



PALOS HEIGHTS
PUBLIC LIBRARY

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Palos Heights Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting
August 15, 2024

Library News

Gadgets & Gizmos

The Gadgets & Gizmos collection is off to a great start! The display looks sharp, and patrons have been very excited to learn about what we're offering. As of the end of July, we had 80 items circulated consisting of a number of different items. Particularly popular have been the 3Doodler, bag toss game, and wifi hotspots. We're all excited to see how this collection evolves going forward.

4th of July Parade

We had a great time at the 4th of July parade! Despite the threat of rain, the weather held out. I don't know if there was an estimated head count, but it was the biggest parade crowd that I can remember seeing in Palos Heights. We decorated my minivan and gave out candy and bubbles. We also fired bubbles out of the bubble bazooka in the van. The bubbles were a huge hit!

Banking

If you recall from our May meeting, Terry and I aren't particularly happy with our current banking experience with Old National Bank. The main issue is that our money market accounts with them were only getting 1.2% interest, whereas Illinois Funds is currently over 5%. There are other minor issues that make day-to-day banking with Old National a pain, so we went looking around at other banking options to see if the grass is greener elsewhere. Terry and I met with a representative from CNB bank to evaluate their offerings. In terms of day-to-day banking, it would be a significant improvement with a better portal and better customer service. However, their government money market rate is also 1.2%. They offered to push that closer to 2%, but that still falls well short of Illinois Funds. Canvassing other libraries in town, that 1.2% figure seems to be the standard for government accounts. I'm not sure why it's lower than commercial rates, but that's the way it is. So we went back to Old National and told them that we were considering moving our money to Illinois Funds at 5%, and lo and behold they offered to convert our account to a 5% rate. That still isn't quite as good as Illinois Funds, but I believe it's close enough to put the conversation about possibly switching banks to rest. Whether we might want to put some money in Illinois Funds for the sake of diversification and to get slightly more interest is another question. But for now, I'm content that we're going to get stronger interest from Old National.

Donations

We've had a lot of interesting things happening on the donations front this summer. I continue to work with the family of Eileen Lunter to find a suitable project to put her name behind. I'm also working with Celeste Kappel to come up with a memorial for Elenor Hawley. Elenor's family is interested in donating an original piece of art in her memory. We have a number of places where we could put such a gift. Per policy, the acceptance and display of such a gift will require your approval, so expect to see more on that soon. We also received an anonymous \$500 donation with the request that we keep Albert Camus's *The Stranger* in circulation. That seems like a request that will be easily accommodated. And we received a \$1,000 donation in memory of Pam Szeniawski. Half of that was earmarked for books and the other half for unrestricted use. I believe that we are seeing an increase in giving like this at least partially as a result of our good stewardship of past gifts and effective recognition and appreciation of our benefactors.

Building & Grounds News

Bird Netting

A few crafty little birds continue to find ways to get into our netting. We have had the bird netting guy out a couple of times to try to patch up the tiny gaps that the birds keep finding. So far this year, we have had two birds get in and not be able to get back out, dying in the netting. And a family of especially wily sparrows actually built a nest and have a well-protected home inside the netting. The netting still seems to keep the vast majority of birds out, but this one small species keeps finding its way in. AJ Bird Control proposes installing some additional netting around the pillar caps at a cost of \$3,250. They also sent a proposal for removing the netting entirely, removing the vertical cabling that the birds like to roost in, and install optical gel discs on the horizontal beams and pillar caps at a cost of \$10,850. The final option would be to remove the netting and install a new netting from scratch, which I believe would cost over \$15,000. I have been mulling this over while on vacation, and I think the wisest option at this point is to go with the first proposal. Most of the netting continues to be in good shape. Perhaps some additional netting around the pillar caps will give us a few extra years before we need to take more drastic action.

Budget News

Some exciting tax bill news: for the first time since 2021, second-half tax bills went out on time this year! And we have already begun receiving those disbursements. Needless to say, I'm breathing a lot easier knowing that we aren't in danger of running out of money before the end of the year. As of this writing, we have received over \$785,000, surpassing 90% of the expected total for the second half of this year. Our balances are the highest that they have been in many years, with over \$1.3 million in our General Fund Money Market as of today. Even factoring in the entire cost of the paving project happening this fall, we have more than enough money to last until first-half distributions start coming in next spring.

The Budget & Finance Committee met in last July to go over the first draft of the FY2025 budget. We plan to meet again in the next week or two to finalize the draft budget for approval at our September Regular Meeting.

Upcoming Events

- Thursday, August 15th – Regular Board Meeting, 7:00pm
- TBD – Budget & Finance Committee Meeting
- Thursday, September 19th – Personnel Committee, 6:00pm
- Thursday, September 19th – Regular Board Meeting, 7:00pm

Agenda Items

Item 1: Parking Lot Repair Project

After approving the architect/engineer at our June meeting, Product Architecture threw a little bit of a curveball at us. Rather than preparing documents to bid in January for work to be completed in the spring, they proposed getting documents ready to bid in August to complete the work this fall. They said that it has been a bit of a slow season for paving companies, and we stand a good chance of seeing low bids from companies looking for another job to finish out the year. Once I learned that tax bills were going out on time and adjusting my cash flow analysis, it became clear that this is an option for us financially. We opted to have the engineer come out and drill cores in mid-July. Four 5' samples were taken. Analysis showed that the subsurface layers are in good shape. They consist of the proper materials at the proper thicknesses. A “proof-roll” will still be conducted during construction, once the old asphalt has been removed. But there is no reason to believe that any subsurface work will be required beyond cursory grading, which will be included in the base bid package.

Obviously, things haven’t progressed quickly enough to issue an RFP and receive responses in time for this meeting. I am skeptical that all of the necessary steps will be completed in time to get this job done this fall. However, the architects and engineers are working on it, so perhaps I will have a surprise for you next month.

Recommendation: No action needed at this time.

Item 2: Approval of FY2023 Annual Financial Report

The FY2023 audit is finally ready! Riley Martin from Lauterbach & Amen will be on hand to present the results and answer any questions that you might have. Despite 2023 being our first year using the Annual Budget System, everything seems to have gone smoothly. Our pension obligations continue to be well-funded, and the overall budgetary health of the library continues to trend toward the positive.

Recommendation: I recommend that you approve the FY2023 Annual Financial Report as presented.

Item 3: Approval of Recommendations of the Policy Committee

When the Personnel Committee met in June, they sent two policy recommendations to the Policy Committee for further consideration. The first is a change to the Staff Benefits Policy that will allow part-time employees who work a minimum of 20-hours per week to enroll in the library's health insurance plan at their expense. This will incur no additional cost to the library but will allow those employees an option for health insurance if they don't have any other good options. The second change is a proposed amendment to the Staff Education Policy that allows part-time employees who work a minimum of 20-hours per week to take advantage of the library's education reimbursement program. This is a great benefit for employees who are working for us while working toward a library degree, but it was previously only available to full-time employees. I think it is a smart move to allow part-time employees to also take advantage of this program as it will allow us to attract and potentially keep high quality less-than-full-time employees.

Recommendation: I recommend that you approve amendments to the Staff Benefits Policy and the Staff Education Policy.

Item 4: Presentation of Slate of Officers for 2024-2025 Term

The Nominating Committee will have nominees for officer positions for the 2024-2025 term. We will definitely have a new President and Secretary, as Trustees Burek and Snow have reached their term limits in those positions. The slate will be up for approval at the September meeting.

Recommendation: No action needed until September.

Respectfully submitted,
Jesse Blazek
Library Director