

Library Director's Report June 2020

RESTORATION OF SERVICES and REOPENING LIBRARY BUILDINGS

The latest addition to our restoration of services was opening all libraries on June 22 for public computing (except for Monroe St. Library). We were able to begin to move in this direction due to Forward Dane's Phase 1 and Phase 2 allowances for people to reenter our libraries on a limited basis. We have controlled crowd size by scheduling appointments for the public computing. But we did find in the first week that if we do have sufficient capacity we can allow for some walk-in requests. This was especially important for Central Library to make exceptions when possible due to limited access to the appointment system by many of our regular patrons at Central. An important takeaway during our staging of this service was to first try it out on a pilot basis to see if changes to the scheme were needed prior to making it available systemwide.

With that in mind, our next step forward will be to pilot test allowing patrons to enter our libraries to retrieve their own holds. This is an essential next step for a variety of reasons. Restoration of services increases the work demands on staff, and to try and sustain curbside services and restore other services places a strain on our staffing capacity. In addition, this is another small step in making sure we can begin to return to pre-COVID activities in the safest way possible for staff and the public.

BUDGET 2021

My presentation to Mayor Satya on MPL's 2021 CIP Budget is happening after I needed to file this report so I will provide an update in my oral report to the Board.

You will be reviewing at the July Board meeting our 2021 Operating Budget for approval prior to submitting to the Mayor. It was an extremely difficult budget to prepare due to the parameters required to meet the directive of the Mayor. The first challenge was to balance our Cost to Continue budget. MPL submitted our anticipated Cost to Continue increases to Finance for review. The Cost to Continue base returned by Finance required us to fill a \$300K gap to balance the budget. Once that challenge was met, we needed to reduce that base by 5% or approximately \$1M. Since over 60% of our operating budget is personnel costs, there is no way to reach that level of reduction without reducing staff. Reducing staff in turn places pressure on our hours of operation, programming, and services.

Our main objective in developing the budget was to minimize the impact on existing staff and still fill some needed staff vacancies. We also had to be strategic on where staff reductions were made, and how we might be able to restore some cuts if given the opportunity or in planning for restoring positions in the 2022 budget. We developed the budget with the acknowledgement that we did not have an opportunity to include a supplemental ask for restoration of some of the reductions, and that the reductions presented will be adopted.

Despite the restraints, we could not ignore addressing the budget with an equity lens. It was very evident as a major equity concern, that we needed to include the elimination of fines as part of our proposed budget. In conjunction with the elimination of fines we are also proposing to eliminate the use of a collection agency that we determined has a disproportionate impact on our communities of color. The temporary closure of Monroe St. Library is being proposed from a logistics perspective, the space cannot comply to COVID conditions in a safe way, but also from an equity perspective. To keep a

facility funded in a reduced budget environment that cannot provide the same level of services does take away from our ability to address equity issues elsewhere in our in system.

There remains considerable work to address the consequences of this proposed budget. We will need to gather community input, also with an equity lens, to determine how our staffing resources will need to be deployed, and what operating hours will allow us to sustain an effective delivery of services within those staffing capacities and budget limitations.

AND. And we are doing all of this under pandemic conditions. We need to remain flexible to possible changes in conditions, the challenges, and the consequences that could further impact our delivery of services, but keep an eye on how we will work in the new normal.

I want to recognize the work of the budget team: Krissy Wick, Susan Lee, Mark Benno, Tana Elias, and Lori Suiter for their tireless pursuit of scenarios and seemingly endless recalculations. Additionally, input of our management team and inspiration from our Racial Equity Change Team contributed to the proposed budget.

OTHER LIBRARIES

I am meeting with other libraries from the local to the national level, and having an opportunity to compare notes and perhaps takeaway some lessons learned. So far it continues to be across the entire spectrum on a variety of levels. Some libraries are still completely shuttered with no services at all, and some are completely open but typically with some limitations. As could be expected budgets and personnel levels remain a hot topic. I've heard of budget reductions as high as 20% for some libraries. Furloughs are beginning to show up and layoffs are becoming more common. I guess we can view it as it could be worse, but any reduction especially during these times is painful. I will continue to advocate for MPL and demonstrate the importance of our services and resources to the community especially during these times.

UPDATE ON MEETINGS, COMMITTEES, & TEAMS

City

Mayor's Management Team
Mayor's Human Service Committee
Performance Excellence Transition Team
Racial Equity & Social Justice Strategic Planning
Deputy Mayor Check-in
Digital Inclusion Team*
Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Planning Team*
Funding and Recovery – Government Services Team*: Co-sponsor of the Policies Team and the Communications Team

Administration and Communications Check-in (Daily)*

All Staff Town Hall (weekly)*

Budget Convenings

External

South Central Library System Library Directors

Dane County Directors (almost weekly)*

Wisconsin Resource Library Directors with DPI (weekly)*

Urban Libraries Council Directors (weekly)*

Dr. Gee's Documentary Premiere

MPL

Library Management Team (meeting weekly)*

*Represents either a new assignment/meeting or the frequency of the meeting has changed since the COVID 19 crisis.