ImagineIF Board Meeting Minutes/Notes

February 16, 2022

Board Members Present: all members present; Connie via Zoom

Public: See sign in sheet

Heidi Roedel called the meeting to order at 1pm. Board members and Tracy Cook introduced themselves.

**Role of the Library and Its Services** – board members discussed the value of the library, community needs, and services.

What is the value of the library?

- Community hub, meeting place, and it provides computer access
- It’s for kids. It helps them get started as lifelong learners. It opens the world and encourages a love of reading.
- It is a depository of intergenerational knowledge. It promotes early learning.
- Its statutory purpose is to fulfill, inform, and enrich. It provides free access to materials.
- It is a place to meet other homeschoolers
- Primary mission/role is books? Or is it supporting educational attainment through programming and materials.

What community needs can the library help address?

- Support homeschooler education
- Provide IT support and help for older generations and those who need access to the Internet and other digital content
- Place for youth to learn about managing personal finances
- Provides craft collections – physical and online
- Large-print books for aging population or those with visual disabilities
- Provides community referrals to other places
- Connector of organizations
- Early literacy – core mission

What services are critical?

- Physical space for reading for adults and kids
- Internet access – including access to computers and printers
- Fundraising center – helpful for non-profits
- Meeting room – providing space to gather
- Variety of subject areas are covered in the collection which encourages exploration

What services are not critical?
• Hotspots – these are expensive. Some board members believe it isn’t the role of the library to provide free internet access in people’s homes
• Hoopla – potentially other digital content.

Questions the board wants to explore with staff

• Where do you draw the line on programming?
• How do we deal with the social issues that show up in the library?
• How do we create a safe space? What is appropriate use of the library? This led to a conversation about loitering and how staff have expressed concerns about their safety and the welfare of other patrons.
  o How serious is the problem?
  o Do staff have a list of places they can give to people who may be experiencing homelessness?
  o How do we best manage this issue? Do we need a loitering policy?
  o Should we ask the public about how safe they feel when using the library?
• How do we bring people back into the library? Is it time to do a survey?
• Is there truth to 10-15% of Kalispell residents have a Whitefish card? Why is that?
• What may have caused people to stop using the ImagineIF libraries?
• How much money should we spend on various services? What is the value of those services?
  What do people get out of the services? How much usage do the services get?

Library Policy and how it relates to the role of the library

Collection

• Book selection – how does this work? Some members of the community cannot find what they are looking for
• Run board thru the selection process – what steps are taken? Will Sean give a presentation to the board? Will he explain his comment about he buys what people request? Are there any other parameters that he considers when he receives a patron request?
• Data the board would like to see
  o What is the breakdown of how much is spent on digital content versus physical content?
  o What are the usage statistics for each?
• What is the balance between education and entertainment?
• Board wants to expand collection not limit. What does a balanced collection look like?

Hotspots

• Are these critical? How do you loan them fairly? How do you pay for these? How many do we offer? How much does it cost? How much usage do they receive? Do these fit the mission of the library? Does wifi at the library better fit the mission and meet a need for Internet access? How do staff see hotspots fitting the mission?
Setting New Director, Board and Staff up for success

Priorities for Ashley in the first year

- Lead a strategic planning effort that identifies core mission/services of the library and incorporates community input. Facilities should be a part of the discussion.
- Review customer conduct policy – does it need to be updated? Talk to staff about safety concerns and if there is a need for training to help staff manage challenges that may arise due to social issues impacting the community.
- Learn about the collection development process and work with the board and staff to update the policy. Ask Sean to lead a presentation about collection development in the library.
- Make a recommendation to the Board about hotspots and whether they should continue beyond the period in which the costs are covered.
- Work with staff to understand what services are offered, the value of those services to patrons, and the usage statistics of each service. Work with Board to determine what services are critical and should remain a part of the library’s portfolio.
- Work with staff to set up a presentation schedule for the board to learn about various services and to be able to ask questions of staff.

Priorities for the Board

- Learn about the collection development process and discuss updating the policy.
- Consider one evening meeting for people who can’t attend board meetings during the day.
- Identify their questions for staff and/or library processes.
- Consider what is the role/duty of the board when it comes to operations?
- Support a strategic plan effort for the library.

Staff questions and improving relations between them and the board

- Ashley will play a role in being a bridge between the board and staff.
- Are there ways to connect board and staff in a friendly way?
- What is the relationship/chain of command between the board and staff? What is the best process for board and staff to communicate – especially if the board has questions they want answered?

Answers to questions posed by staff for the board

**Layoffs** – The board cannot imagine any scenario where we would lay off staff.

**Bigfork Property Transfer** – the Board remains unanimously committed to this property transfer. We recognize how much work community members and others have put into raising the funds for the Bigfork branch. We continue to try and convince the Commissioners to transfer the property.

**Relationship between the board and the county** – The library board is a governing and autonomous board. We report back to the County periodically, and the County gives us our budget. The county commissioners have indicated that there is a perception that the library isn’t welcoming to all, and that the library has a strong liberal bent. There is a desire from the Commissioners and other community...
members for the library to move more towards the center and be more balanced. The Board is still working through what it means to be more balanced.

**Relationship between the director and the board** – The board recognizes that there has been tension in this area – between the board and former interim director and between the board and staff. The board would like to reinstitute staff presentations, so we can understand your work. We need that information to make policy decisions. The board wishes to give Ashley time to get to know you and learn about the library and community. Board members will welcome Ashley and meet with her to give us a chance to get to know each other. This will be an area we work on as Ashley starts her new position.

**Outside communication between board members** – Board members attended an excellent training about open meeting law and board service. We learned the proper way to communicate and are applying what we learned.

**Letter to Staff from the Board (Action)**

Doug Adams moved to write a letter to staff. David Ingram seconded. Tracy will send the text of the letter to Heidi. Board will review at their February 24, 2022 meeting and will send it once all changes have been made. The board voted unanimously to send the letter.

**Wrap Up/ Next Steps**

- Board ran out of time to fully address this agenda item. Based on her notes, Tracy will create an outline for the Board and Ashley to review.

**Open Time for persons to address the board**

- J. Sibbitt spoke about the role/value of the library. It is a shared resource. He said it sounds like the board needs to identify the proper chain of command. Typically, the board supervises the director who supervises staff. If that is not the case the board should better define the chain of command. He also spoke about the importance of valuing the professionalism of the employees, their education and experience when it comes to collection development.
- J. Biby submitted written comments. Invited board members to call him if they had questions. He talked about recent press and relationship to the Commissioners. He thanked the board for attending meetings and fundraisers. He asked them about their goals. What is the board’s mission?

Meeting adjourned at 4:11pm.