



**Victoria B. Woodley**  
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**Anne C. Mulhern**  
**Muriel Parseghian**  
**Amy Watson**

Date: August 31, 2021

To: Pollard Library Board of Trustees

From: V. Woodley

Re: Director's Report September 2021

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**BUILDING ISSUES:**

- We fought with the HVAC system all summer. The outside chiller unit has to be re-started approximately twice a day, manually, by DPW staff. I really don't know what causes this to happen, but it seems like a great waste of manpower and I hope that updating the controls and replacing some sensors will help.
- I gave the DPW Commissioner a list of some outstanding problems that need resolution:
  - Water leak in Quiet Study Rm. 211 on the second floor. At this time it appears to be dry.
  - The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor Literacy Office, Rm. 312, still has a leak above the ceiling whenever it rains.
  - Part of the floor in the "work area" behind the Children's picture book room on the ground floor is sagging and getting progressively worse.
  - There is a leak in the corner of the Meeting Room on the Ground floor, plaster is falling down.
- The City electricians have come back into the building to finish installing LED lights in the book stacks and to replace burned out bulbs in the open areas of the building.
- The DPW Commissioner is arranging for a lift to be brought to the Library so they can check the outside of the building for water entry points.

**PERSONNEL:**

- One of our Library pages retired in June. Over the summer we posted 4 positions: 2 Library Pages, 1 PT custodian, and 1 PT Library Assistant. We have interviewed and recommended 2 applicants for the page positions. They should start in early September. I received 6 applications for the custodian position and am in the process of setting up a couple of interviews. For the PT Library Assistant position we promoted Katelyn Baker. Now her position of PT Library Aide is open and I will be posting it this week. At this time we still have an unfunded vacancy, the Coordinator of Technical Services position. It is possible we might receive more funding in the FY22 budget and they will "unfreeze" this position.
- We have obtained a 2-year contract with Eagle Investigations for a new security guard. The contract is waiting for all the appropriate signatures. The guard will



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work Monday – Thursday 2:15PM to 9:15PM. Friday hours are 1:15PM to 5:15PM. Saturday hours from September after Labor Day to June 30 are 9:15AM to 5:15PM.

#### LIBRARY OPERATIONAL STATUS:

- The Library is presently operating at full capacity. We will begin our fall schedule next week. The present City mandate requires everyone to wear masks in the building, regardless of vaccination status.
- We will begin in-person programming in September. We have asked the City Manager's office to allow us to modify our in-person programming due to the resurgence of COVID infections from the variant D strain. We would like to offer programming for toddlers (story times) online only at this time. The main reason we requested this deviation from our normal procedure is that children under the age of 2 cannot wear masks. Scientific evidence has shown that this variant strain of COVID is more contagious and is infecting small children. We do not want our story times to be adding to this infection rate. For other programs we are restricting the number of in-person attendees and "live streaming" as many of our programs as possible. Everyone who attends in person will, of course, wear masks.
- One of the things that will make it easier for library staff and outside groups to hold programs both in-person and online simultaneously (hybrid) is the appropriate technology in our meeting room. We are still working with consultants to determine what equipment we will need to offer hybrid programming with a minimum of fuss on the part of the users. The PML Foundation has offered to help with funding some of the cost of this equipment. We are very grateful to them.
- Senior Center Branch has not been manned over the summer due to a shortage of staff. With input from the Director of the Senior Center, Lillian Hartmann, we are re-evaluating the use of this Branch. The collection has never circulated very much and most of the time our staff sit at the desk and occasionally help patrons with computer questions. Our intention is to leave only a small collection of books and DVDs at the Branch that patrons can take and return without using a library card. We do find that patrons use the computers quite a bit and they seem to need a lot of staff guidance. If the branch isn't manned, they go to the Senior Center staff for help. We have temporarily powered down the computers at Lillian's request, but intend to man them a few hours a week with a Reference librarian starting in September. We will post the "open" hours and see if it meets our patrons needs. If we need to increase the hours, we will need to request more staff.

#### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

We had an incredible number of programs in June, July, and August and great participation for our Summer Reading program.



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- Our IT specialist is in great demand for technology advice so she is offering one-on-one sessions for 2 hours on Wednesday evenings in the Main branch and 2 hours on Thursday afternoons at the Senior Center branch.
- The Friends held 3 pop-up book sales outside on Merrimack St.
- Through collaboration with other libraries we were able to offer 6 great online programs that included 3 authors, a Climate Change forum, an Introduction to Pronouns & Gender Diversity, and a screening of a film called "Contradictory Place" followed by a Q&A with the filmmakers. We also had a virtual "Libby" (our e-content application) training for patrons.
- The Children's Dept. offered online programs and "grab & go" events throughout the summer. They included Mother Goose Story times, Animal Adventures, Zoom Make & Take Story time, and Tie Dye Shirts. Grab & Go themes included Neighborhood Safari, Fish Tails, Unicorn Tails, Dinosaurs, and a Bug Jar. Molly Hancock did quite a few outreach programs over the summer also with Girls Inc., the Recreation Dept. and the Bailey School. She also attended a CBA and Back-to-School event to promote the Library.
- Teen programs included: Dungeons & Dragons Grab & Go, Origami Grab & Go, Virtual Anime Trivia, Creative Writing workshops, and a Storytelling workshop.
- A chess club has started meeting at the Library.

#### STAFF TRAINING & MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

- Staff attended webinars and workshops on a diversity of topics: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Equality (by the Mass. Off. on Disability), Gift Acceptance Policies, Reading Graphic Novels, Readers' Advisory, among others.
- We attended informational meetings on the different ARPA grants, the Hotspot grant program, The Touchpoints program, and State Aid & ARIS programs.
- Sean Thibodeau has been working with the Kerouac Centennial Committee to come up with events and funding for the 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Kerouac. He has also worked on programs and events for Lowell Reads.
- We have worked throughout the summer meeting and preparing our Strategic Plan (SP) with the help of our consultant. The SP team, other staff, and Trustees have put a great deal of effort and thought into this process and we hope to have a wonderful plan ready by October.

#### GRANTS & OTHER FUNDING:

- The Library has been approved for a \$50,000 grant of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds given to us by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and administered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). There are five projects we will need to complete by the end of FY22 with these funds. They include a pop-up mobile technology lab, computer upgrades for the Computer Lab in the Senior Center, translation stations on each floor of the main branch, touch screens for patrons with limited accessibility, Baker & Taylor e-



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content that can be accessed from a server/hotspot in 3 chosen locations in the City, and a program called Navilens that will allow patrons with low vision to navigate the library building. I will attach a copy of the grant letter I sent with all the details.

- Thanks to the hard work of you, the Trustees, the City is working with the Library to fund a new "Bookmobile". They will be using ARPA funds that are given directly to the City for disbursement. Your campaign to put this priority on the City's list of projects was successful and we are now formulating a budget to account for the purchase and modification of the vehicle, staff needed to operate it, library materials to stock it, and technology needed to checkout materials. The project was estimated to cost about \$155,000. We may need a little more.
- We have also received 20 mobile hotspots (with 5 more on the way) through a program administered by the MBLC using more ARPA funds. I will attach a summary of the program to this report.

#### INCIDENTS:

There have been a few incidents over the summer.

- A patron who is deaf tried to walk out of the library with some magazines, but was stopped by the anti-theft gates. He returned the materials. It may have been a misunderstanding about library cards.
- We had to call a sick child's parents to come and pick him up.
- A patron who was angry about having to wear a mask in the Library was asked by staff 3 times to put his mask back on. He finally left after the third warning and made an obscene gesture to the staff as he left the room.

#### PEOPLE COUNTER:

The number of people accessing the building has continued to rise throughout the summer. In July it was 3,800 and in August 6,218. Our pre-pandemic monthly numbers were often 10,000. Most popular time of day was 12:00 to 1:00pm.

#### BUDGET SNAPSHOT

MUNICIPAL ACCOUNT	\$ BUDGETED FY2022	\$ SPENT	% OF BUDGET USED
Salaries - Permanent	\$928,982	132,126	14.22
Salaries - Temporary	69,340	4,971	7.17
Salaries - Shift	5,632	517	9.18
Electricity	76,000	0	0
Repair & Maint. Equip.	5,550	2,318	41.77
Leasing Equipment	33,000	20,247	61.35



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Consortium Fee	54,598	54,598	100
Professional Services	36,894	2894	7.84
Library Materials	152,551	48,429	31.75
Office Supplies	15,000	3,753	25.02
Custodial Supplies	5,000	0	0

State Aid Grant: We have not yet received a disbursement of Library State Aid for FY22. We continue to use money that rolled over from our FY21 budget. We now have \$126,359 in the fund. We have spent \$16,540 so far in FY22.

Literacy Program Grant: We have not yet received a disbursement for this grant in FY22. We used all the funds in this account in FY21. To pay salaries or any other miscellaneous expenses we are using the State Aid accounts.

Respectfully submitted.