



# **THE MARGARET E. HEGGAN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN December 2016 to December 2019**

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN**

This three-year strategic plan is based on a series of focus groups that were conducted in the fall of 2016 with representatives of the various patron populations of the Library. This strategic plan has been prepared to serve as a working tool for the board, the administration, and the staff of the Library to strengthen its services to the community in the next three years. Based on the focus groups plus additional discussions with the library board, the library director, and the staff, the plan identifies twenty major goals with some guidelines for achieving each of the goals. How the twenty goals are prioritized and if and how they are implemented will be at the discretion of the board and the administration.

## **MISSION STATEMENT OF THE MARGARET E. HEGGAN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Margaret E. Heggan Free Public Library of the Township of Washington will be the community's primary resource, through print and non-print resources, for knowledge, information, and enjoyment, with emphasis on convenient accessibility and customer-oriented service. The Library will strive to:

- Provide materials, with an emphasis on printed media, which are of most interest to users of all ages; especially preschool and adult age groups who have no other library at their disposal;
- Instill a love of reading and learning, and a familiarity with the Library, in all residents but especially in preschool children from infancy through the kindergarten age;
- Provide prompt and accurate information to individuals, groups, businesses, and government in our community
- Assist elementary and secondary students with information, materials, and services which support their formal education assignments and interests.

## **The Leadership**

There is overwhelming support for the library director and for the board of trustees of the Library. There is an appreciation by the community for the manner in which the library is managed and how responsive the leadership is to initiating change for the betterment of the Library and its patrons. Several patrons expressed an interest in meeting with the library director throughout the year to voice their opinions and to offer suggestions for new initiatives and programs.

## **GOAL 1 - *to create a town meeting program twice a year***

The Library Director will host a town meeting with the community in the early spring and in the fall to allow patrons to express their ideas and concerns in a friendly and open forum.

## **The Staff**

Almost universally, patrons have only positive and complimentary things to say about the library staff. Patrons express appreciation for the friendliness of the staff as well as the staff's customer service. An often expressed comment is that the library staff will always go out of its way to secure a new book or movie for a patron, and that staff always goes beyond expectations in taking care of the needs of patrons.

All members of the library staff, without exception, express contentment with their jobs and express gratitude for the excellent working conditions, benefits, and collegiality with their colleagues. The only issue that was raised during the focus groups was that some senior citizens feel that the staff could, at times, be more sociable and be available to talk to them. However, according to current staff protocols, the staff is not encouraged to engage in casual conversation with patrons.

***GOAL 2 - provide additional customer service training***

The Library will provide more customer service training to the staff that is inclusive of how to tactfully redirect patrons who do not need assistance but wish to engage in long conversations.

***GOAL 3 - revisit the customer service protocols and revise, if appropriate***

The Library will have a formal discussion focused on the present customer service protocols to determine whether new approaches might be appropriate based on patron feedback, and if deemed necessary, the protocols will be revised.

**Circulation Services**

Patrons like the system of on-site checkout and check-in of materials, and patrons view the staff as friendly and accommodating. However, there were several concerns expressed with the online reserve system. One concern is a difficulty with navigating the online reservation system and that it takes too many steps to complete the process. Another concern is that sometimes patrons are told they have not returned materials, when they have and that false overdue notices are generated.

***GOAL 4 - consider a better approach to training patrons to use the catalog***

Since the Library is part of a consortium, and it shares a catalog, the Library does not have too much control over this issue. The Library will look at better methods of showing patrons how to use the catalog and using the online reservation system.

***GOAL 5 - examine and revise the system tracking overdue materials and fines***

The Library will examine the current system of tracking returned materials to see if it needs refinement or replacement to better monitor the return of materials, and if necessary, will consider a change.

**Reference Services**

Patrons feel that the reference librarians and the reference services are exceptional. Patrons praise the librarians for their service and responsiveness and are very grateful for the assistance that is provided by the reference desk, both in-person and over the phone. Words that are used to describe the reference staff include “brilliant”, “amazingly helpful”, and “extremely accommodating”. It was suggested that the library try to reach out to area businesses to a greater extent to encourage use of the library.

***GOAL 6 - consider ways of further outreaching to area businesses***

While the Library has implemented an impressive outreach program to area businesses including offering companies a library card and hosting valuable workshops, there are probably more ways that the Library could collaborate. This goal will include providing outreach and/or meetings with a select group of area small business owners, attorneys, accountants, and healthcare

providers as well as executives from larger companies in the Library's service area to learn how the Library can better serve these business owners.

## **Children's and Youth Services**

The Children's Services staff members receive accolades from parents, grandparents, and the children. The board and all segments of the patron population express how impressed they are with the activities and services provided by this important department of the library. Among the many things for which the families are grateful are the excellent story hours and many interactive programs, the museum passes, the social interactions that library programs afford to caregivers and their children, the fact that the library has given children's and youth services its own separate space, and the warm and passionate approach of the children's and youth services staff.

A number of suggestions were made in the focus groups to expand the services of this area of the library. One request was that the library should enhance its outreach to home schooled children and their parents and provide space and tailored programs for this population during the daytime hours. Another idea was to include more non-book related programs such as jewelry making, cooking, gaming, and more concerts. Because of the recent change to full-day kindergarten, several parents felt that programs for young children should be offered between 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm. At the same time, parents with older children who bring them to the events for younger siblings, feel the library should provide better seating for the 9 to 11 year old children as well as materials to occupy their time while their younger siblings attend the programs in the children's area.

### ***GOAL 7 - enhance outreach to home schooled children and their parents and provide space and tailored programs for this population during the daytime hours***

The Library will learn more about the exact needs of homeschooled children as well as their parents to create a daytime program that tries to meet those needs. This includes connecting with organized homeschool groups.

### ***GOAL 8 - include more non-book related programs such as jewelry making, cooking, gaming, and more concerts for older children in grades 4-6***

The Library has successfully provided excellent non-book related programs to younger children. Efforts will be made to create similar non-book related programs to children in the upper elementary school grades.

### ***GOAL 9 - evaluate late afternoon programming for kindergarten-aged children***

The Library is still evaluating how the change to full-day kindergarten impacts children's programming. Since the change, the Library is offering more afternoon programs, but they are not very well attended. The Library will continue to evaluate how it can better serve this young population at the right time.

### ***GOAL 10 - evaluate seating in the Children's area***

The Library recognizes that seating is definitely an issue and the children's area is definitely geared for younger children. The staff will explore seating options for older siblings and adults visiting the department while younger children are enjoying the programs.

### ***GOAL 11 - design a new approach for outreaching to teens and millenials***

The Library will make an effort to come up with new innovative approaches to reaching out to teens and millenials to increase their use of the library. This initiative includes considering the hiring of a new staff member who will be exclusively focused on creating programs and attractions to these two underserved populations.

### **Services for Retired Seniors**

The senior citizen patrons adore the library. They cite as their reasons the great staff, nice facilities, a complete collection with variety, excellent shared resources, wonderful shared online resources, the book sale nook, the art gallery, a safe building, and the hallway area for cell phone use.

Among the ideas suggested by the retired seniors were having more large print books, offering more morning and afternoon programs for seniors since it is difficult for many of them to come out at night, more special interest titles in the periodicals collection, more copies available of the local daily papers, better communication about programs to seniors, more outreach to senior centers and assisted living communities and bringing library programs to the centers and communities, providing charging stations for electric cars and electric bikes, and having a system for homebound individuals where the library delivers and picks up materials. Seniors also want more classes in using technology and more programs that provide social opportunities.

#### ***GOAL 12 - promote the large print collection to retired seniors***

In 2016, the Library spent \$10,000 on large print materials; previously, it was only a few thousand dollars. Therefore, the large print collection has increased greatly. The Library will use internal and external marketing to make retired seniors more aware of the availability of the expanded large print collection.

#### ***GOAL 13 - explore new programming ideas for retired seniors***

The Library will reach out to retired seniors who use the library on a daily or frequent basis to determine what kinds of new programs the Library can offer. This initiative will also include exploring the best days and times to run any new programs.

#### ***GOAL 14 - encourage patrons to make suggestions for materials they want***

The Library will launch a creative campaign to make all patrons aware that they can suggest new titles for books, digital media, and periodicals, which remains the best way for patrons to have the materials they wish to have in the library.

#### ***GOAL 15 - explore outreach opportunities with area retirement communities***

The Library will explore new opportunities to bring the materials and/or services of the library to neighboring retirement communities and assisted living centers. All legal and logistical aspects will be considered, and partnerships will be sought with the in-house libraries established by these communities.

### **Services for Working Adults**

Working adults praise the Library for its building, being open seven days a week, having a friendly and helpful staff, having a current and complete collection, and having a great movie collection. Their wishes for the future include having more speakers from the community, author talks after 7:00 pm, a home delivery program for older adults, a system that alerts a patron when new books or DVDs in their favorite genre are added to the collection, and a better navigation

signage system over the stacks so that signs designate what a patron will find – biographies, travel books, best sellers, gardening books, etc.

This group also has concerns about the back of the building and says it needs better lighting and repairs to the parking lot. There is also concern that tutors and business owners using the library are creating too much noise and their suggestion is to seclude tutors and those running businesses. Working adults also are very protective of their right to quiet and express concern that others are using the library as their place of business without paying the library for use of the space.

***GOAL 16 - explore how to improve the navigation signage over the stacks so that signs designate what a patron will find – biographies, travel books, best sellers, gardening books, etc.***

The Library will evaluate the current signage system over the stacks and improve the system to provide a much easier experience for patrons using the library.

***GOAL 17 - evaluate how businesses use the library space as well as how this impacts the noise level***

The Library will study how tutors and entrepreneurs use the library space and how this impacts the noise level and the right of other patrons to a quiet space.

**Facilities**

Most patrons and the staff are thrilled with the new library building. However, several observations have been made. These include re-configuring the floor space to accommodate more shelf space for materials, adding wireless and 3-D printers, and adding a more sophisticated public address system and looking at a more sophisticated security system.

***GOAL 18 - evaluate library floor space to maximize its use to contain materials***

The Library will evaluate its current use of shelf space and floor space to determine how the space can be best utilized to provide the easiest navigation and the most complete choice of materials to its patrons.

***GOAL 19 - evaluate the purchase of wireless and 3-D printers***

The Library will explore the purchase of wireless and 3-D printers focusing on the feasibility of how these machines will be used as well as the copyright issues and the security issues of adding these machines to the library.

***GOAL 20 - explore adding a more sophisticated public address system***

The Library will explore replacing its current public address system with more advanced technology for the sake of better communication within the library to patrons using the library and for better security.