



PALOS HEIGHTS  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

# DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Palos Heights Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting  
September 19, 2024

## Library News

Usually, things get a bit quieter in the library once summer reading ends at the end of July. Not so for us! The Friends hosted their semi-annual book sale the weekend of August 16<sup>th</sup>. They raised over \$3,500 for the library despite what we felt was below average foot traffic. We co-hosted the annual paper shredding and pill drop-off event, along with Lake Katherine and the City, on August 24<sup>th</sup>. This continues to be a popular event with a constant flow of residents shredding a few tons of documents in just a few hours. We also hosted what has become our annual pet adoption event with Traveling Tails. Kudos to Lorena and Beth for a fun event where a number of dogs were adopted and lots of donations were collected for Traveling Tails. Finally, preparations are underway for our 6<sup>th</sup> annual Fan Con event on September 26<sup>th</sup>. It's going to be a fun day for all ages!

You might recall that we opted to try something different for our August staff in-service day this year. We all attended the SWAN Expo in Palos Hills on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. This is a one-day conference for the 100 SWAN library members held annually with a keynote speaker and presentations on various topics throughout the day. This year's topics included Circulation Best Practices, Collection Management, and School Partnerships, to name a few. It was a great experience for all staff, especially those who don't typically get to attend conferences like this. It was also a great opportunity to have all of our staff attend, when we normally can only send a few due to the library being open.

Here are some of our staff's takeaways from the day:

Beth S. – Public Services Librarian

The Swan Expo sessions I went to were, Utilizing the Illinois Digital Archives, Aspen for Library Staff and Be a Workflows Detective. Even though most of the IDA program dealt with how to submit your records to IDA, which we have already done, I did learn a bit about applying for grants and that we can have our IDA records added to Aspen. I will reach out to Aaron to have our items added to the catalog. If we wanted to apply for grants, they will help walk us through the process. I'm not sure we would qualify for any, since we have already digitized quite a bit, but it is worth looking into.

The Aspen session was very helpful. I have not been utilizing Aspen to the extent I should, and didn't realize how much customization we could do at our end.

Christina V. – Public Services Librarian

The Swan Expo on August 23rd was very intriguing this year and I was able to attend some very informative panels. It started off with the introductory speech where Aaron Skog talked about the 50th anniversary of SWAN and the history of it. The guest speaker was Troy Siewert, a police officer. He was very introspective and talked about tough situations he has faced with police calls and Mental Health Crises. He talked about how sometimes you have to deal with situations you are not prepared for and that you have to assess the situation. Think about how you can help them and to be calm in your approach. Listening to the person is key, and remember to validate them, acknowledge their perceived injustices, have points of agreement, and ask them open-ended questions. To resolve the issues, remember again to validate them, set limits on what they can do, and collaborate with them on a solution. I thought he was a very good speaker with many good points.

Sue P. – Public Services Librarian

Troy Siewert's presentation about mental health crisis intervention was good and very practical for those of us working on the front lines with the public. I was reminded of Ryan Dowd's presentations about working with homeless patrons. Both give useful tools for difficult situations.

I had planned to attend BLUEcloud Analytics Basics, but the room was full. Instead, I attended the Self Care in the Balance of Work & Life roundtable. It was an interesting session with great handouts.

Unfortunately, the Aspen for Library Staff class was full so instead I attended Circulation Best Practices: Moments at the Service Desk. It was a nice refresher of the ins and outs and complexities of circulation.

The last session I attended was BLUEcloud Analytics Q&A for Public Services. The actual "how to" was over my head, but it was interesting to hear specific details that other libraries are looking to include in their reports.

Being an old-time, I enjoy getting together with library staff from across SWAN to share information and swap stories. My biggest takeaway is if the session you want to attend needs a computer, get to the room as quickly as possible!

Carla D. – Assistant Head of Youth & Teen Services

I learned a few interesting things from the SWAN Expo. I found the Basic Copyright Literacy for Librarians especially interesting. Under current copyright laws, it lasts a person's lifetime plus 70 years. Prior to 1923, copyright was different so now every New Year's Day, more music, film, and books come into the public domain. Librarians also have an easier time when creating media under Fair Use because most of what we create is for educational purposes. Finally, if you can prove that your work is transformative or in other words, presents a new idea or meaning to the work, it likely will fall under fair use.

Mary Kate K. – Youth & Teen Services Librarian

From the SWAN Expo, I got the most from the Keynote speaker. This was an important thing to learn about, especially as an LIC. I know I will keep VIPO (v-validate, i-perceived injustices, p-point of agreement, o-open ended questions) and VLC (v-validate, l-limit, c-collaborate) in my mind when dealing with a difficult patron or situation.

At the Roundtable: Staff development, Library In-service days, & what libraries do for fun, there are 3 types of fun things we could do on an in-service day. To get out of the building & do team building, we could go to Dave & Busters with a corporate package or see who could beat an Escape Room. A great outdoor option would be Iron Oaks in Olympia Fields, that features different teambuilding events like wall climbing and high ropes course. My mom's school would take students to build trust and connect to each other. To have in-house competitive games we could play fun minute to win it games or do a scavenger hunt. During an in-service, I know I need a brain break. They suggested something artsy, so we could do paint by number with stickers or diamond painting fun bookmarks or coasters. They also recommended having tasty food and I think it would be fun to have a fun book T-shirt.

Jolie D. – Youth & Teen Services Assistant

I really enjoyed Swan Expo as we got to expand our horizons by learning more about how each department operates daily. I liked how our first keynote speaker, who is a police officer, talked more about how we should always keep our safety in mind before we act in a difficult situation as well as accurately accessing the situation. Handling situations that are more challenging allows us to solve a problem while also growing in our profession. An example of this could be a patron that is unhappy with one of our policies by starting out explaining why the policy benefits our library as well as the safety of our patrons while keeping a calm manner. It's always beneficial to listen to the patron's argument because this essentially helps us to see their point of view even if we don't necessarily agree with their argument. I attended the Bluecloud Analytics session first because I wanted to learn more about how collection development is done. My key takeaway from Bluecloud was learning how to make different reports that all use data generated by Swan Workflows. I also liked learning more about Bluecloud as we learned how to share and save a report. An example would be sharing a report made by Acorn Public Library about tech processing to our library and we find ours using the dropdown menu. In our second session, I went to learn more about the circulation desk which was led by Susana's sister, Sandra Leyva, manager at Alsip library along with two other circulation managers. We learned more about how to determine if an item is damaged and the right steps to take when receiving damaged items in the book drop. The last session I went to was the roundtable for how to deal with difficult situations. We listened to those that went through a difficult situation such as one lady not arguing with a patron that returned a damaged book in the book drop claiming that the book was probably damaged in the book drop overnight. The book had some water damage and the patron kept insisting that it was the library's fault. The patron explained that she wasn't going to take responsibility for the item and she just explained that it's alright, we will take care of it. I liked how this lady handled this situation because sometimes, it's not worth asking or investigating when the patron just won't be honest.

## Building & Grounds News

The bird netting work was completed earlier this month. It certainly looks impenetrable, but we probably won't know for sure until the birds begin nesting again in the spring. Discussion of the parking lot project is under Agenda Item 1, below. There are a few other small issues that I plan to discuss with the Building & Grounds Committee in October.

## Budget News

Tax disbursements continued to come in at a great pace in August. To date, we have received 99% of the expected disbursements for the year, which is fantastic. We will likely receive the remaining percent in drips as the year concludes. We also received our first substantial interest payment after Old National having converted account to the higher rate. We received over \$5,600 in interest revenue in August, compared to just over \$5,000 for January thru July. This will provide a welcome boost to the budget as long as interest rates remain strong.

## Upcoming Events

- Thursday, September 19<sup>th</sup> – Personnel Committee, 6:00pm
- Thursday, September 19<sup>th</sup> – Regular Board Meeting, 7:00pm
- Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup> – Building & Grounds Committee, 6:00pm
- Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup> – Regular Board Meeting, 7:00pm

## Agenda Items

### Item 1: Parking Lot Repair Project

We moved forward with our parking lot repaving project on an accelerated time frame in the hope of completing the job this fall. That would allow us to avoid another winter of water getting into the cracks and freezing, potentially destabilizing the subsurface and dramatically increasing the cost of this work. We issued our call for bids the week of August 19<sup>th</sup>. We had a non-mandatory pre-bid site walkthrough on Wednesday, September 4<sup>th</sup>. Bids are due and will be opened at 2pm on Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup>. We had inquiries from 19 companies prior to the pre-bid meeting.

I won't have satisfying information on this topic until bids are opened on Tuesday, but we are hoping for some strong bids with the strong interest we have seen from contractors. Dan and the engineers will assist us in evaluating the bids on Tuesday afternoon. Assuming that we have a responsible bid that falls within our budget, I expect to have a recommendation on awarding a contract at Thursday's meeting.

**Recommendation:** I recommend that you approve the contract with the lowest responsible bidder as recommended by our engineers, as long as that bid falls within our budgetary capabilities.

### Item 2: FY2025 Budget

The Budget and Finance Committee met in August to discuss the FY2025 budget and FY2024 levy. My narrative is in this month's meeting packet. The budget doesn't balance because we have

earmarked \$225,000 for the parking lot project to be completed next year, so that the funds are allocated in case we aren't able to move forward this fall. The revenues for that work are in the FY2024 budget, so they don't need to be re-levied in 2025. Other than this contingency, the budget balances and includes a substantial amount for the reserve fund.

**Recommendation:** I recommend that you approve the FY2025 budget as proposed.

### Item 3: FY2024 Levy

As has been our practice the past few years, the levy is derived directly from the budget. Every item on the levy matches up directly with the revenue lines on the budget. If everything holds to form with the extension for the past few years, we can expect close to 100% funding of this levy. The proposed levy includes a 2.5% increase in the Corporate Levy, which the City should be happy about.

**Recommendation:** I recommend that you approve the FY2024 levy as proposed.

### Item 4: Recommendations of the Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee will meet immediately prior to this month's Regular Meeting to consider the submitted evaluation forms and complete the annual evaluation process. If necessary, we have included an executive session in the agenda so that the full board can discuss the specifics of my performance and evaluation over the past year. No final action can be taken while in executive session. It is just for the discussion of relevant private information. Per the Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120/2(e)), once the Board has returns from executive session, "Final action shall be preceded by a public recital of the nature of the matter being considered and other information that will inform the public of the business being conducted."

If no specific discussion is needed and a general approval of the performance review is all that is taking place, this executive session can be skipped.

**Recommendation:** I recommend that you approve any recommendations of the Personnel Committee or as a result of executive session.

### Item 5: Approval of Donated Artwork in Memory of Elenor Hawley

Through Celeste Kappel, the family of Elenor Hawley has reached out to the library to inquire about donating a work of art in her memory. Through Celeste, I have worked with the family to select an item that fits their budget and how they would like her to be remembered. Specifically, they were looking for something that would reflect her love of music and butterflies in the neighborhood of \$200-\$250 to be displayed on the first floor of the library. This is the piece that the family has selected:



The actual dimensions are 46" x 16", which is quite a bit smaller than the above picture but still substantial enough to contribute to the ambience of the space.

We have a number of places on the first floor where this piece could be displayed. I think it would go well in the Reading Room, on the south wall above the little cabinet. The question is whether you feel that the selected work is suitable for display in our building for the next decade or more.

**Recommendation:** I recommend that you approve the selected donation.

### Item 6: Approval of Slate of Officers for 2024-2025 Term

The Nominating Committee made its recommendations for the 2024-2025 term at the August meeting. Now it is time to vote on the slate.

**Recommendation:** I recommend that you approve the slate of officers for the 2024-2025 term as presented.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jesse Blazek  
Library Director