

Monday, August 10th, 2020

Following is a joint communication from President Jim White and Vice-President, Bill Largent, the current longest serving library trustees of their respective cities. While not an official board communication, we assure you it accurately conveys the past and current environment and activities at Farmington Community Library (FCL).

As you are all aware, the FCL has always been an asset to our Cities. The FCL has sought to enhance our community by promoting literacy, providing an educational environment and community gathering space, fostering life-long learning and recreation for adults and children, and promoting access to information through the use of technology. The latter point, use of technology has changed greatly since the formation of the FCL. Along with those shifts, so have the patterns of use of the FCL by community members. The FCL is evaluating how we can meet the challenges these changes bring and ensure our FCL is not only the library of today but sets the standard of being the library of the future.

While the current health crisis has required closure of much of our State, including the FCL, this also presents a perfect opportunity to make some of these transitions. This communication is intended to highlight some of the activities.

One big change is to welcome our new Executive Director, Ms. Riti Grover. She has the experience, background, and vision to work with the entire Farmington Community and lead our FCL to be the best community library in the country, today and into the future.

The FCL is reopening using a safe, phased plan based on health information. Of course, with considerable uncertainty and regularly updated orders from the Governor's office, CDC and the Michigan Library Association, next steps will be taken only when the board and Director are assured that the action taken poses no threat to the safety of staff or patrons.

This week saw the return of greater than 80% of Full and Part Time employees as we move to ramp up curbside delivery and prepare for the possible opening for "Grab and Go" where patrons are allowed limited access to the facilities for a set duration.

With the likelihood that school this year will be remote or some hybrid version, President White is working closely with Director Grover to assure that every student has a library card and increased access to online tutoring services through tools such as Tutor.com which could be a great help for parents and kids. And it is totally free for our patrons!

To ensure Director Grover and the Board of Trustees understand the community needs, an on-line survey was conducted recently. The full report will be shared with council and the entire community when completed, which we anticipate being mid-September but we can tell you the response went well beyond expectation with more than 2,100 participants and numerous specific suggestions on programs, events and facilities.

FCL will also send surveys to the schools, intended for parents, students, faculty, administration and support staff when we are notified they will have time to address it.

Moving forward, the Director and board will begin the process of reviewing options for an updated website to ensure a smoother and more friendly on-line experience for patrons. The current system, while adequate, was the subject of many comments in our recent community survey. We will pursue a more intuitive look and provide patrons the opportunity to customize their accounts, thereby allowing them to receive email or text notification of events, programs or materials of interest to them as opposed to the current 'peck and hunt' system.

Some two years ago, the board of trustees voted to add four permanent sub-committees to the then existing Personnel Committee which historically met just once per year. This structure allows for better oversight on governing policies, their execution, and promotion of library's mission within the community.

The work of these committees provided insights into the actual day-to-day operations of the library and resulted in numerous Board of Trustees' actions toward change and improvement.

The facilities committee learned of and informed the board of four critical issues, one of which fell into the category of emergency repair and in calendar year 2019 completed each project. At the suggestion of the facilities committee, the board approved a contract to complete a comprehensive Building Health Assessment. The results of this study are now the basis for a two-year plan to address delayed repairs and replacement that we expect to cost between \$1.5 and 2 million dollars. We are looking at an immediate expense of \$230,000 to upgrade two (2) elevators in the 12 Mile Location.

Due to the work of the Finance Committee, chaired by Farmington Hills trustee Paul Huyck, a CPA by profession, the board was made aware of serious concerns related to internal controls; specifically that accounting, finance, payroll and HR were all handled by a single individual.

Under direction from the Finance Committee and recommendations of our Executive Director Grover, the board approved the implementation of a new financial software platform and process which has eliminated internal control concerns and allows for real time reports as opposed to the previous system which provided month old data. Even though we had to close due to the pandemic we have transitioned into the new system successfully under the close supervision of the Executive Director.

Finance and Personnel committees also learned that payroll, while outsourced was based on a paper calendar system with supervisors approving hours posted, which was then sent to a payroll staff person to enter into a Microsoft spreadsheet before it was transmitted to the payroll company. Additionally, the Board had no access to clear breakdown on personnel expenses.

Under the direction of Ms. Grover, ADP's automated Time & Attendance system was installed to replace the previous paper based and labor-intensive system. Director Grover then augmented the payroll system with ADP's automated Comprehensive Payroll & HR System and is currently

finalizing an application that will facilitate the ability for the staff to clock in when working remotely or on-site.

To guarantee network and data security, Director Grover is working with the IT staff to review FCL processes as well as implement PMI standards necessary to begin allowing patrons to use credit cards for damaged or lost materials. The ongoing efforts also move FCL to Windows 365 in the coming weeks.

Director Grover also presented to the board of Trustees a brand-new analytic tool created by Gale Cengage, a subsidiary of Gale Research Headquartered in Farmington Hills.

“Gale Engage” along with “Gale Community Insight” was unanimously approved by the board, making FCL the first library in the State of Michigan to implement Gale Engage with the ability to aggregate and analyze patron utilization of services and collections, allowing for customized marketing, programming and outreach so all residents will be aware of the value that exist in their library.

Through regular community and staff surveys, service analysis, implementation of best business practices, creation of roles for top of the line innovation, other organizational modifications and a budget of \$6.7 million, we look forward to delivering to the residents of Farmington and Farmington Hills, the finest library experience in the country.