

FOX LAKE PUBLIC LIBRARY

LONG RANGE PLAN FOR SERVICES

2018-2022

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IN COOPERATION WITH THE

FOX LAKE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD AND

LIBRARY DIRECTOR PAULA TORGESON

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The Fox Lake Public Library has been in operation since 1907, and is currently offering its 110th year of service to the community. The Library provides primary service to over 1,500 residents of the City of Fox Lake, and is the closest library for offering service to the residents of the Town of Fox Lake and other surrounding areas. The current library facility was constructed in 1958, and is located in downtown Fox Lake. The Library is a member of the Dodge County Library Service, and the four-county Monarch Library System. In the spring of 2017, the Library Board and Library Director were interested in examining existing library services and operations to develop a five-year plan that could provide some guidance for improving, modifying and possibly expanding services to the community during the next few years. Former Hartford Public Library Director Michael Gelhausen was hired to assist in this process. A series of meetings and interviews were held with the members of the Library Board, the library staff, the Friends of the Library along with library users and members of the community asking each what they considered to be the Fox Lake Library's best traits, and then comment on the areas that needed attention. Based upon the comments that were received, a report was provided to the Library Board to see what should be considered priorities on which to concentrate. What follows is a proposed plan of action for several areas which the Library Board and staff hope to implement in cooperation with the City of Fox Lake.

COMMUNICATION

Every successful library operation needs to make sure that the community it serves knows what is happening at the library. Public relations work is crucial to spreading the library's message. In a smaller community like Fox Lake, it is difficult to "get the word out" when there is not a centralized newspaper or media outlet. The Number One goal for the Fox Lake Library in the next budget year is trying to improve communication with Fox Lake area people. The Library Board realizes that getting people into the facility, utilizing the collections being offered and attending the programs for various age groups is critical to the long term success of the library. In an attempt to reach out to younger adults and families, the Library will work on developing a Facebook Page and probably restructure its website to be more user-friendly and informative. Other forms of improved communication being considered are quarterly and/or specialty newsletters mailed to every Fox Lake zip code address, monthly calendars highlighting activities and programs for distribution within the community and through area schools and day care centers, and regular updates of library news to be shared with the Chamber of Commerce and the City. To be successful with this endeavor, it will be necessary to commit dedicated staff time of approximately five hours weekly to update information on the Facebook Page and the website, plus have the opportunity to work on calendars, flyers and contacts with other local information sources.

Better library signage is a goal for the future. It would be beneficial to have a Fox Lake Public Library sign prominently displayed on the building, with perhaps a different location for the announcement board so that it could be better seen when passing the library. There was also discussion of an electronic community information sign on library property, but that would need careful consideration regarding costs, administration of the sign along with the development of policies regarding what could be posted.

PROGRAMMING

The staff of the Fox Lake Library tries to offer a wide variety of programs throughout the year with support from the Friends of the Library. Specifically mentioned during the review processes were the monthly Third Saturday adult sessions and the Summer Reading Program offered for the school children. While some of these programs were well attended, others didn't have the attendance to justify the time and effort that was spent on planning and presentation. The communication improvements that are being implemented in 2018 will hopefully help spread the word to more people who are currently unaware of what the library is offering.

As part of program planning for the future, the Fox Lake Public Library would like to prioritize literacy as a primary goal. Illiteracy is a disadvantage for people, and it does not translate into being unintelligent. It shall be the goal of the Library during this five-year plan to try to help all ages within the Fox Lake community become more aware of what the library has to offer and how accessing the library's materials, programs and services can improve their lifestyle. Literacy means for than just reading. Better communication skills can improve the ability to seek employment, obtain health insurance or other necessary assistance, and become an involved citizen. There are five main literacy practices that support lifelong learning within libraries, especially for younger children and teens. These five practices are Reading, Writing, Talking, Playing and Singing. During each year of this services plan, the library will focus on one of these practices and will promote that particular theme throughout its programming efforts for all ages.

There were several other programming options mentioned for consideration in the future. A regular series of preschool programs was requested, expanding the infrequent sessions now offered. Movie sessions for adults, children and families were also mentioned, which would cost about \$225 annually if the library participated in the movie license program offered through the Monarch System. The Library Board and staff will be evaluating all of these suggestions for possible additions to the programming schedule based upon which programs would attract the most interest and how much staff time is necessary to plan, present and add new programs.

Another issue regarding library programming that was frequently mentioned was the need to have adequate space to present various programs. Currently the furnishings in the library have to be juggled to make room to offer programs, which is time consuming and disruptive to regular library users. Afterwards, everything has to be returned to the original arrangement. The Fox Lake Community Center has been utilized for library programming to accommodate more people and to offer better parking. The only problem with using an offsite location for programming is it removes the attendees from the library environment. However, the software of the Polaris computer system now offers the ability to take the library into the community and link directly to both the administrative functions and the database. Staff will investigate using this software option as a way of taking the library's laptop, a small collection of materials focusing on the subject of the program being presented and library cards/applications to offsite locations as a way of providing a direct connection to the library for those attending the programs.

LIBRARY MATERIALS

The Fox Lake Library received good reviews from users regarding its selection of materials offered for public usage. Across the past ten years, the book collection has ranged between 12,000 and 13,000 volumes with staff making a concerted effort to provide the most popular titles and authors. The Library's collection of DVD/video titles has doubled in the past ten years, going from 1,420 in 2007 to 3,108 through 2016. The collection of audio materials (Books-on-Tape/CD and Music CDs) has also increased across the years from 592 in 2007 to 900 last year. The Library also provides access to Wisconsin's Overdrive collection of over 68,000 titles of downloadable audiobooks and videos. Participation in the Monarch Library System allows Fox Lake library users direct online access to the collections found in thirty other libraries in a four county area, with weekday delivery of materials.

While the review process indicated some interest in having the library expand specific areas of the overall collection, there didn't seem to be any immediate need to address any shortcomings. The staff will continue regular evaluations of the collections when making purchase decisions, and the Library Board has indicated a willingness to address requests for improving specific sections of each type of collection with funds that are collected from outside sources, primarily cross-county usage payments.

LIBRARY STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION

The Fox Lake Public Library currently has a full-time MLS accredited Library Director and two part-time library aides that equal 1.7 FTE. The Library offers 47 hours of service per week across the entire year. The staff and hours are adequate for a community of Fox Lake's size, but there are times during the week when only one staff member is present within the building, especially at night and on Saturdays. Vacations and sick time also put a strain on the existing staff as they are sometimes required to work extra days and hours on short notice to provide coverage. To maintain the status quo regarding current operations and services, it is felt that the staff size is appropriate. However, the Library Board and Director are investigating possible changes to services and operations based upon this five-year plan. There is a desire to thoroughly review existing job descriptions as they pertain to each employee's current job expectations. The Director would like to see a formal review for all library policies across the next five years to make sure the Library is complying with the expectations of the Monarch Library System and offering user-friendly rules for library customers. The latest edition of the Wisconsin Public Library Standards will be released soon by the Department of Public Instruction, and these updated quantitative and qualitative proposals for library services and operations need to be reviewed by the Library Board to see how Fox Lake compares with the recommended state-wide guidelines.

The goals and objectives being discussed in this document will increase the administrative workload on the library director to gather information for Library Board review and consideration, and will probably increase the time necessary to improve communications with, and prepare programming options for, the Fox Lake area. The Library Board will work with the City of Fox Lake to determine the most cost effective way to continue current library operations while implementing changes to improve the overall quality of the library for the community.

The Library Director and support staff should be allowed time during the course of every year to attend training and continuing education programs and conferences as a regular part of

their job expectations. The Director in particular has to maintain her certification every five years with the Department of Public Instruction. The implementation of the new Polaris computer network in 2017 has been a challenge for all staff members as the product is vastly different from Sirsi/Dynix which was in use for ten years. Onsite personal training is available from the Monarch System so that everyone is more comfortable with using the administrative components of Polaris along with the daily circulation and cataloging modules. The Library Board supports making staff time available for proper training and CE opportunities.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES

During the review process for this report, a number of possible improvements for library furnishings and equipment were discussed. In particular, the Fox Lake Public Library needs to maintain the personal computers for both public and staff usage. The Library currently has seven PCs and one laptop. Four PCs are used for the public Internet stations, and three are staff PCs for Polaris and administrative usage. The Monarch Library Systems offers annual group purchases of PCs, laptops and other peripheral equipment to help provide the most current technologies necessary for public and Polaris needs at an affordable price, and most importantly a warranty is provided along with system technical assistance for set-up, installation and maintenance of the product. The Fox Lake Library should work with the City to begin an annual rotation of computer purchases that can be budgeted every year to insure that the library is utilizing current and reliable computer equipment.

Other capital needs for improving library services that have been mentioned include some new book and audio-visual shelving and displayers. The Library Board and staff have been working on "freshening up" the appearance of the facility with some painting and rearrangement of various sections in the library. There is a willingness to invest modest amounts of the library's savings to acquire necessary furnishings as needed. The Board and staff will continue to examine ways to improve the quality and comfort of the patron's library experience.

LIBRARY FACILITY

Another of the major goals to accomplish by the end of this five-year planning cycle is to assemble a committee of people from within the Fox Lake community to explore the options and costs associated with expanding the size of the library, and make a report to the community with a recommendation for action. Throughout the interviews and discussions, the space limitations and lack of ADA compliance of the soon to be sixty year old facility were mentioned by everyone. There seems to be support to consider a "larger library" but there is definitely a strong division on just what a "larger library" means. About ten years ago, there was a move to construct an entirely new facility including a fundraising campaign, and there is a strong sentiment to resurrect that discussion. There is another element within the community that wants to explore options on the current site. It also must be admitted that there are people who feel the current facility has more than enough room that just needs minimal updating. The current operation is greatly handicapped by the inability to utilize the lower level because of ADA compliance. While the building has roughly 2,400 total square feet, only the 1,500 square feet of the upper floor can be used to provide accessible library services.

Any costs associated with expanding the size of the library will be expensive. It would be a very positive approach to bring together all sides and work together to find a unified solution

to the space issue. Proposals that include adding an elevator to the building, replacing the lighting fixtures or installing new shelving units and furnishings all make a long-term commitment to the current location. In the short term of this plan, the Library Board is making a commitment to trying to attract more Fox Lake area people into the library with better communication efforts and possible service enhancements. The Board will be reviewing its staffing needs, job descriptions and policies to provide an efficient and effective operation. Offering a good public library is a quality of life issue for many communities, and for over 100 years Fox Lake has provided the people with library services. It is hoped that within the next five years, even more people will become aware of the Fox Lake Public Library and take advantage of its materials, programs and services. If that committee can be put together and seriously consider all the alternatives for library enhancement, perhaps in five years the community can have another discussion on the long term future for the Fox Lake Library.