

Library Director's Report November 2024

Property Tax Check

The 2025 property tax check in the amount of \$ 1,124,663 was mailed out by the school district on Friday, 11/15. Hopefully it will have been received by the time of the Board meeting. The school district did not have information yet on when we will receive the 2025 PILOT payment or how much it will be for.

NYS Construction Aid

I am currently working on two Construction Aid project amendments. One is for the security camera and lighting upgrades we did last year. Because I did not directly oversee the work, I was unaware of some relatively small changes that were made while the work was taking place (this was an oversight that won't happen again). Because the grant applications are written long before work starts, there are often changes in technology, pricing, and building needs by that time. In the case of this project, improvements in camera and lighting technology changed the need for some of the cameras and/or lights in certain locations, while we realized there was a need for coverage elsewhere. The Division of Library Development requires amendments be submitted for approval before the work is started, which did not happen in this case. I notified Jan Dekoff of the situation and she communicated this to DLD. They feel that the changes are within the scope of the original application and will likely approve all of the changes/additions made. If they have issues with any of the changes, we may have some portions of the grant deemed ineligible for inclusion in the project. Because the vast majority of the work was within the original scope, it would amount to a small dollar figure, and we would have to find another small project and have it approved by DLD to make up the difference. Worst case scenario would be having to return part of the funds for the work deemed ineligible (again, very unlikely). DLD does not want to reduce grant awards after they are awarded, so they prefer to work with libraries that need to make changes to the original scope of work.

The other amendment that I will be submitting is to the upcoming HVAC replacement project. Because we are not going to replace the two older units with Seasons4 units, as proposed in the grant application, but with less expensive, more energy-efficient units, it's best we notify the state of this change in advance. It is highly unlikely they will question the logic of this change and therefore will most likely approve it.

Building Insurance Update

As reported at the past couple of meetings, our building coverage through Utica was inadequate, at a replacement value of only \$4,357,927. Our coinsurance requirement is to be covered for 80 percent of the replacement cost, which we know would be much higher than that amount. Our agent, Scott Brook, has been going back and forth with Utica to get a higher replacement value on our policy. He finally succeeded in getting them to increase the limit to \$7,400,000. The premium increase for the remainder of the term (which is approximately 10 months) will be \$896.13, which is less than expected. Scott said that he will continue to negotiate for a higher value, more in line with what Scott Bova recommended, next year when our policy is set to renew in September.

NYS Retirement System Bill

The 2025 Retirement System invoice in the amount of \$88,496 (if paid by 12/15/2024) was received on November 6th. Prepayment saves us approximately one percent on the total amount owed or a little over \$500. Heather plans to pay it once we receive the property tax check from the school district.

October Gifts/Grants/Donations [Action Item]

Per our Policy on Acceptance of Gifts, Grants and Bequests to the Library, the Board must formally accept the following: in October, we received \$2,733.94 from the Friends of the Library for Makerspace equipment (this was the amount not covered by the Manley Trust for the \$7,733.94 request we submitted earlier this year); \$50 memorial donation for MaryLou Muir; \$46.40 in anonymous donations, \$10 of which was specified for the Children's Department.

Bullet Aid/Grants in Aid

In May, CCLS Director Jan Dekoff announced that Assemblymen Andy Goodell and Joe Giglio released Grants in Aid funds (formerly known as Bullet Aid) to CCLS for distribution to member libraries to help pay for special projects. CCLS received \$40,000 for Chautauqua County libraries and \$30,000 for Cattaraugus County libraries. OPL put in a request for funds to replace a large number of older chairs throughout the Library, including at the public computers, scanning station, tutoring/ADA computers, microfilm readers, the conference room, and at the Information Desk. Our request was for 42 chairs totaling \$8,978. On October 31st, we were notified by Jan that we will receive partial funding for our request in the amount of \$3,163 to purchase 4 handicapped accessible chairs for our ADA-compliant workstations, 4 chairs for the microfilm reader stations, and new chairs for the Information Desk. We may ask the Friends if they would be willing to cover the remaining amount, as we really do need to replace all of the chairs we listed in our request. Jan does not know when the funds will be released by the legislators, so we will wait to place the orders until we have the funds in hand.

Personnel Updates [Action Items]

Heather and I met with Fran Steffen on October 30th to review the Treasurer position recently vacated by Diane Weatherell. She accepted the position and came in for her first day to train with Diane on November 15th. She will not be at the November meeting, as she already had a vacation scheduled; she will begin attending meetings in December. Elliot Lothridge was hired as a page on 11/11/24. The Board should vote to approve these two appointments.

Friends of the Library

As reported last month, the Friends nominated our Coordinator of Children's and Family Services, Kathy O'Malley for a WNYLRC 2024 Library All Star Award, which she was awarded. The ceremony was held during WNYLRC's annual meeting which was held at the National Comedy Center in Jamestown. It was a nice event and it was obvious that Kathy really appreciated the recognition. There were many people there to support her, including some of her family, Library staff, and Library board and Friends board members.

The Friends will once again participate in Giving Tuesday, which takes place on December 3rd. They have been very successful with this event over the past few years, raising well over \$4,000 each year. This year they plan to feature the Library's emerging Makerspace as a focus for support. Our Technology Engagement Librarian, Chad Taylor, is putting together

talking points for the Friends to use in their promotions. If you plan to give this year, please consider supporting them, as they do so much for the Library.

They are currently running their annual Poetry Contest for area high school students. There will be a reception for the winners at the Manny Hanny Building on December 5th at 7 pm.

News from the Library

On October 17th, I attended a workshop offered by NYCOM entitled Planning & Zoning Primer & SEQRA. While most of the people in attendance worked for zoning departments, there was some information I found helpful for our purposes. For instance, one of the points made was that educational institutions doing facility expansions of less than 10,000 square feet are considered a Type II action (actions deemed not to pose an environmental risk), meaning the SEQR process should be fairly simple (completing an environmental assessment form, which we already complete whenever we apply for Construction Aid). If the form doesn't trigger the need for additional review, then hopefully that is all we will have to do. I'll run it past our attorney Bob Schofield when we get closer to that point, as I want to be sure our status as a local government agency doesn't put us in a different category.

Another interesting point that came up had to do with the Open Meetings Law. When going into executive session, if nothing discussed requires a vote, the minutes should state "no action taken."

WNYLRC reached out to me last week to ask if OPL would be interested in hosting a legislative advocacy meeting with newly elected Assemblyman Joe Sempolinski. The meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 10th at 10:00 am in the Gallery. This is an opportunity to communicate the need for strong state funding for libraries and to discuss the importance of libraries to the communities they serve. The last time we hosted one of these meetings was when Catherine Young was Senator. We had a great turnout including staff from other CCLS member libraries, area college libraries, Board members, Friends of the Library, and Library staff. There was a very lively and informative discussion. I'd like to encourage Trustees to attend if their schedules permit.