



Albert Lea
Public Library

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Library Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
February 19, 2025
5:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers

Present: Annice Sevett, Anna Andersen, Jay Escobar, Andrew Gustafson, Becky Tennis Hanson, Cheryl Intihar, Vicky Robson, Keith Van Beek (City Council Representative), Cindy Gilbert (ALPL SELCO Board Representative), Matthew Tessmer

1. Introductions

New City Council Representative Keith Van Beek was welcomed. All members introduced themselves and shared anecdotes about why they serve on the board.

2. Elect Chair for 2024

Hanson moved to nominate Gustafson to serve as the board chair in 2025. Intihar seconded. The board voted unanimously for Andrew Gustafson to serve as the board chair for 2025.

3. Approve Minutes of the November 20, 2024 Meeting

Gustafson asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Hanson made the motion, Robson seconded. The board voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the November 20, 2024 meeting as written.

4. Old Business

a. Director's Report

Statistics from 2024 were shared as an infographic. The same infographic was also released to the public. Categories with significant increases from 2023 include the percentage of digital items borrowed, the number of new library cards issued, and the total number of public computer sessions. More detailed information will be available in the State Annual Report, which will be provided to the board at the May meeting.

An update was given on the changes made to Hoopla. On Jan. 1, 2025, the number of checkouts allowed per month decreased from ten to four and the maximum cost per item was set to \$2.99. These changes were in accordance with board recommendations to help control the cost of the service. In 2024, the average cost per month for Hoopla was \$2,617; in January 2025, the total cost was \$1956.84. If this decrease continues, the cost for Hoopla will fall in the budgeted range for 2025. Sevett and the board noted that though disappointment was expressed, the bulk of patron response was appreciative that the service would continue.

Details were provided for upcoming library staff changes. Children's Librarian Patty Greibrok will be retiring on May 2, 2025 after working at the library for 25 years. Library Assistant Trish Whelan will be promoted to the Children's Librarian position in May. Trish already has built rapport with library families and has begun training with Patty in the areas of programming and collection development. Summer programming will be similar to past years while Trish acclimates to the new role. The board expressed their appreciation for Patty's service and shared their enthusiasm for Trish's promotion into the position.

An update was given on the migration to the new integrated library system (ILS), Evergreen. Staff training on the new system has begun and will continue through April. The official migration date has been set for Thursday, May 1. To prepare for the change, the library will be closed on Tuesday, April 29 and Wednesday, April 30. Widespread communication on the new system will begin about six weeks ahead of the Go Live date, when more details about the change will have been worked out. A draft communication plan was shared. Sevett asked the board for questions and feedback about the change, especially as it relates to the board's use of the public catalog. The board asked what training materials the library will be able to provide for patrons to learn the new catalog and expressed that step-by-step graphics located close to the catalog would be helpful. Sevett shared that the library plans to create video tutorials with the new catalog. Gilbert stated that there may be opportunities for SELCO to create and distribute training graphics for the new catalog.

5. New Business

a. 2024 Annual Report Update

Preliminary statistics from 2024 were shared in the Director's Report. The full annual report will be provided for the board at its May meeting, and will supply more detailed statistics regarding library operations.

b. Proposed State Budget and Impacts

Information on the proposed state budget and its impacts was presented. Areas that impact the library include funding for Minitex, which facilitates state-wide interlibrary loan and provides access to databases and other electronic materials, Legacy funding, which supports arts and cultural heritage programs, and grants for public library construction and renovation, which support public library capital needs with matching funds. The public library construction grants have the biggest potential impact on the library, as a large grant that requires matching funds from the City could generate movement for city center renovations that expand library space.

To advocate for funding for these areas, Sevett wrote a letter to Rep. Peggy Bennett and Sen. Gene Dornink. Gilbert, as ALPL SELCO Board Representative, and Gustafson, as Library Advisory Board Chair, agreed to sign the letter. SELCO Executive Director Krista Ross will include this letter in their advocacy activities as part of the Minnesota Library Association Library Legislative Day, occurring Thursday, Feb. 20th.

c. 2025 Goals

Goals for library services in 2025 were presented. These goals were based on feedback from the 2022 SELCO Community Needs Assessment. Completing a new strategic plan is on the horizon after the ILS migration, and is dependent

on the City's plans to conduct a strategic plan and the availability of SELCO's strategic planning services. Goals include: (1) identify marketing strategies and opportunities to increase awareness of the library services, including increasing engagement with existing library media channels, (2) provide educational opportunities for staff to continue to grow and expand their knowledge and skills, including facilitating cross-training opportunities, and (3) expand services to Freeborn County's immigrant and refugee communities using the 2024-2026 plan as a guide.

Sevett asked the board for additional ideas for goals for library service in 2025. The board's ideas and discussions focused on the following themes: (1) the possibility of city center renovations to expand library space, (2) space and staff capacity to keep up with program participation and demand, and (3) opportunities for the library to collaborate with community businesses and other organizations both in programming and in nontraditional collection offerings.

6. SELCO Board Report

Gilbert provided updates on her activities representing the library on the SELCO Board of Directors, Legacy Committee, and Advocacy Committee. The Legacy and Advocacy committees' activities revolved around the proposed state budget and its impacts, as discussed in New Business. The Legacy Committee is also finalizing a policy and procedure for Requests for Reconsideration for Legacy funded programs.

7. Board Comments or Concerns

The board asked for updates on programs and services, including (1) Books by Mail, (2) Read to a Dog, (3) the limited edition library card art and availability of keychain and digital library cards, and (4) the feedback of teens and tweens on programming efforts to that audience. Sevett shared that (1) the Books by Mail service has yet to be used, but targeted marketing and one on one service conversations should open up opportunities, (2) the Read to a Dog program has been well attended and will continue, (3) the limited edition art may return (and can be made available for board members), a digital card is available in the SELCO app, and keychain cards could be explored, and (4) input from teens, tweens, and their caregivers has been received and will inform summer programming, including a possible teen book club.

The board provided suggestions for programming, collection, and collaboration initiatives centered around birdwatching. Ideas discussed included expanding offerings of birdwatching binocular kits beyond the current birdwatching discovery kits for children and adults, offering guided birdwatching programs, and collaborating with the Albert Lea Audubon Society. Board members discussed local personal connections that may help facilitate these efforts. Gilbert suggested that program funding could be sought from a Community Collaboration Grant. Sevett made note of the suggestions and will explore the feasibility of these initiatives.

8. Adjournment

Gustafson asked for a motion to end the meeting. Intihar made the motion, Escobar seconded. The February 19, 2025 meeting of the Library Advisory Board concluded at 5:59 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Matthew Tessmer