

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Palos Heights Public Library Board of Trustees Meeting
June 18, 2025

Library News

It's been a busy month at the library! Of course, the big events were the beginning of our Summer Reading Programs and our **Summer Reading Kickoff Party**. The Kickoff Party was a huge success! It's hard to get a good estimate of attendance at an event like this where there is no central entrance and people are free to come and go from various parts of the property as they please. I tried to come up with an estimate by looking at security camera footage and our door counter. Both of these are



imperfect methods for various reasons, but my official estimate is that we had 830 people attend that day. The radio-controlled cars and the climbing wall were especially popular, with crowds of people lining up basically from open until close. But really everything that we set up got great usage. The bounce house, crafts, carnival games, and food trucks were all busy for most of the day as were our Summer Reading registration tables. The Friends set up a table to sell books and candy and raffle off a free membership. Lake Katherine had a table to talk about their programming and show off our new nature kits. Palos Heights Police and Fire Departments brought their vehicles for people to see. There were so many moving parts to this event and so many small things that could have gone wrong, so it's a testament to our staff's planning that it all went so incredibly smoothly.

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Beth and I met with Bill Schepel, who is the Life Enrichment Director at **Bethshan**, to discuss getting library cards into their residents' hands. In addition to their main facility in unincorporated Palos Heights, they have two other independent group homes in our unincorporated area. Their residents have varying levels of financial means, but they all have a baseline income to accept financial responsibility for any items that they borrow. Bethshan also provides a significant amount of oversight and assistance, and I believe they view this as a good opportunity for their residents to practice good community engagement and personal responsibility. Beth and I will coordinate with Bill and Bethshan administrators to get them registered in the coming weeks.

As you might have heard, the Illinois House and Senate have both passed the "**Opioid Antagonists Bill**." This would require all public libraries to maintain a supply of naloxone and have staff who are trained to use it. Our library has been fortunate to be relatively unaffected by the opioid crisis so far. I believe this to be a factor of luck more than anything else, as this crisis has affected just about every community in the country without regard for demographic differences. And this is a crisis that is accelerating rather than abating, thanks to the ever-increasing influx of fentanyl into our communities. We have been on borrowed time not having done this training already. So I'm working with the Cook County Department of Public Health to get our staff trained and to procure a supply of naloxone for us to have on hand, should the need present itself someday. I intend to include this training in our August staff in-service day.

We had some **dicey weather** in May, including some high winds and thunderstorms. We were not entirely unscathed. The wind on the evening of May 15th broke one of the trees along the fence line with St. Al's. The top half of that tree came down on our side of the fence shortly before closing that night. Luckily, nobody was parked in those spots. A few days later, a storm caused a power outage that lasted a few hours, which forced our server stack to shut down. When it came back online, one of the servers was down. After a few hours of work, Marcin was able to revive the server, and redundant storage resulted in no loss of data.

New mulch was laid around the property in late May. This is a pretty hefty project for a property this size, but our landscaper completed it in pretty short order. This is on our Capital Needs Assessment as something to be completed every three years.

Our **new phone system** was installed the first week of June with almost no hiccups. After twenty years with our previous phone system, this one feels like a huge upgrade! Each handset has a touchscreen with a highly intuitive user interface. Routing calls is smoother, and things like our daily announcements can be pre-recorded and automated. Voicemails can be automatically routed to our emails, and we can pair Bluetooth devices to each handset if we like. None of this is probably very surprising or different from what you've likely seen in use in office settings elsewhere, but it's new and exciting for us! We're still learning about the capabilities of the system, but the rollout has been very smooth so far.

I can't remember if I've mentioned this before, but I'm excited so I'll mention it again: the **Chicago Tribune** is piloting a program with area libraries to provide online access to all of its daily papers to all of our patrons. The pilot program included a handful of libraries from various consortia. My home library was fortunate to be one of those, so I was able to test-drive the new system. It worked flawlessly on all of the

devices I used, and I'm excited to report that this service is being rolled out to all interested libraries. We have eagerly signed up to begin this service on July 1st at a cost of \$540 for the year. I think this is a great deal!

Budget News

Cook County has announced that the summer property tax bills will be delayed by about a month. Apparently, they still haven't ironed out all of the wrinkles in their new computer system. While this makes me nervous (and I'll be watching the situation like a hawk), we should have plenty of funds in the bank to endure this delay. As long as we start receiving those revenues by November 1, we'll be in good shape. If their one month estimate proves accurate, we should start seeing those funds come in early in September. In the meantime, our General Fund balance remains healthy, and I don't anticipate any significant issues for us financially.

Upcoming Events

- **Wednesday**, June 18th – Personnel Committee Meeting, 6:30pm
- **Wednesday**, June 18th – Regular Board Meeting, 7:00pm
- Friday, July 4th – Independence Day Parade, 12:00pm
- TBD – Budget & Finance Committee Meeting
- Thursday, August 21st – Personnel Committee Meeting, 6:00pm
- Thursday, August 21st – Regular Board Meeting, 7:00pm

Agenda Items

Item 1: Building Envelope Study Results

Our Owner's Representative, Dan Eallonardo, will be on hand to walk us through the findings of Building Technology Consultants. The BTC report is included in this month's packet. I met with Dan and Chris, the BTC lead engineer, last week to review the report. As we had hoped, they did find the point of vulnerability in the building's design that needs to be patched or fixed. As we expected, they have identified three potential courses of action. Dan will be able to discuss these in greater detail at the meeting, but here is my general and incomplete understanding:

Option 1 is a superficial approach. It doesn't address the structural issues at play here, but it would likely seal up the windows for a number of years. Basically, I think this is like doing a thorough re-caulking of the entire area. The structural defects, in terms of surfaces pitched incorrectly and barriers that don't cover what they probably should, are not addressed with this solution. But it is going to be the least expensive option. The estimate is that this could probably be done for under \$25,000 but might be as costly as \$40,000.

The second option begins to address the structural issues. This option involves installing some additional flashing and vapor barriers and protecting that exposed wood that you can see in the photos. The goal would be to preserve and re-use the existing metal cladding while bolstering the materials underneath it. This wouldn't fix the underlying structural issue, but it would likely provide us with a solid barrier that would prevent future leaks. The estimated cost of this work is in the neighborhood of \$100,000.

The third option is the most extensive and entails fully replacing the metal panels with a new system that will properly drain water away from the area. The goal would be to retain the existing look of the building while correcting the structural defects. This option also likely includes adding insulation to the area, which appears to have been intended in the original drawings but was never installed. You can see the lack of insulation in photos 12-14, 24 and 25. Adding insulation here would also probably improve the heating and cooling of the building to some extent. The estimated cost of this work is in the neighborhood of \$150,000.

There is a lot of good news here! First, they found the source of the leak. Second, the source is not related to the windows themselves, which would be much more expensive to repair or replace. Third, the repairs are unlikely to affect the existing aesthetic of the building. Finally, we're talking about repairs that are in the five- and lower six-digits. While it will set back our Special Reserves savings, we can immediately afford to do any of these options.

Because we are likely talking about a project that will cost more than \$25,000, we will probably have to go through the formal bidding process, as we did with the YTS renovation and parking lot repaving. That adds a few steps to our probable timeline. The first step is to engage an engineering firm to fully illustrate the needed repairs and prepare them for bidding. Dan has asked BTC to prepare a proposal to provide these services for us. Their experience conducting the study puts them in the best position to understand precisely what the engineering costs are likely to be and will reduce the time that a new company would need to familiarize themselves with our building, drawings and proposed solutions. I suspect that engaging BTC is going to be our best option.

If we engage BTC this month and get them started on bid documents right away, it's possible that we could have this work completed before the end of this year. Whether or not we need to rush to get this work finished is debatable. On the one hand, things are somewhat caulked up and are currently in better shape than they have been for a while. We're unlikely to see a significant escalation in the existing damage by pushing this project back by a few months or even a year. On the other hand, this problem isn't going away. Kicking the can down the road might not hurt us, but it certainly isn't going to help us. The only reason I can see for waiting any significant period of time would be if we needed or wanted some time to save up additional funds. As things currently stand with our budget, even with a bit of a delay in property tax bills, I estimate that the work of even the most expensive repair option could be completed in this fiscal year without our General Fund balance falling below \$600,000.

Recommendation: This item is a discussion item, so no action is needed.

Item 2: Engineer Engagement

Pending Dan's presentation and getting all of our questions answered, I'm including an action item here in case we feel that we're prepared to move forward with the first step in the remediation phase of this project, which is to engage an engineer to draw up the necessary bid documents for us. Unless you have unanswered questions for which we need a more in-depth explanation or you want to see proposals from other engineering firms, I recommend that you approve engaging BTC to conduct the engineering work for the desired repair option. I believe that BTC is in the best position to conduct this work for us due to their prior experience with this issue and similar work completed at other libraries.

Recommendation: I recommend that you approve the BTC proposal for engineering services.

Respectfully submitted,
Jesse Blazek
Library Director