

Notes from Work Session/Retreat of ImagineIF Libraries

March 10, 2022

Senior staff and board discussion about core services, safety in the library, and policy

- Broadly speaking, the Core Services that we provide are in alignment with Public Library services across the country. These include, but are not limited to:
 - Free, open, equitable, non-judgmental access to books, periodicals, media, digital/downloadable content
 - Free, open, equitable, non-judgmental access to the internet and technology – including ancillary services like printing, scanning, etc.
 - Free, open, equitable, non-judgmental access to public spaces that are clean and safe
 - Programs for all ages that develop literacy and 21st Century Skills (problem-solving, collaboration, communication) and encourage play and social connection
 - Apolitical Services
- Library needs/safety in the library
 - Single-staffing situations, particularly in Bigfork.
 - In Kalispell, the 1st floor public adult bathrooms are in the Children's area.
 - Supervision of spaces is difficult due to floor layout – lots of blind spots.
 - Insecure basement in Kalispell, particularly during evening hours.
 - ADA non-compliance.
- Potential solutions
 - Security cameras – group discussed balancing privacy with accountability. IT has a plan for inexpensive and efficient use of security cameras. After discussion about the need to have good policy in place, the Board directed Ashley and Senior Leaders to bring forward a proposal for security cameras.
 - **Action Item:** Ashley and senior staff present proposal for adding security cameras to the branches.
 - Volunteers in Bigfork – single staffing situation poses a potential safety risk. Board and senior leaders discussed having volunteers help. Reliability is an issue. There were concerns with placing volunteers at risk.
 - Other techniques/solutions to consider – continue to develop and maintain relationship with law enforcement. Consider increasing staffing in Bigfork and on 2nd floor of Kalispell branch.
- Hotspots as a core service
 - Managers shared stories about the use of the hotspots from a student using them to apply for military academy to getting a job to serving people outside the city limits who may not have access to broadband Internet. Is it the role of the library to support telehealth? If we are supporting it, should it be paid for by the health department?
 - Hotspots support the work of the library in connecting people to information.
 - IT has found a cheaper data plan that is only \$15 a month.

- Group discussed the cost of the service and the limitations of the library budget. There were questions about the Internet line item in the budget.
 - **Action Item:** Ashley will pursue grants to pay for the hotspots if cost is an issue.
 - **Action Item:** Sam and Teri will explain what is in the Internet line item.
- Digital library services
 - Discussion about how these services help those who cannot get to the library. Staff receive feedback from the community and use that information to decide what to offer. These services are a different way to access library services.
- Library budget review – group discussed the library budget. The Board had questions about line items within the budget.
 - **Action Item:** Teri and Ashley will complete an account analysis, so the Board knows what is in each line item.

Fair Treatment, Collection, and Internet Use Policy

- Discussion about removal of ALA references.
 - The library is not currently a member of ALA. The Board is fine with individual library staff being members. Board members expressed a desire for dues to be covered by non-general funds.
 - For some of the group - ALA is seen as political and as taking a stance. Board members gave examples of where they see the association taking stances.
 - Group did not come to consensus on the removal of ALA.
- Group discussed content within library bill of rights
 - Challenges of labeling material – it might exclude access. It could discriminate. It tends to be subjective, and it takes a lot of staff time. Group seemed to come to consensus that labeling materials was not a solution.
 - Censorship – what is the definition? Is it denying freedom of information and preventing people from fulfilling their learning? Or is it when you prevent people from fulfilling their information and learning needs?
 - Selection process and censorship – there is a perception that the selection process is censoring certain items, and that has led to distrust. What is appropriate? What does that mean to each board member? What is the best way to spend taxpayer dollars? There seems to be a disconnect between policy and procedure. As group discussed the issues, the policy doesn't seem to be the issue. It's the procedure.
 - Collection and book reconsiderations – the board plays a role in communicating missing areas. The staff is charged with operations and collection management. The staff's decisions impact the board – especially if an item is challenged.
 - Is there an issue with using the pre-lists? It is a potential area of concern.
 - **Action Item:** Sean will share his process and the procedure with the Board. He will explore changing the pre-list to have a wide political spectrum.
 - **Action Item:** State Library will ask Lt. Governor if she has recommendations for an attorney who can talk about what is protected material, what is censorship, and what are the rights of a library in book reconsiderations?
- Minors use of the library

- Question remains if the library should be giving access to all records of a minor that is under 17. This is part of the library's policy where the library works with minors and parents for permission for parents to see materials.
- Reader's advisory remains a way that staff can help parents protect minors. Staff question parents/library users about their interests and what they want to read/view. Staff then help those individuals find the items they want.
- Group discussed the current policies/procedures in place to protect minors during storytime. They want the library to be transparent. Staff contact organizations that are attending storytime to check on title suitability. They also are announcing the titles before storytime begins.

Art Exhibit/Display Policy/Library as a welcoming place

- Art Exhibit: Lune gave an overview of the art exhibit policy and procedure and how it works. Group discussed what they want to know and what role they want to play.
 - **Action Item:** Lune will email the board a list of upcoming artists that are being displayed and a list of applicants. Board will let her know if they have any concerns.
 - No changes to the policy are needed at this time.
- Display policy: Sean explained how things have changed after it became clear that certain community members did not feel welcome in the library. The staff updated their merchandising guidelines. Staff are focused on neutral things in a public space. No changes to the policy are needed at this time.
 - **Action Item:** Sean will share the merchandising guidelines with the Board. He will also share the old procedure, so the Board can see the difference.

Director, Board, and Staff relations

- Commissioner Broedel and members of the group discussed the County Commission's role. The Commission wants an engaged board and feels like they have that now.
- Budget – group discussed budget questions and staff's questions about having the resources they need. Board members are seeking to hold the line budget wise. They are committed to Bigfork and updating the facilities. They are working their way through the CIP process. Staff expressed a desire for more advocacy on the part of the board.

Items that need to be discussed in the future

- Should the board adopt its own code of ethics?
- How can the library protect minors and parental rights while not excluding or denying access?
 - Is filtering an approach?
 - Is a family card an option?
- Digital Library Services – what is relevant? What is not? What can the library afford when it comes to hotspots?
- Selection process/collection development – still a work in progress. Board will hear what staff has to say as well as what an attorney says about censorship.