oregon, Fitchburg, Madison), and financial advisors (Madison Library Foundation, Grant Specialists, and Fund Development Advisors). Here, we emphasize that the establishment of a formal Library Board does not guarantee the building of a library; but it does allow for accurate and adequate researching and planning to take place.

A Library Board allows for the research and planning phases of this project to continue in 2022. These critical phases include networking and stakeholder engagement, researching to meet community needs, planning outreach to the community, financing for the future, and developing the team to accomplish this project.

Library Board Responsibilities

A Library Board's true responsibility is to set a purpose and a direction for a local library; this includes defining directions to meet the needs of the community. Eventually it will delegate staff and resources to run library services. Additional responsibilities are to act as a liaison between the library, the village, and the community; the Library Board will represent the public in its stewardship of the library and **advocates for the library and the community it serves.** The Library Board will work with the staff and administration to determine what the public wants and, in turn, to let the public know what the possibilities of library service are. To do this, the Library Board must maintain regular contact with the public, this includes those who use the library and those who do not. These data that the Library Board will collect will guide the Library Board in setting future directions for the library. Moreover, to achieve future goals, the Library Board will communicate this information to the Village Board and advocate for the necessary resources. Advocacy includes working on obtaining the required funds for the library, finding ways to work with the community and connect with public groups, and making sure that the needs and interests of the community are at the forefront of making board decisions.

A Library Board will also **establish a mission and vision for the future of the library.** Library Board responsibilities include being cognizant of the future of the library and shaping it to be responsive to any community needs. Establishing a mission and vision for the library, essential Library Board responsibilities, are foundational to planning for the future of the library and its services. The Library Board will also begin to **establish and implement policies for the library,** this includes spending time on policy issues, developing and implementing policies and monitoring the effectiveness of those policies.

Library Board Meetings

The Library Board would meet. At minimum, once per month. An example of topics covered include:

- By-laws and format of library board meetings.
- Expectations for library board member participation.
- The library's long range and/or strategic plan.
- Review of current issues facing the library.
- The library's budget and financial situation.
- Overview of the Trustee Handbook.
- Library board powers and relationship with the municipality and/or county.
- Discussion of Library's role within, and expectations from, South Central Library System.
- Discussion of library compliance with local, state, and federal law.
- Take into consideration public comment, when appropriate.
- Other library policies, Including input upon, and approval of, an annual Library Budget.
- Input and/or status report from the Library Director, once they are established.
- Hiring and evaluating a library director on an annual basis.
- Public library system membership.
- Policies on the selection and review of library materials.
- Approve of, amend, and suggest Library Policy.
- Discussion of: library circulation, library programming, approximate number of attendees to library in a month, and approval of library bills.
- Address building concerns.
- Friends of the Library reports and collaborations

Library Board Committees

Moving a library project forward means expanding the role for community engagement. A physical library building must meet the needs of the community, whether as a village hall, community center, and collaborative space. However, community input is necessary so that the Library Board can direct future planning appropriately. The Library Planning Committee suggests several sub-committees, formed by residents, that will help research answers to questions Village Board Trustees have raised in the last several meetings including:

- Actual and Realistic Operational Costs— **Library Board Finance Committee**
- Surveying Residents for Building Spaces— **Library Board Public Relations Committee**
- Program Statement/Architectural Design: Sq Footage Assessments—**Library Board Facility Committee**
- Capital campaign/fundraising—**Library Board Capital Campaign Committee**
- Working with the Friends of the Cottage Grove Community Library, Inc to assist in setting up long-term endowments and foundations, grants from employers and large charitable foundations—**A vision to fund the library**

References

See attached for the Department of Public Instructions Trustee Essentials document as well as the “*Role of Library Trustees*” document by the Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends, and Foundations.