

Little Falls Library Advisory Committee

Minutes of Meeting April 5, 2022

1. Secretary Dave Shumaker led the meeting as Chair Kathy Davies was unable to attend. He called the meeting to order at about 7:05 p.m. and called the roll. LAC members present: Mark Mitchell, Hannah November, Robert November, and John Stodola. Eric Carzon, Interim Little Falls Branch Manager, and Grace Manubay, Montgomery County Library Board liaison, were also present. LAC members absent: Kathy Davies (Chair), There were no guests or observers.
2. The minutes of the Feb. 1 meeting were previously approved via email. Dave Shumaker requested approval of the agenda - moved by Robert November, seconded, and adopted unanimously by show of hands.
3. Branch manager Eric Carzon gave his report, which included the following:
 - Staffing remains a problem. Two librarians will be leaving Little Falls, including a children's librarian who was promoted to a job at another library and another transferring to a different library. The loss of these staff members will be challenging especially since the library will now be open on Sundays. Scheduling will be difficult. However, these losses are somewhat offset by one new full time and one part-time Library Assistants. A substitutes budget has been released making it easier to hire part time substitutes.
 - MCPL has announced a management restructuring. There will be six Regional Managers, each of whom will have responsibility for 3 or 4 branches. These are new positions, and this structure is consistent with what many other public library systems of similar size are doing. The Regional Managers will be the main point of contact with LACs and will focus on other outreach, marketing, and community engagement activities, while the managers of individual branches will focus more on day to day operations and staffing. Little Falls, Connie Morella, Davis, and Chevy Chase will all be in one Region.
 - A safe outdoor space is needed for children's programs.
4. Grace Manubay, Library Board liaison, presented her report. The Board is also concerned about staffing. Currently, the operating budget is \$45.9 million, of which 71% is allocated to staffing, and 29% to materials and other costs. Next year, there is expected to be a \$900,000 increase, which will go to digital materials costs. An outreach grant from the state will pay for an electric van that can be used for library outreach. Upcoming Board meetings will be on May 11 and June 8. Ms Manubay encouraged LAC members to attend.
5. Chair's Report. There was no report, but the committee discussed the recent Friends of the Library announcement that Chapters have been eliminated. Concern was expressed about the ability of FOL to recruit and coordinate volunteers for book sales and other tasks at the branches without a local chapter. However, Branch Manager Carzon does not anticipate that this will be a problem. It was also noted that in the absence of an FOL

Chapter, the role of the LAC as the community's link with the library becomes even more critical.

6. Old Business

- There was discussion of the ongoing concern about the sunken lawn area around the storm drain between the building and Mass Avenue. The area has been fenced in except for an opening for a gate. Apparently there are no plans to close this opening with a gate or more fence. The counterproductiveness of having a safety fence with an opening in it was pointed out. Branch Manager Carzon will relay the LAC's concerns. Also, the fence is unattractive. There was discussion that the garden club that maintains other plantings around the library could work on that, and Little Falls Friends funds can be used for plants and needed supplies. Eric Carzon will follow up with the gardeners.
- Ongoing publicity to our communities was discussed. John Stodola has published a new article in the Bannockburn newsletter and sent a copy to LAC members. All are encouraged to share it with their communities via newsletters or email, as appropriate. John also plans to issue another Library Update around June if there is sufficient new information to warrant it.
- A draft resolution for improving the library outdoor facilities and grounds was considered. It was decided to restructure the draft as a memo. Dave Shumaker volunteered to prepare a draft and circulate it to the committee. The central recommendation will be to build an outdoor deck and amphitheater adjacent to the children's room on the lower level, taking advantage of the natural landscape contour. The project would necessarily also involve repairing the existing steps along the side of the building, which are in disrepair and constitute a safety hazard. The memo should note the availability of funding through FOL – Little Falls restricted funds. It was noted that local businesses might be interested in assisting the library with the project, especially some of the up-front costs. A public appeal could be made to the private sector to add funds and pro-bono services, e.g., a landscape architect.
- The discussion of outdoor facilities included the idea of relocating the bike rack next to the Massachusetts Ave. entrance to the library to the north corner of the parking lot (front of library), to meet demonstrated demand. It was decided that Eric Carzon can address that separately with the MCPL administration, so it won't be part of our proposal.

7. New Business: The next LAC meeting will be June 7. The start time will move up a half hour, to 6:30 p.m. It will be necessary to elect a Chairperson and Secretary for the coming year. All members are urged to consider taking on one of these roles.

Dave Shumaker noted that he will not attend. Instead, he is preparing to move out of the area and plans to resign before the next meeting. Tonight's will be his last meeting.

8. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Action items:

- Eric Carzon: follow up with MCPL administration and the garden club regarding the sinkhole and fence.
- Eric Carzon: follow up with MCPL regarding bike rack relocation
- Dave Shumaker: draft memo outlining our space and facilities recommendation.
- All: share John Stodola's article, continue communicating with our communities regarding the library and LAC.