



APPLETON PUBLIC LIBRARY
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TO: Appleton Public Library Board of Trustees
FROM: Colleen Rortvedt, Library Director
DATE: June 18, 2019
SUBJECT: Library Safety and Security Update

The Appleton Public Library Building and Equipment Committee met on May 29 to discuss library safety and security. At that meeting the committee asked me to provide an update at the board meeting as well as describe any necessary board action that would be taken. I currently have no recommendations for actions for the library board to take.

Discussions about safety and security at the library are not new and all public entities have an obligation to make safety and security a priority. While we are all grappling with the recent horrors and heroism that occurred in our neighborhood last month, our focus has been on the long-term safety and security needs of the library.

The library hasn't embarked on this work alone. We have had enormous support from our Facilities Department, Police Department and the Milwaukee Public Library (MPL) who serves as a Resource Library to the State of Wisconsin. MPL provided us their Security Manager to participate in our security assessment and procedure and training updates.

In brief:

- We have updated procedures, will be developing a mandatory staff training and offering opportunities for staff to become familiar with aspects of the building they may not use often.
- The security guard is covering all operating hours.
- A security assessment of the building was completed with APD, Facilities and the MPL Security Manager. Updates currently being evaluated and prioritized.
- An evaluation of the neighborhood was done last week and we anticipate additional changes including an added camera, signage, removing or trimming trees that have made it difficult to monitor the neighborhood and removal of small structures that tend to encourage loitering.
- Library staff are researching alternative service models including the possibility of an in house or contracted community resource specialist to focus on connecting people facing poverty or experiencing homelessness with critical services, making referrals, serving as a conduit to other community agencies
- Staff are receiving training on compassion resilience

I will continue to provide you with regular updates. If there is any information you would like please let me know.

For more details about the above please read below.

Procedures and Training

Proper procedures and enforcement of policy are possibly the most important things we can do to ensure a safe library. We have updated library policies over the years to be in line with national library standards and our local need will continue to do so.

In the past month we have reviewed and updated our active threat procedure with the help of APD's Threat Assessment Officer and the MPL Security Manager. This procedure will be incorporated into an updated mandatory annual training.

Since a key part of any emergency is staff familiarity with the facility, regular opportunities for staff to have tours of rarely accessed emergency exits, stairways and alternative routes will be provided. Our new staff orientation will be updated to address safety and security procedures as well.

Security Guards

As you may recall, in January of 2018, the APL Board of Trustees approved a pilot to work with a contracted security company due to increased incidents within the library over the past several years. This funding provided a guard afternoons, nights and weekends. That pilot was successful in reducing calls for service to APD. Initially we also experienced a decrease in incidents within the library from 2017 but 2019 has returned to 2017 levels.

Importantly, while all staff are still expected to address issues they encounter, the guards allow staff to focus on their library work and allow an expert in security to address the behavior issues. Many of the issues the guards deal with are de-escalated by their interaction. The guards also take the lead on coordination with medical emergencies. While usually not security related, these issues are very time consuming and tend to disrupt the building, entrance and parking lot.

After it was determined that additional funding would not be available for security in 2019, staff identified a way to continue providing guards in 2019 for the same hours as in 2018 through reducing part time staff hours, the library's materials budget and a one-time savings in our network services contracts.

Following the tragedy outside the library in May, the library director directed the guards to be here during all library operating hours. This will require an additional \$10,000 and staff are still working to identify the source of the funding and will bring that forward in the future as a budget adjustment.

Security Assessment of Building

The current library facility has had security related upgrades over the years including cameras, a door access system, modifications to create doors to staff areas where there were none and other smaller security modifications. However, staff has been careful to do the minimum updates due to the ambiguous status of the library building project.

Regardless of what happens with the mixed-use library project the Appleton Public Library will be in this current facility for several more years. Consequently, city Facilities and library staff are working diligently to prioritize necessary security upgrades and implement different safety and security tools. We will do this with an understanding that we still do not know the future of the library building but must balance the public and staff's safety. I will be able to update you more at future meetings.

Neighborhood

The library neighborhood is a highly visited area with multiple public entities located adjacent to each other. Over recent years our neighbors have disappeared as multiple buildings adjacent to us have been

demolished. The potential for redevelopment in the neighborhood is exciting but in the meantime the library works hard to be good stewards of our neighborhood.

Library property ends at the sidewalk in front of the library. Library staff works closely with our fellow city departments of Valley Transit, Department of Public Works, Facilities Management and Appleton Police Department as well as private stakeholders and Appleton Downtown Inc to address safety needs outside the library's doors. This partnership resulted in the neighborhood's longstanding security guard collaboration.

An evaluation of the neighborhood was done last week and we anticipate additional changes including an added camera, signage, removing or trimming trees that have made it difficult to monitor the neighborhood and removal of small structures that tend to encourage loitering.

Alternative Service Models

A public library serves as an essential component of the civic and educational foundation of a community. For some a library is a place to simply get books, attend programs or access the internet. For others it is a lifeline, serving as a place where people turn for help during life transitions and where people in need of resources come for assistance.

For many years the library has been involved in partnerships and initiatives to respond positively to the changing needs of our community and we continue to work in a proactive way to balance safety and security needs with progressive approaches to serving our entire community.

One way libraries are increasingly responding is by employing or contracting with an agency to provide a social worker or in-house community resources specialist that focuses on connecting people facing poverty or experiencing homelessness with critical services, making referrals, serving as a conduit to other community agencies in areas of physical and mental health, housing and providing training to library staff. This position coordinates with local agencies to increase their presence within the library as well, something APL has been doing with local agencies in recent years. Eau Claire recently became the first library in the state to employ a community resources specialist.

Locally we are evaluating what type of position might be appropriate and feasible based on local needs. The United Way Fox Cities recently hosted a meeting on our behalf with a variety of providers in these areas to discuss this issue and we are evaluating next steps and potential partners. We are still in preliminary discussions on this and any future recommendations will be brought back to the board.

Finally, supporting our staff in new ways will be essential. Library work has evolved over the years as our community's needs have evolved and we are a key piece of our community's social safety net. Earlier this year we began working with the Wisconsin Initiative for Stigma Elimination and Rogers Behavioral Health to be the first library in the state to focus on compassion resilience. This program trains in-house staff as facilitators and peer supporters to learn from their work in groups or one-on-one as staff understand compassion fatigue and develop wellness and resilience strategies.