**Director’s Report**

**Prepared by Donita Ward:  August 2025**

**Attachments: posted to website**

* Agenda
* Statistics & Digital Statistics
* Balance Sheet
* Profit and Loss Report
* Minutes from June meeting
* Sales Tax collection and trends report from HDL
* Draft Updates to the Services Policy
* Draft Sponsored Program Request form and Agreement

**Budget Adjustment Requests and Financial Items for Approval:**

* See agenda

**Finance & Administration**

Sales tax income remains strong. If our monthly deposits stay on the current track, we will have $2.7M income for this fiscal year. We’ve budgeted for less than $1.7 in operational spending this year, which may leave up to $1M to put towards the renovation costs.

I have run the Profit and Loss Report and the Balance Sheet from QuickBooks. Those reports are posted on the website along with the sales tax snapshot from HDL. I sent a breakdown of all renovation costs to date, including paid and encumbered amounts, to the treasurer.

The 2025 Legislative Session came to close, but there is still Special Sessions to watch. School libraries were certainly harder hit than public, and many of the most concerning bills did not make it through. Items coming into law next month that are most impactful for us are:

* Changes to posting requirements for budget adjustments- no big deal, just a bit more paperwork
* No affirmative defense for librarians relating to materials harmful to minors- this is the scariest one. TSLAC is looking into impact for public libraries and liability. For now, our Collection Development Policies show that the responsibility lies with the Director, so extending my TLA liability insurance (~$45) may be a band-aid situation until some real concrete information is available.
* Changes to notary services, including making notaries personally liable for fraudulent documents and publication of contact information. I’ve asked our lawyer for an opinion on these as it is not clear. From what she replied, we can manage the address part of things, but the increased training required may make the service less approachable for library staff who are already keeping many balls in the air every day.

The board president, assistant director and I attended a meeting of the National Special Districts Association in Austin last month. This was mostly a networking opportunity as several library districts were in attendance, but we also got some information about AI, leadership, and potential impact of recent legislative activity.

**Outreach & Branding**

The renovation committee is very invested in having a successful and well attended groundbreaking party for the start of renovation. Unfortunately, since we are not actually breaking any ground, we may suffer for community enthusiasm. I’m working on a plan that would include demolishing a wall, launching the new logo/mascot, giving away all the merchandise we have left with the old logo (water bottles, coffee cups, sunglasses, so much stuff), and food.

We can also launch a contest to NAME our new mascot. I plan to do that in a bracket style and any stakeholder can submit a suggestion. If we are going to do a big reveal, that means we cannot leak our new friend in advance, so mum’s the word if that’s the decision. I can go ahead and start ordering materials for the party (and things like checks) and simply hold them back until October 4.

The committee also wants to give the three study rooms literary names. I’d like to run that in brackets like the mascot. I’ve drafted a plan for that process and put it at the end of this report.

Of concern in the renovation planning is the loss of the mural in the storytime room, which was painted by local artists. When that room is updated, the mural will be lost. To preserve the history, we asked members of the Wells Branch photography club to come in and do a photo shoot of the painting. We have 38 high definition files with close-ups of some favorite critters. Margaret Sufke has agreed to put a tribute shot in the Wells Branch Neighborhood Association calendar this year, and we will use some of the images to create a gift basket that will be included in the WBNA silent auction at Fourth Fest next year. By keeping digital images, we can reprint and frame as needed so the history isn’t lost.

**Operations**

The big weed is nearly done with only a bit of adult fiction (M-Z) and kids still to go through. Once complete, we will cycle back to the first sections as this is one of those continual processes.

Inventory for August will be the adult Non Fiction section, which includes reference and biography as well as cookbooks. Because we have an idea of the phasing plan for construction, we know that we will have access to all of the collection in October, so the October scheduled inventory will go as planned and be Adult Fiction.

**Internal Affairs**

Our new Assistant Director started at the end of June and is quite the score for us. Dayna has been a library director in Victoria and has worked with our regional library services network. She has over 20 years of varied library experience. The substitute worker plan hasn’t gotten off the ground. Truthfully, we haven’t reached out to anyone yet. Otherwise, our staffing is steady and holding strong.

Volunteers gave 102 hours in June and another 97 in July. There has been a recent increase in court mandated volunteer applications. Between that overflow, the shelving closure and change of season, we are not accepting new applications in August.

I am registered for the Association of Rural and Small Libraries conference in September. Other upcoming meetings include the Library Districts Discussion Group meeting in August at the new Lake Travis West location and the District 3 Texas Library Association Meeting in Temple in November. Time and staffing allowing, I will be at both of those local meetings.

The Public Library Association Conference is in Minneapolis this year. PLA 2026 is April 1-3. The conference is held in even numbered years. For a variety of reasons, I have missed each one since COVID, so I very much wanteded to attend 2026. Unfortunately, it backs up onto the Texas Library Association meeting in Houston which is March 29-31 and I do need to attend that one, so this year is probably doomed as well.

**Technology**

The new servers have arrived. Technology for Education came out last month to start the update and setup process. We expect to switch over from the current virtual servers to the physical boxes at the August inventory closure. That is also when we will be installing the new Wi-Fi routers and repeaters around the building.

New hotspots were ordered last month and we are transitioning service from the lost items to the new ones. Hotspots are, by percentage, our highest theft items even though they don’t work after the circulation period.

The new giant television and stand came in. We were able to use them at one of the page turn meetings with the designer and construction company. We also have the Zoom Owl in house, but setup for that has been a bit trickier as the software wants to lock to a specific person/device/account and we want to make it available for programs. It’s one of the next things on the to-do tech list.

We put in four new staff machines to replace some of the boxes in the workroom that were more than 5 years old.

**Facilities**

Shelving installation is currently in process. It’s loud. We have notary, seed library, circulation, reserves, minimal printing, reader advisory, etc available in the meeting rooms and all programs are happening. It’s a bit crazy around here this week.

Once we get closer to the end of renovation (once the wall is moved), we will have more shelving to order. I anticipate that we will need 1 or 2 more sections of low browsing shelving for the front area, 1 more run for YA, shelves for GN and Manga, and at least 2 more runs for the picture books. Everything is going to need to shift and wiggle about before we know for sure, but we need room for growth and expansion going forward once the dust settles.

There are a number of things that we are keeping in play with prayers and duct tape as we get closer to our demolition dates for renovation. We have a number of light fixtures with ballasts that are not worth replacing and the water fountain near the bathrooms has developed a fan rattle. There’s nothing urgent or dangerous, just some annoyances. Tossing time and money to fix something we plan to throw out doesn’t make sense, and having things in need of a refresh should help the community understand why we’re doing all this work.

I’ve asked Fransen Pittman to manage the replacement of AHU3 since the duct reworking and new size are outside our scope of expertise. For the time being, we are recharging unit 8 and 3 as necessary until new units can be procured and installed. It’s not perfect, but it works. We did one recharge at the beginning of June and it seems to be holding, but we may need to do another if summer temperatures persist.

**Programs**

Summer Reading went very smoothly this year. We had 175 adults, 132 kids, and 45 teens register. Of those registered, 122 adults, 88 kids, and 31 teens met the first prize level for reading and collected a reward. There were 101 adults, 60 kids and 28 teens who completed their program and got ALL their prizes.

Storytime remains our bread and butter program. We consistently get over 30 people at programs for this age, and we have storytime style programs eleven times each week. Elementary programs seem to bring in 6-12 kids for successful presentations. Crafts are more popular than reading and gaming for this age. Really, crafts are the most popular for every age once you take storytime out of the mix. Even teens had 30 attendees for jewelry and 18 for canvas painting. That’s higher than our Lego Madness party.

Kids and Family programs in the summer had good turnout with July numbers stronger than June. In June we had 15 people for balloon twisting, 54 for Mrs Dipsworth stories and silliness and 22 at the cartooning workshop. In July there were 51 at the Superhero party, 90 at Honey Goodenough, 68 at Christmas in July and 77 for the Joe McDermott Concert.

Adult programs are holding strong. There’s a slight decrease in summer as kids take over the neighborhood and folks go on vacation, but our regular program folks are still here.

Once we have our First Friday program in October on the 3rd and potentially the Renovation Kickoff Extravaganza and Mascot Reveal on the 4th, we lose access to the large meeting spaces through January. Most of our programming is moving into the main library building in the storytime room or quiet reading room with back-to-back offerings for things that need more space. For example, instead of 20-25 people at an adult crafting program, Julia will have 12 people each in 2 sessions of the same program.

Things that cannot work in smaller spaces are being reimagined temporarily. This mostly involves the monthly First Friday cultural programming for families and the Saturday family concert/party once a month. In October, we will have First Friday before the closure. The family party will be a crafting event held in multiple sessions.

For November, we are doing a passive program to learn about all the cultures in Wells Branch. We have a map of the world and push pin flags for our patrons to indicate their nation of origin. We are also going to collect from our patrons recipes from their heritage. Those will be printed and bound into a Wells Branch Recipe Book that can circulate in our collection (and be part of a silent auction basket at next year’s Fourth Fest).

December would usually be Polar Express. We did Christmas in July to cover that program, but that leaves us with time in December. We will attend Luminary Fest this year and do a reading there both nights. This is nice in that we never get to participate in Luminaries (staff is here for Polar Express), so we may get to capture different people that don’t realize the library is here and for them. Plus, I hear they have cocoa.

Naming Process

For the study rooms:

Collect suggestions from staff and trustees through September 16. Publish the lists internally for staff and trustees to vote. Each employee and trustee gets up to 3 votes for each naming opportunity to distribute as they like. The 8 top vote getters go into brackets.

October 1 publish the top 8 for each room internally. People vote in brackets bringing it down to 4. October 15 publish the 4 bracket winners. People vote in brackets bringing it down to 2. October 29 send out the top 2. Nov 12 we have a winner for each room.

For the Frog

Unveiling at the October 4 party. From that time until October 22, anyone interested can submit name recommendations, but not anonymously. The submission will include card #.

October 22-November 3 I’ll publish the list internally for staff and trustees to vote. Each employee and trustee gets up to 3 votes to distribute as they like. The 8 top vote getters go into brackets.

November 4-16 the public will be able to vote in house by sticker to bring 8 down to 4.

November 18-30 the public will be able to vote in house by sticker to bring 4 down to 2.

December 2-16 the public will be able to vote in house by sticker to pick a winner.