

Grafton Public Library Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2021

In attendance: Susan Fienberg, George Curran, Andrew Cushing, Gary Whitney, Cindy Kudlik, Elaina Bergamini, Kate Coolley, Gretchen Over

Absent: Sue Smith

Meeting called to order at 1:00pm.

Survey Responses

Susan presented the survey results from the community. With 117 respondents, the sample size was about 10% of the town's population, which is considered a very good number for statistical accuracy. A more complete analysis is attached.

The survey resulted in a good spread of ages, length of residency in Grafton, and users of the library.

There was a discussion about if the data could be broken down into cross sections to provide more insight into how demographic groups answered various questions. (For example, did newer residents wish to see more community programming compared to older residents?)

Some highlights included: 68% of respondents wanted to use the library for books; 66% for local news and information; 53% for adult activities. Fewer respondents were interested in internet access (24%), kids programming (21%), and quiet space for studying or working (20%).

Interview Responses

The committee shared their findings after interviews with various community leaders and related organizations. A more complete summary is attached.

Susan talked with the director of the Mascoma Area Senior Citizens Center:

- need to address social isolation, but not necessarily with crafting events
- need for better access to information about community events and services
- lack of internet and computer literacy for some older residents

Andrew talked with the Mascoma School District superintendent, Amanda Isabelle, the high school librarian, and the Canaan Elementary School principal:

- need for connectivity for students (both virtually and through programs)
- after-school/summer enrichment programs
- quiet spaces for students who lack such space at home
- targeted book clubs for kids, teens, and tweens

Kate interviewed local public libraries:

Canaan

- has seen an increase in online offerings (overdrive and subscription services)

- benefits from a structured volunteer program
- staff and patrons view the library as their town “living room”

Enfield

- library benefited from a recent town-wide strategic plan regarding space needs
- interest in collaborating more with the local libraries

Danbury

- library also shares the struggle with space and poor parking, inadequate facilities
- welcoming staff is a key asset to the town

Cindy interviewed the selectmen and Russell Poitras, chief of police. Russell felt that some Graftonites struggle with poverty, joblessness, and lack of life skills. The library could fill that need by expanding access to employment information, community/government services, or with programming.

Tom M. had no particular aspirations for the library but would advocate for the community’s choice. Jennie J. felt that the library’s main focus should remain on books, and less on community programming or services provided by other organizations in town. Jennie J. felt that the library could expand on its current site. Cindy K. concurred with Jennie J. and thought that the town should focus on needs like a store with a gas station, better town office storage space, and addressing the unsafe police station.

Data, trends, & funding for rural libraries

Susan shared findings from her research on other libraries in rural communities:

- rural libraries (defined as serving communities under 2,500 residents) have median facilities sizes of 2,595 sq. ft. (Grafton is ~640 sq. ft.); have 1.3 full time equivalent (FTE) staff (Grafton has .35 FTE); and are open an average of 26 hours/week (Grafton is open 12).
- Grafton does meet or exceed some national statistics, however. Our hourly pay is comparable (average, \$14/hour) and unlike 60% of rural libraries, we are connected to a broader library system.

The committee discussed the role of a rural library in the community as a hub for community programming, help finding employment, providing homework help or GED programs, or assistance with government services.

Library Mission and Vision

Susan shared examples from other libraries’ mission statements and vision statements. The committee discussed what they liked and didn’t like about these statements, but did not come to an agreement about a final mission statement or vision.

Next meetings were scheduled for July 24, August 28, and September 25, from 10-12.

Meeting adjourned at 3:07 pm.