

## Director's Report

Prepared by Donita Ward: October 21, 2024

### Attachments: sent via email 10/15/2024

- Agenda
- Statistics & Digital Statistics
- Balance Sheet
- Profit and Loss Report
- Draft Minutes from previous meetings
- Draft 2025 Budget
- Updated HRA Policy

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

- We have earned almost \$100K more than budgeted in interest this year.
- Add \$1K to 597 advertising
- Add \$2K to 572 electric/gas
- Add \$5K to 573 repairs/maintenance
- Move \$1K from 542 office supply to printer supply (we use a lot of ink)
- Create Account 670 for capital expenses and move Special Improvement funds to that category. Add \$60K for 720 fees.

My draft of a 2025 Budget was distributed to the finance committee in September. Some items like insurance and landscape maintenance went up based on actual numbers from our contractors. Some line items increased based on financial predictions (interest rates, sales tax income).

### Finance & Administration

Sales tax income is down a bit this year from last. I am confident that HDL is catching any errors, and we budgeted conservatively, so the district should still achieve budget goals for income 2024.

Work continues toward the upcoming election. We had a ballot order drawing per requirements and I went downtown for Ballot Proofing earlier this month. The notice was posted to the newspaper and we have everything in place for a smooth event. The next step is for the board to call a quick meeting to canvass the results on November 18, but that only requires 2 trustees in attendance and can happen any time of day.

September marked the end of the quarter, so training hours were journaled. I also submitted the sales tax payment and we signed with Gary Davis for next year's required financial audit.

Legislative Day used to be an annual event put on by the Texas Library Association at the capital for librarians and advocates to meet their delegates and put forward agenda items of concern to libraries. This stopped many years ago. This year,

a small meeting was hosted that may show resumed interest as libraries are more and more in the political cross hairs. The Board President and I attended this legislative advocacy training and were able to speak with staff from Sarah Ekhardt's office after hearing from seasoned advocates and Senator Menendez (and his staff).

Friday was the Library Districts Discussion Group meeting at Westbank Library. This group gets together twice per year to share ideas and best practices for Library Districts, since we're such a specific group. This meeting had updates from the state library and PLAN with a focus on strategic planning in the presentation, but discussion of the trials and tribulations of construction was rather enlightening. Erica Richardson from Bembrook spoke about the Special Purpose District Coalition that is attempting to form across the state and the possible benefits of joining. Our growing pains and frustrations are in no way unique. I hope to get a private tour of the new Lake Travis library branch next month as they prepare to open to the public. Of specific interest to us, though it was not officially presented, is the Westbank coffee and vending solution at the Laura Bush branch. I took a picture to share with the committee.

Tomorrow is the Texas Library Association District 3 meeting downtown at Austin Public Library. That should be the last offsite obligation I have for the calendar year.

## **Operations**

Usage statistics show normal fluctuations. Overall, circulation is down from last year. I spoke to other librarians at meetings this month and they are experiencing the same trend. Door count, computer use, and program attendance remain strong.

The adult nonfiction collection will be scanned into inventory this week. Background projects include disassembly of the stage next door, getting the fence painted and some plumbing work. These things are best done while we're closed, as well as the basic cleaning and noisy tasks.

We plan to have the big weeding project complete by end of the calendar year. Our last big book and material orders will be this week. There will be another order mid November, but items must ship by December 10 to be deployed by the end of the year for reporting.

## **Internal Affairs**

I attended the ARSL (Association for Rural and Small Libraries) Annual Conference in Massachusetts last month. There were several useful (and some not so useful) meetings and presentations. As is often the case, the greatest value came from networking and the sessions about HR and legal topics. Special program ideas I was able to pass along include teen stuffed animal taxidermy, take-your-child-to-the-library-day, and citizen science.

I attended the Library Journal Design Institute in Cincinnati. While this workshop was supposed to include a tour of branch libraries the day before the meeting, they were cancelled after my plane departed. Efforts to arrange a rental car last minute were

unsuccessful. I was able to get in touch with other librarians and we toured four branches unofficially together.

Cincinnati has a huge main building with two floors of closed stacks and four floors of circulating materials and meeting space. The branches, however, are tiny with incredibly limited browsing collections. The majority of circulation comes from the main building downtown. The branches are mostly community space. They have study/meeting pods and most even serve meals to youth daily. Of interest, in the facilities with both meeting rooms and study pods, the pods were all in use and the rooms were not.

Nick and I went to the PLAN Performer Showcase in Seguin last month to experience some of the local talent available to hire. We saw some fun people and got to have lunch with Linda. We also poked around their public spaces and children's area together.

Sexual Harassment Training is required every 24 months for all employees. I'm happy to report that we are compliant. Nine people were due to complete the course this year and that was done using EasyLlama online training modules.

Volunteer hours have come back after a brief and scary period of no shelving help. There were baby goats and ice pops at the appreciation event in August, with more than half our weekly shelvees in attendance.

At the end of December, we will be losing one of our Library Assistants to marriage and the temperate state of Washington. I will advertise next week for another person to work weekends and Monday evenings. With upcoming holidays, the sooner we get someone in place and start their training, the better.

Over the next two weeks, I will be meeting with each employee for their annual review and goal setting. Each employee sits down every month with a manager, but this is the meeting where overarching plans are determined. I will also be setting annual bonuses, budget allowing, at these meetings.

I completed and submitted all the reenrollment forms for the district insurance. Open Enrollment for our medical/dental/vision coverage is from November 4-15, so I am also going to be distributing information about options, gathering paperwork, and inputting all of our data into the TML portal. November is a busy time for HR tasks.

## **Technology**

There have been a number of hiccups recently with the document station and the website. The State Library hosts our website, and that seems to be a matter of retraining ourselves to work with their new interface once all the bugs are worked out at the upper levels. The document station, however, is just old. We put it in place in 2016-2017. Katrina and I are getting quotes to replace the whole thing. When we do, since we'll need to replace with updated peripherals, I will be putting in the ability to pay by

card. Karen and I are researching those options. We have to get set up with Evalon through Regions for that and are currently investigating the costs per transaction.

The other item on the technology immediate purchase list is additional hotspots. Many of our original twelve have been damaged beyond repair or stolen through the years. Because of the way pricing and ordering works with TechSoup and Mobile Beacon, we had to upgrade/update the remaining functional devices before we could add services. That was done last month and additional devices have been requested.

## **Facilities**

Recent maintenance tasks include restriping the parking lot, cleaning and inspecting the gutters, the semi-annual heat HVAC check, and cleaning of the windows and carpets. At our next closure (October 24) we hope to get the front fence repainted. That has been rescheduled twice for weather. As of today, no rain is forecast for Thursday. Cross your fingers.

As renovation discussions progress, we looked at our usage of the stage in the large room. Nobody uses it and it takes up valuable space. Like the kitchen over there, its time has passed.

After quite a bit of back and forth, it is clear that the MUD does not desire or require any input or approval in the planning process. We are not making changes to the impermeable ground cover or the cistern. We are reworking some bathrooms, but not substantially enough to impact wastewater. While I had originally planned to include them as stakeholders in the dreaming part of our renovation, that has been deemed unnecessary. We will present to a committee once we have construction permits.

Our most recent meeting with 720 was October 15<sup>th</sup> for schematic design. We have finalized the RFQ (request for qualifications) for a CMAR (construction manager at risk) and I will post that publicly today. The timeline for that is rather accelerated as we very much want to get someone on board ASAP to sit in on the meetings that involve construction. We are accepting bids until December 2<sup>nd</sup> and will review them with the architect on December 6<sup>th</sup>. The pre-submission conference is an open virtual meeting on November 7<sup>th</sup> with interpretations due by November 14<sup>th</sup>. There is also a meeting on December 2<sup>nd</sup> to open and accept the submissions.

Abbie and I presented our current draft plans to the public on October 13<sup>th</sup>. There wasn't as much attendance or interest as I'd hoped, but I still think it's important to offer these open meetings so people can come ask questions.

## **Programs & Outreach**

The WBNA Art Faire was a success and people were very happy. National Night Out saw so many people that the FoL ran out of custard for the first time. Lauren and Nick have been in contact with Joe Lee Johnson elementary and Deer Park Middle School about tabling at book fairs this semester. There is another library card sign up event scheduled at Affinity next week.

Adult programs are progressing in a predictable way. Travelling Tea and Spice of the Month are well received. Hoppy Hour was a raging success. People liked Taylor Swift and making Tiny Books and Bad Art. Meditation, computers, and resumes are never as highly attended, but are more personalized training and thus valuable on a different scale. LAB and DIY programs are shifting from a machine/technology focus to a project focus in hopes of becoming more cost effective and reigniting the popularity they once enjoyed.

Kid programs are declining as the year wanes. That's a pattern we see most years. Storytimes and afterschool programs have attendance drops throughout September and October across the board. There were 42 people at family ceramic painting, but only 7 at a Play on Swords. There were 38 for sharpie tie dye. This area loves to craft. Our most successful teen program was Tiny Tails, with 25 kids in attendance. Fall programs have had the expected slowdown in live participation, but the sticker puzzles and other passive programming remain popular for our kids age 10 and up.

The holidays are just around the corner, so mark your calendar for special programs. This year, we will have our annual Polar Express Pajamarama on Saturday, December 14<sup>th</sup>. We will have a Whooville Extravaganza the Friday before on December 6<sup>th</sup> as our children's librarian is partial to Grinch-y activities. We will also have storyteller Gary Whitaker on Sunday, December 15<sup>th</sup> to do an oral presentation of Dickens' Classic Tale *A Christmas Carol* in costume.