



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Board of Library Trustees

Date: 2024-07-08

Time: 7:00 PM

Building: Reading Public Library

Location: Community Room

Address: 64 Middlesex Avenue

Session: Open Session

Purpose: General Meeting

Version: Final

Attendees: **Members - Present:**

Cappy Popp, Chair; Patrick Egan, Vice-Chair; Cherrie Dubois;
Andrew Gregory; Monette Verrier (remote)

Members - Not Present:

Andrew Grimes, Secretary

Others Present:

Amy Lannon, Director (remote); Michelle Filleul, Assistant Director;
Meaghan Clemente, Administrative Assistant; Maura Deedy, Local Librarian
Consulting, LLC Consultant (remote);

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Patrick Egan, Vice Chair

Topics of Discussion:

I. Call to Order 7:00 p.m.

II. Public Comment

No public comments were made in person or remotely.

III. FY26-FY30 Strategic Plan Presentation

The Library engaged Maura Deedy from Local Librarian Consulting, LLC, to help create its new five-year strategic plan. For state aid and grant eligibility, the plan must be filed with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) by October 1, 2025. The plan provides organizational guidance and direction for the Library and is used to create annual action plans to achieve stated goals.

Ms. Deedy has professional Library and strategic planning experience with the MBLC, the Robbins Library in Arlington, and the Weymouth Public Libraries. She now operates Local Librarian Consulting, LLC. Ms. Deedy was excited to work on the FY26-FY30 strategic plan for the Reading Public Library and thanked the Strategic Planning Committee, which consisted of Ms. Lannon, Ms. Filleul, Ms. Verrier, Head of Collection Services Jamie Penney, and Head of Children's Services Olivia McElwain, for their valuable input and critical thinking during this process.

Ms. Deedy started background research and committee meetings for this project in April 2024. The process did not include a library survey for the community due to the rich data sets collected in other recent community surveys.

In May, Ms. Deedy conducted staff retreats, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews on-site at the Library. She noted that Trustees and municipal stakeholders provided unique perspectives. She also had the opportunity to engage in casual patron conversations and observe programming, which deepened her understanding of the energy, professionalism, and level of service present at the Library. These rich information-gathering sessions provided high-quality data that helped identify trends and inform the development of the strategic plan.

In June, she worked with the Strategic Plan Committee to develop, draft, and revise the plan, culminating in presenting the draft strategic plan to the Board at this meeting.

Data sources include Reading's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Priorities, Housing Survey, Library Landscape Survey, Library Surveys, Symonds Way Land Use Survey, DEI Assessment, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Reimagine Reading Survey, and the Reading Center for Active Living Committee (RECALC) report. This existing data reflects the community's many aspirations and concerns. This valuable information can help the Library better understand the community's needs when providing impactful services.

Ms. Deedy identified priorities and emerging themes for improving the quality of life in Reading. Recreational and cultural events often intersect with enjoying outdoor open space. While the recent renovation improved the Library facility, accessibility is a concern for many other Town buildings. Also, residents support opportunities to age in place and remain engaged and connected. Community gathering spaces and socialization are critical.

A key recommendation from the DEI Assessment notes that diversity is necessary for representative government and inclusion efforts to ensure success. Leadership roles should reflect the diversity of the community and Library users. The Library can also enhance the role of Community-Based Organizations by drawing more people into civics, increasing community engagement at recreational and cultural events, and engaging with various populations on diverse topics.

Transgender and gender diverse (TGD) youth and students of color are at risk for bullying and mental health incidents. Data also indicates a need for additional support for multilingual students and families. Overall, a sense of belonging is necessary for all residents to feel valued in the community.

The prior FY21-FY25 strategic plan had solid bones but needed some refreshing renovations for the FY26-FY30 strategic plan. The core values that guide the Library's work and the vision that aligns with the ambitions and aspirations of the community remain the same. However, the new strategic plan will update the mission statement that defines why the Library does what it does. The overall strategic priorities of the new plan allow the Library to continue to focus on activities that align with its values, mission, and vision. However, updated goals and action items will inspire new projects.

Ms. Deedy presented the new mission statement inspired by exercises completed at the staff retreats in May. The reduced length and simplified language promote the core value of access. Keywords like "connect," "welcome," and "engage" further support inclusivity. The tagline "building community, creating connections" will be used in marketing materials and community discussions to promote the Library as a space and place, one

of the key strategic focus areas. The Library facilitates connections to informative and enriching print and digital material collections, new technologies, programs, and between community members and organizations. The new mission reflects the importance of growth and learning at the Library and within the larger community to improve everyone's quality of life.

Ms. Deedy reviewed the development process for a sample goal in the strategic area of focus for customer convenience and personalization. The need to support diverse, multilingual residents across various literacy levels was identified by the Library staff, focus groups, and interview participants. Approximately 11% of Reading residents speak a language other than English at home. The influence and opportunities of each department are considered in each action item. The overall goal is to expand the accessibility and discoverability of a robust collection of print and digital materials published in native languages, as well as popular items translated from English, for patrons of all ages and literacy levels.

Ms. Deedy noted that the strategic plan's plan summary section provides a narrative overview of the process and the philosophical questions and concerns the Reading community is currently facing, such as high-cost housing, an aging population, and divisive local politics.

Ms. Deedy briefly reviewed the three strategic areas of focus: customer convenience and personalization, community learning and engagement, and the Library as space and place. Each strategic area has four goals and numerous action items. Ms. Deedy also summarized the methodology for developing the strategic plan, which included reviewing the prior plan, municipal survey data, community engagement sessions, and input from the strategic planning committee.

Ms. Lannon thanked Ms. Deedy for her work and explained that the strategic plan's approval will be a voting item in August. Any changes will be incorporated before final approval and filing with the MBLC.

Mr. Popp inquired about the most significant change to goals compared to the existing strategic plan. Ms. Deedy explained that the new goals reflect the recent changes in the community and the ongoing commitment of the Library staff to address them by promoting accessibility and inclusion. Ms. Lannon noted that the areas of focus and the actionable nature of the previous strategic plan resonated with the staff and have helped guide them in educating and engaging with the community. Keeping the same key focus areas while updating the goals and action items according to the qualitative and quantitative data collected during this process will allow for continued growth and expansion.

Ms. Dubois suggested revising the second community learning and engagement goal to begin with a verb rather than a noun for consistency throughout the document. Ms. Deedy will update the language to include the verb "foster."

Mr. Gregory asked about the staff's general feelings on the strategic plan. Ms. Filleul clarified that the leadership team has reviewed the plan on behalf of the staff and believes the staff will appreciate it, as they are already beginning to work on some goals

and action items. The strategic plan will be fully presented to the staff once approved. Ms. Lannon noted that strategic planning sessions were well-attended by library staff, allowing them to feel engaged, empowered, and positive about the process compared to the last strategic plan that was developed remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Deedy has attempted to personalize the strategic plan by incorporating language, ideas, and themes contributed by the staff.

Ms. Deedy clarified that data was gathered from new conversations with patrons during organized focus groups, which used a series of questions to facilitate conversation. The three focus groups included multilingual patrons, older adults, and Partners and Allies for Inclusive Reading (PAIR).

Mr. Egan complimented the plan's clarity and flexibility. Although Mr. Egan believes the exterior Library landscape project should continue to move forward, the Ad Hoc Library Landscape Committee recommendations and the availability of alternative funding sources through gifts and grants have not yet been clearly identified.

Mr. Egan also noted that it may be challenging to establish a board recruitment or succession plan, as local voters ultimately elect the Board of Library Trustees. Ms. Verrier acknowledged that the Board has no control over the community vote but should take an active role in educational outreach in the community about open Board seats and the benefits of serving as a member. Ms. Deedy clarified this goal's connections to the DEI Assessment recommendation for diverse representation.

Ms. Dubois clarified that the Ad Hoc Library Landscape Committee is still working on its project recommendations and does not intend to use any municipal funding or make the Library responsible for funding. Ms. Lannon suggested using softer language such as "investigate feasibility," which was used in a previous strategic plan to explore the possibility of obtaining a generator for the Library to serve as a backup emergency response center. Although the generator idea was unfeasible, the details were thoroughly explored with other municipal departments. Ms. Lannon suggested that committing to landscape improvements as a strategic priority may be beneficial in securing future grant funding.

Mr. Popp asked for clarification on the succession plan. Ms. Deedy explained the importance of planning for cycles of staff turnover as personal circumstances change. Strategic and gender-neutral job posting language and diverse job posting locations for new positions can help recruit qualified candidates who will go beyond just filling an opening. All forms of diversity are welcome. Meeting community needs and reflecting diversity in the community are also essential. Succession plans are intended to balance retention and internal growth while incorporating innovation.

Long-term employee retention in the library industry as a whole since COVID-19 was discussed. Although some current employees have served the Library for over 20 years, limited upward mobility presents a challenge for many municipal and school employees, who often move on to other municipalities for new opportunities within less than five years. Some applicants may also be transitioning to libraries from other fields, such as teaching. Ms. Filleul stressed the importance of cultivating a younger generation of

future librarians and library staff members through volunteer and internship opportunities.

Ms. Lannon will share Ms. Deedy's contact information with the Board for further feedback and corrections to the strategic plan. Changes sent to Ms. Deedy by August 1 will be incorporated into a revised redline version of the strategic plan to be discussed and potentially voted on at the August meeting or in September if needed. A new strategic plan must be finalized and approved by October 1,

Mr. Popp thanked Ms. Deedy for her hard work in expanding yet simplifying the original tenants of the previous strategic plan and developing new future objectives. Ms. Deedy thanked the Board for their thoughtful questions and engagement and excused herself at 7:59 p.m.

IV. Financial Report

Ms. Lannon noted that FY24 will be officially closed out in August. Ms. Clemente continues to coordinate the payment of FY24 and FY25 invoices with the Accounting Department. The municipal expense budget has been fully spent with the most recent warrant, and materials spending has met state aid requirements. Despite the most recent payroll period ending June 30, some municipal salary funds will be returned to the Town due to various staff transitions.

Ms. Lannon noted that in addition to regular cash donations, the Young Women's League of Reading donated in continued support of the EcoTarium Museum pass. The Women's League of Reading generously donated approximately \$1,000 of Tonies, a type of audiobook in which a cartoon figure reads stories. The collection has been highly anticipated and is expected to grow. The Library received a generous bequest from the Estate of Lawrence J. Stiles. Ms. Dubois and Ms. Lannon provided some background information on Mr. Stiles, who was an active local Reading resident for many years.

A schedule of FY25 warrants for library invoices was presented. Although the Town runs warrants weekly, the Library typically participates every other week to reduce the burden associated with in-person signature requirements. Ms. Clemente has carefully planned the warrant schedule around upcoming board meetings, holiday closures, and due dates. An emergency warrant outside this schedule may be necessary to accommodate payment deadlines for key projects.

V. Director's Report

Ms. Lannon reported that the exterior library pickup lockers are back up and running. Senior Library Associate Valerie Gould Heithaus and Library Associate Alissa Landau have crafted signage instructing patrons to lift the cloth screen cover to begin. RPL will promote the service to increase usage as the colder weather approaches.

Volunteer hours are up this month due to Sophia Ortins, the new Office of Equity and Social Justice intern.

The Library has recently added a new LOTE4Kids database of over 4,000 picture books in more than 65 world languages. Each book has English translations to help children learn and experience languages other than English (LOTE). This online resource will help engage immigrant, refugee, and multilingual families in the community.

The Friends Speaker Series launched in June and has received over 2,000 views through the website portal across both live and recorded events. The Crochet Coral Reef exhibit will be displayed throughout the summer in the Studio with a matching game and prizes.

The Library received over 20 applications for the full-time Children's Librarian I position. First-round interviews will begin this week. In July, Ms. Clemente celebrates her second work anniversary, and Ms. Gould Heithaus celebrates her sixth work anniversary. Ms. Lannon summarized recent professional development opportunities that Library staff have participated in.

VI. Approval of June 10, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes from the June 10, 2024, Board of Library Trustees meeting as written.

(Egan / Gregory)

Vote: Approved 5-0

VII. Future Agenda Items

In August, Head of Collection Services Jamie Penney will present an update on the state of the Library collection, including annual circulation statistics for fiscal year 2024. Proposed updates to the Tutoring Policy and Meeting Room Policy will also be discussed. Ms. Filleul is investigating insurance coverage requirements at other libraries to minimize liability.

The Library is currently working with Communico to develop a new website, mobile application, and meeting room reservation software and hopes to launch by August or September. Website content will be simplified to improve accessibility. For example, Ms. Filleul noted that the Wilmington Public Library uses Communico for its website and mobile application. The Trustees will be able to beta-test the new website and provide input. Room reservations will be possible through the mobile application.

The Ad Hoc Library Landscape Committee is currently working on its recommendations for the exterior landscape project, which will be presented to the Board in the future. The Select Board recently voted to establish the Ad Hoc Commemoration Establishment Committee, recognizing the legacy and impact of local Boston Celtics legend Bill Russell. The Board or the Library may need to appoint a representative to this new Committee in the future.

Adjournment 8:15 p.m.

Motion: To Adjourn at 8:15 p.m.

(Egan / Gregory)

Vote: Approved 5-0

Respectfully Submitted,



Patrick Egan, Vice Chair

READING PUBLIC LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN
2026 - 2030

BOARD PRESENTATION
JULY 8, 2024

MAURA DEEDY,
LOCAL LIBRARIAN CONSULTING



Strategic Planning Committee

Michelle Filleul
Amy Fang Lannon
Olivia McElwain
Jamie Penney
Monette Verrier



Strategic Plan Timeline



APRIL 2024

Background research

Strategic Planning
Committee Meetings

MAY 2024

Community engagement

2 Staff Retreats
4 Focus Groups
9 Stakeholder Interviews

JUNE 2024

Community engagement
analysis

Plan drafting,
development and
revisions

JULY 2024

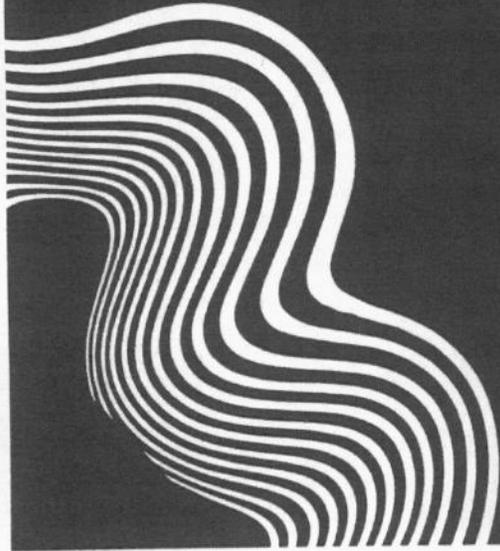
Continued revisions

Presentation of draft
strategic plan



Data Sources

- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Priorities 2022
- Housing 2023
- Library Landscape Survey 2024
- Library Surveys 2023
- Symonds Way (land use) 2023
- DEI Assessment 2024
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2023
- ReImagine Reading Survey
- RECALC Report



Top priorities for improving the quality of life in Reading, and emerging themes

- Recreation and Culture
- Open Space
- Town Buildings + Accessibility
- Opportunities to Age in Place
- Community Gathering Spaces + Socialization
- Diversity is necessary for representative government, and inclusion efforts to ensure success
- Enhance the role of Community Based Organizations
- TGD and Students of Color at risk for bullying and mental health incidents
- Support for MLL students and families
- Belonging



framework



MISSION
why we do what we do

new

CORE VALUES
what is important to us as we do our work, what are our guiding principles?

keep

VISION
ambitious aspirations for the Reading community

keep

strategic plan elements



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
areas of focus to deliver on mission and achieve vision

keep

GOALS
how RPL will support the strategic priorities

new

ACTION ITEMS
details the initiatives and projects to achieve goals

new



MISSION

Building Community, Creating Connections.

Reading Public Library's mission is to connect all people with opportunities to grow and learn, and to provide resources to support a welcoming and engaged community.



STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS: CUSTOMER CONVENIENCE AND PERSONALIZATION

Goal 3: Expand collections and access for multi-language residents

- Build robust collections of print and digital materials in languages spoken by Reading residents
- Advocate to the library network to improve integrated library system capabilities to support multi-language resources and findability
- Support English language learning goals with print and digital material and services at various proficiency levels

