

Library Director's Report

January 2025

Trustee Election and Budget Vote Calendar

Normally in January, Kim would present a trustee election and budget vote calendar to the Board for approval. However, with uncertainty about whether we can hold the bond vote at the same time, we held off on creating the calendar. Normally, the election and budget vote is held the first Tuesday in May, which would be May 6th this year. We are waiting for Bob Schofield to get back to us regarding whether he agrees we can bond through the CRC, and also to confirm that we can hold the bond vote and budget vote on the same day.

I contacted him last week, and he stated he had not concluded his review yet and did not give a date as to when he thinks that will be complete. We are also waiting for the architect to get costs from his engineers on different aspects of the project (plumbing, mechanical, electric), and then a total cost estimate to follow.

We can schedule the vote up until June 30th, so if the Board wanted to move the vote farther ahead in the hopes that we will have everything we need to hold the bond vote at the same time, the calendar could be created with a later date.

Trustee Ann Tenglund's term expires on June 30, 2025. She must decide if she plans to run for another term. If not, we will need to recruit someone to run.

Once the calendar is created, the date will be set for availability of petitions for nomination to the ballot for Library Trustee, as well as applications for absentee ballots. This usually happens sometime in March, but if the vote is moved to June, it would likely be later. The budget hearing will be held 2-3 weeks before the vote. The Board should discuss the timing of the vote and whether there is enough information to set a date.

2026 Budget Planning

Due to the fact we are asking for a tax increase for 2026, we have to approve the 2026 budget by March 2025, which will be voted on by the taxpayers in May or June depending on what the Board decides. Though we usually ask for a 2 percent increase (last year we also asked for a small carryover amount of \$3,891 that was available from the prior year tax levy increase, due to coming in under the allowed amount), this year we may go out for a tax increase that exceeds the tax cap limit. Once the proposed budget is set, the Board also votes to approve overriding the tax cap.

As the Board is aware, we have to plan far in advance, not knowing how inflationary trends will develop over the course of the year and any other number of factors that could affect the 2026 budget. Heather and I worked on some possible budget scenarios that were discussed at last week's Finance Committee meeting. The FC asked Heather to develop a budget scenario that includes a 2.5 percent wage increase, except for 3 full-time staff who receive the minimum NYS exempt salary which is set to increase by 3.23 percent, as well as a tax levy increase that would eliminate use of fund balance in the 2026 budget (see attached). The notes from the FC meeting discussion were emailed to Board members for review prior to the Board meeting.

The Board has several options: it can discuss the proposed budget and, if it is satisfied with it, vote to accept it as the budget that will go out to the voters in May or June; or the discussion can be tabled until February and, if desired, other scenarios can be developed for consideration.

There will be a public hearing at the Library in April or May for constituents to ask questions about the proposed budget, and possibly the capital project if the bond vote will also be held. While the Director runs the hearing, it is recommended that Trustees also attend, especially the President and Finance Officer, to help answer questions and show support for the proposed budget and capital project. The Treasurer also attends the budget hearing and the business office official should also be present. Often a reporter from the OTH shows up and interviews Library officials about the budget. With the tax levy increase being considered, there is a strong likelihood that members of the public will attend, as well as reporters. If a bond vote is also anticipated, the architect and financial advisor will also be present and/or assist with the presentation to the public.

Bequest to OPL through CRCF

I was contacted by Kirk Windus on Jan. 13th, letting me know that CRCF is working with the executor of the estate of Thomas Barnes, which made a bequest of \$50,000 to the Olean Public Library through the Foundation! Kirk stated that a number of other bequests were made to other nonprofits, all of which had an established fund with the Foundation. OPL, however has no such fund, so he said something will need to be established to accept this donation for the Library's benefit. I let him know that we've researched the possibility of opening a fund there but that we are very limited by law as to the types of investment vehicles we can invest public funds in. I said I would run this past the board and perhaps our attorney. He responded that since a donor decided to establish this to benefit OPL, it seems that another option could be to open a designated fund in the donor's name, where an annual grant is made to the Library, since in that scenario OPL would benefit, but the fund would not be owned by the Library. I let him know there are other donor advised funds of that type at CRCF that benefit the Library. He responded that as long as that option is agreeable to us and that our attorney agrees, the trust and the executor of the estate should be able to sign the agreement and establish the fund. I asked Kirk to forward any paperwork that we can review and that can be forwarded to Bob Schofield so he can advise (see attached Will Provisions—no other paperwork was available at this time).

NYS Construction Aid

On December 16th, we received 90 percent of the aid (\$61,762) for the restroom renovation project we applied for in 2023. We should postpone this work until we begin work on the building renovations. At that time, I will put in an amendment so the aid can be used toward the restrooms that will be a part of that project.

I am currently submitting updated information for the teen room project we applied for in 2024. The DLD reviewers requested an updated letter of available funds to reflect the potential for 90 percent state aid for the project (currently, CCLS approved us for approximately 60 percent funding, as that was all that the system had left to divvy out). It's possible other library systems won't use all their allotted aid, which would then be given to other systems to provide additional funding for their projects. DLD did not accept our request for a State Historic Preservation Office waiver based on criteria they provide. The option Jan Dekoff and I felt was most appropriate wound up only pertaining to school districts. This is strange, given NYS Construction Aid is only for public libraries, and DLD listed that as an option to choose from. I have a call in to SHPO to discuss the teen room project and the history of our building. Jan and I are hopeful that SHPO will not see any reason to designate OPL as a building of historical significance, meaning we would not have to go through SHPO for future projects. The reason

SHPO is now involved is because the current OPL building turned 50 in 2023, which is when buildings can gain historic preservation status.

Bullet 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 would be awarded partial funding 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. Earlier this month we received the funds from CCLS and the approved chairs have been ordered. Kim is currently updating the quotes for the remaining chairs we are hoping to purchase. We plan to ask the Friends if they would be interested in covering this, as we really do need to replace all of the chairs in our request.

Personnel Update [Action Item]

On Jan. 3rd, building attendant Lester Baker put in his two-week notice. His last day will be Friday, Jan. 17th. He has offered to fill in for the night-time cleaner's bi-annual vacations if we need him. We had already posted for a building attendant position, as Les had cut his hours back to 9 per week a number of months ago; however, we have not received any qualified applications (the position requires security duties, some cleaning, occasional light maintenance duties, and running errands once every week or two. The security aspects of the job make it a more difficult hire, as not everyone is well equipped to handle some of the situations that occur). We are considering other places to advertise the position besides on our website and social media that might result in more qualified applicants. Joe Reagle, our other building attendant, will pick up some additional hours to help fill hours Les had worked. The Board should accept Les' resignation for the minutes.

December 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 December, we received \$300 from Love in Action for Outreach Services to purchase non-circulating books for programs; \$10 anonymous donation from the PayPal Giving Fund; \$20.50 in anonymous donations; \$2,665.43 quarterly payment from the Marjory Burdus endowment; \$1,001.31 additional one-time Marjory Burdus fund payment due to change in IRS regulations; \$5,000 John Henry Eldred, Jr., Foundation grant (as reported at last month's meeting); \$25 memorial donation for Mr. & Mrs. Victor Stebbins, Sr.; \$15 memorial donation for David Thomas Gaeta.

Conflict of Interest Forms

Each year Trustees, the Treasurer, and staff must fill out the Conflict of Interest form (see attached). Please complete this, and scan and email it back to me, or drop it off at the Library/bring it to the Board meeting with you.

Strategic Planning

The 2023-25 Strategic Plan (see attached) was approved by the Board in February 2023. The plan will expire at the end of this year, so we will have to start the planning process soon. I have asked Larry Sorokes if he would be interested in leading the process again, and he indicated he would be and that it would be included in his current consulting work. This is an ideal time to look at the strategic plan as we rededicate our efforts to improving and expanding the current building.

Friends of the Library

The Friends' annual beer tasting fundraiser, FeBREWary, is scheduled for Friday, Feb. 28th. It will run from 7-9:30 PM at the Library. Tickets will be on sale soon. Prices will be one for \$25, two for \$45, and \$15 for designated drivers. As they do at all of these events, the Friends are requesting basket donations for the basket raffle. If the Board is interested in donating again, it would be greatly appreciated by the Friends. All of the proceeds from these events go to the Library to help pay for presenters, programming supplies, circulating materials, furniture, technology, and many other needed items.

As they do every year, the Friends treated Library staff to pizza and wings as a holiday treat in December. Staff were very appreciative.

At the end of their January 13th board meeting, Cookie Lindamer announced her retirement from the Friends board! Her last day as president of the Friends will be February 11th, or sooner if the Friends select a new president before then.

News from the Library

Kim was awarded an \$800 scholarship from CCLS to attend the NYLA conference in Syracuse this year (the scholarship is a reimbursement for expenses related to conference registration, accommodations, mileage, and meals; it obviously doesn't pay for everything, but it's a big help to the Library's travel budget). Kim has this to report on the 2024 conference:

“The NYLA workshops were very informative. I attended presentations about construction and creating flexible space in the library. I also attended workshops about how to better deal with patrons and staff. As a supervisor, I found the ideas presented to be very helpful. They were a good reminder of how important it is to make your staff feel valued. Tips were also given about how to better deal with difficult patrons. The keynote speaker, Amanda Jones, was interesting and relevant to today's environment of censorship and book banning.”

“Group tours were also available to the Onondaga Historical Association and Onondaga County Public Library Central Library. These tours were very interesting. While touring the library, I noticed some things they did that I really liked and would like to implement in our library. They had a great maker space. I liked the way their local history section was laid out. The children's area had a lot of creative things. Their signage was large and easy to read.” These kinds of visits/tours are a great way to develop ideas for our upcoming building project.