

Brooks Memorial Library

Minutes of Strategic Planning Committee, July 28, 2021

Present: Jane Southworth, Starr Latronica, Lindsay Bellville, Jeanne Walsh, Karen Tyler, Ann Varilly, Howard Burrows.

Co-chairs Ann and Karen called the meeting to order at 4:12 in the Community Meeting Room at the library. Minutes were approved as written. There were no changes to the agenda and no public comments.

New Business

What is the purpose of our strategic plan?

- Guides operations/decisions of the organization. For example, when applying for ARPA funds, we consulted our plan to see whether/how these funds could be used to further our work.
- It helps staff develop their own work plans, what we do and don't do. In turn, staff work informs the plan. "A two-way street."
- Helps to set goals for the future.
- To make sure we don't just repeat what's been done. Respond to actual needs and interests in the community rather than projecting our own ideas.

Structure of plan

- Flexible, nimble, set goals
- Strategic as opposed to tactical. Tactics are operational, strategy is planning
- Set up several targets, anticipate/plan
- Strategy/goal—here's what we want
- A document for people who want to help the library
- Useful for fundraising/grants
- "Values-based framework from which to respond to the emerging needs, aspirations, and opportunities of the community, and beyond."
- We want to offer things that the community might not yet know it wants or needs; however, we must ask and listen.
- Plan as framework/scaffold, not the whole structure

Audience: who might read/refer to the plan

- Funders
- Staff
- Collaborators/partners/mentors
- Public
- Users / current patrons + future patrons
- Selectboard, Town Staff

- Potential residents
- Other libraries/librarians
- Distance users
- Other non-profit organizations
- Outside experts who can assist our efforts
- Us!

Ideas from discussion: collection/connection/catalyst; focus on staff/community

Concern: How do we respond to many constituencies without trying to be too many things to too many people? This led to the next agenda item:

Is it possible to make the plan sufficient to staff and the community while remaining nimble and responsive?

- We have to prioritize. Community will provide input. Remember that people communicate in different ways, and there should be a variety of ways to provide that input.
- It's useful to ask people what they want their *community* to be.
- Support Town government.
- Create a space to bring people of different opinions / experiences / worldviews together.

What do we need to learn before we gather input (pre-inquiry information gathering)?

- Should we think about us going out among people instead of them coming to us? Yes, but we need current staff to sustain existing services at the library, even if we would love to do more outreach. "There's only so much of us to go around."
- We want our community to be aware of the library's potential if we have sufficient resources.
- From whom do we need to gather input, and how will we go about doing that? We'll focus on the Brattleboro community.
- Outreach is like a tree, providing a structure. Partnerships will grow library's reach into the community.
- Asset assessment, starting with the Board. Who already collaborates with whom in various sectors of our community? Those connections will help us.

Reading for next meeting: United for Libraries' "Library Board's Practical Guide to Strategic Planning"
<https://www.ala.org/united/sites/ala.org.united/files/content/trusteezone/practical-guides/strategic-planning.pdf>

Role of staff versus trustees in planning?

The staff's role is to provide a reality/capacity check as we work on this. Also input into library trends, things that are emerging, best practices in other places. And a perspective. The Board /this committee creates the surveys, gathers the information, and develops the plan.

Next meeting: to be determined by poll of the committee members