Wilbraham Public Library

Strategic Planning Focus Group

August 27, 2019

Dr. Linda Dagradi, Facilitator

Bernard Davidow, Recorder

SUMMARY
WPL FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS
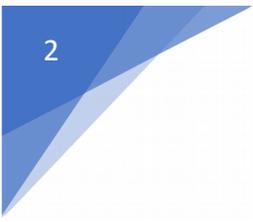
SOAR EXERCISE

STRENGTHS	

• Strong staff
  ○ Welcoming builds community (2)
  ○ Friendly. Helpful Personal service/touch (4)
  ○ Responsive/follow thru (2)
  ○ Good knowledge of community
  ○ Connect to info
	• Space
	  ○ Welcoming space – updated (2)
	  ○ Warm atmosphere (2)
	  ○ Interior layout
	  ○ Grounds
	  ○ Atmosphere conducive to satisfying curiosity

• Practical applications (example: genealogical)	• Facebook & social media (3)
• Teen programs & department (2)	• Child & teens concentration
• Outreach to other libraries	• Convenient hours
• Outreach to community	• CWMARS
• Busy library	• Busy calendar
• Great programs: diverse; successful (i.e. book clubs)	• Computers (access; updated WIFI)
• Large & diverse collections-constantly updating	• Inter library loan (3)
• Good budget and resources	• Open to the public
• Staff Tech Services	• Children's programming (2)
• Tech services offered: website, streaming	• Collections (2)
• Regular patrons	• Programs
• A lot of computers	• Advertisement
• Chromebooks for public use	• Technology
• Patrons love staff	• Familiarity
• Patrons love our library	• Programs to create young readers
• Positive feedback regarding programs & services	• Accessibility
• Variety of resources	• Book clubs
• Program variety	• Library tours for 3rd grades

Strengths Discussion Key Words

Atmosphere	Classes	CWMARS
Accessibility	FB posts	ILL
Familiarity	Follow thru	
Programs	Strong staff	

Book Clubs   Grounds

SOAR EXERCISE

OPPORTUNITIES	
• Digitizing reference materials	• No password to get on computer
• People attending events rub off on WPL staff	• Chargers at tables
• Website	• Nicer outdoor space -furniture
• Global learning - With any kind of expert	• Parking
• Increase info in newspapers	• Communication betw staff & volunteers
• More partnering with schools	• Consistency
• Partnering with senior center	• Awareness by all of communications
• Evaluate what works and what does not work (2)	• Visit schools in higher grades
• Digitization of photos & documents	• Promotion of library
• Small meeting space (3)	• Partner with educators
• Access to WORD software (3)	• Partner with colleges
• Classes- WMA – more regular	• Partner with businesses
• Make summer reading longer-mid August (2)	• Access-open up computer use
• Open house- themed nights	• Learning a new skill
• Outreach to service groups	• Bringing education to PD
• MRHS clubs to help	• Working with G. Trebler at ILT (?)
• Lighting in children's/first floor	• Classes for public
• More Chromebooks	

Opportunities Discussion Key Ideas

Website improvement	Small meeting spaces	Themed Open house nights
Evaluate what works	WORD software on computers	Outreach to service groups/organizations
Evaluate what does not work	Refine computer access	Increased info in newspapers
Bring outside world in with workshops	Classes in computer skills	Human library
Continued digitization	Longer summer reading	Global learning for challenged learners

ASPIRATIONS	
• Connect Brooks Rm events to resources in WPL	• Smaller meeting space (2)
• Digitize more books/docs into files	• Provide a safe, welcoming space
• Update space	• Provide quicker services
• Guard our outward bias (i.e. do not squander good will)	• Provide welcoming space by keeping up with maintenance (2)
• Add to STEAM	• Space limitations: not so much to expand but to shake up what we have

• Student hours in their safe space (2)
    o Firm up teen loft policy re: adults
	• Create a 'human' library
	    • People with skills
	    • Use NHS students

• Separate space for teens	• Increase use of library
• More senior involvement/programs during the day i.e. memoir writing (2)	• Improve interaction with schools (2) • Reintroduce librarians
• PD for k-5 teachers	• Expand cooperation with schools
• Increase awareness of WPL as info clearinghouse for entire town	• Community clearinghouse via website
• Become the center of the community	• Expand cooperation with community groups; schools; colleges (2)
• Bring outside world into WPL using travel experts	• Tours of library for HWRSD educators

Aspirations Discussion Key Ideas

Greater senior involvement	PD for K-5 teachers	Safe Space policy
Need maintenance plan	Connect presentations with WPL resources	Civic engagement resources
Improve interaction with school resources	Increase awareness of the 'FRIENDS of the WPL'	

RESULTS	
• Define how we measure success	• Numbers
• Reports	• Personal gratification (Dept heads; Committee chairs; library director; trustees
• Attendance (2)	• More readers/teens in summer reading
• More people coming in	• Reward kids for reading
• Better patron experience	• # materials circulated/used
• Data driven	• Increase in patron participation
• # of Facebook followers	• Number of users of rooms & tools
• Program Evaluations by staff & patrons	• Social media followers
• Counts and attendance	• Get out of WPL
• Surveys	

Results Discussion Key Ideas

Counts   Surveys

                          Get out of the WPL to greater community

Attendance   Program evaluations

Use counters   Search Engine Optimization

WPL SERVICE RESPONSES

SERVICE RESPONSE OPTIONS	FOCUS GROUP VOTES	RANK
Be an informed citizen	5	2
Build successful enterprises		
Celebrate diversity		
Connect to the online world (current)	4	3
Create young readers (current)	6	1
Discover your roots		
Express creativity	1	5
Get facts fast	1	5
Know your community	4	3
Learn to read & write	2	4
Make Career choices		
Make informed decisions (current)	5	2
Satisfy curiosity (current)	5	2
Stimulate imagination	2	4
Succeed in school	1	5
Understand how to find evaluate, use information (current)	5	2
Visit a comfortable place (current)	4	3
Welcome to the United States		

MISSION STATEMENT

CURRENT

THE WILBRAHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY PROVIDES SERVICES AND PROGRAMS TO EDUCATE, ENTERTAIN AND ENLIGHTEN ITS PATRONS

RANK QUALITY OF STATEMENT

1. Awesome   2. Very good   3. OK   4. Inadequate   5. Very Inadequate

➔ **All 8 votes rated the current mission statement as: 2. VERY GOOD**

MISSION STATEMENT DISCUSSION KEY WORDS/IDEAS

Strives to provide….	Promotes	Engage	Educate	Entertain
Welcome	Current	Inspire	Diverse programs	Opportunities
Sharing	Love	Community	Lifelong learning	Knowledge
Interaction	Come together	Supporter	All ages	Inform
Forge connections	We've got it here	Everyone	Updated	Explore
	Enrich		Enlighten	

If we don't have it, we will find it

Comments

➔ Develop a WPL tag line

➔ Use of word patrons is OK but somewhat stuffy – perhaps community is better

➔ Consider the word opportunities instead of programs and services

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Tuesday, Aug. 27, 5 to 8pm

WPL Brooks Rooms

PARTICIPANTS

Facilitator: Linda Dagradi, library trustee.

Charles Bennett, adult patron (local newspaper columnist)

Bernie Davidow, adult services librarian

Christine Goonan, adult patron (public school science teacher)

Karen Grycel, library trustee

Ron Haislip-Hansberry, adult patron

Rachel Hapgood, teen services librarian

Heidi Kane, children's librarian

Carol Ross, adult patron, library volunteer

Molly Wilson, teen patron, member of Teen Advisory Board

Note: Megan Dubord (community) & Maggie (teen) were invited but unable to attend

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS BY LIBRARY DIRECTOR KAREN DEMERS

Karen welcomed everyone and reviewed how service priorities from recent years have set the library agenda, including but not limited to:

- Early literacy: Added two computers with education software in children's department, expanded Launch Pad offerings, offered special early literacy programming on these digital resources: Tumblebook, Kanopy and Hoopla.

- Lifelong learning: Developed our genealogy and local history resources, tech-help sessions with student from Wilbraham & Monson Academy, workshops in such areas as online publishing and financial management, and online offerings such as the Great Courses.

- Comfortable physical and virtual spaces: Resumed 9am opening and Sunday hours (during the school year), improved lighting inside and outside the building, redesigned website, expanded Facebook and Instagram posts, planning for next year's opening of the Story Walk trail on library grounds (someone later mentioned interior painted).

- Information fluency: Our traditional reference work/guidance, bolstered by the return of the assistant director's position after a seven-year absence.

- Connect to the online world: Expanded our public work-stations, provided Chromebooks for daylong loans. Added wireless printing.

- Making informed decisions: Added Weiss Financial Ratings for guidance on investing and such tasks as buying supplemental Medicare insurance.

Karen left the meeting, saying she wanted to make sure people felt comfortable to speak freely in their assessment of the library.

FOCUS GROUP MINUTES

Bernie Davidow, Recorder

SESSION BEGINS

Linda said the meeting would have three parts:

I.   A SOAR exercise to assess the library. (SOAR = Strength, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results)

II. Review service priorities.

III. Review mission statement.

After attendees introduced themselves, the work session began.

I. SOAR

Each attendee had a worksheet to write down words in each of the SOAR categories. The moderator urged everyone to think outside the box. After attendees wrote some thoughts on their worksheets, we spoke as a group. Here are responses offered in each category. The answers were not ranked or judged.

A. Strengths

- Atmosphere
- Accessibility
- Familiarity with community
- Follow-through
- Strong staff
- C/W MARS and ILL
- Library classes
- Facebook posts
- Teen programs such as Paint, Sip, Fun and book club.

Linda asked if attendees thought the town as a whole was aware of all the library had to offer. And if not, why not? Most thought that, on a scale of 1 to 5, awareness rated 2.5 to 3. One person suggested that library representatives need to get out more to visit the senior

center and other places in town to promote its offerings. There was discussion of the success enjoyed by the children's and teen librarians when they go to the schools to promote the library. Attendees also mentioned the continued importance of going beyond the library to promote the library – getting mentioned in the local media, particularly the Wilbraham-Hampden Times, for example.

B. Opportunities

- Better evaluate what works and what doesn't
- Further develop the digitization of town documents and take advantage of other technological tools
- Need for small-meeting space
- Need for computer classes (not just drop-in sessions) and to vigorously promote them
- Extend summer reading to mid-August rather than end in early August
- Review practice of requiring pass for computer access for non-library-card holders
- Get Word on public computers
- Greater outreach to community service groups
- Offer "how-to" courses that teach life skills
- Offer something along the lines of the Human Library, where experts from among the general population come in to teach acolytes in their area of expertise.

C. Aspirations:
- Create a writing group for seniors in areas that would interest them such as memoir writing – and have it during the day when seniors would be more likely to drive to the library. This would be a fun exercise, an escape for people. Would also combat isolation.
- Help people capture oral histories.
- Develop plan for keeping up with building maintenance such as replacing worn, dirty rugs.
- Have greater interactions/coordination with school instructors.
- Encourage the schools to let K-5 teachers come through here as part of their professional development day.
- Better match our exhibit/display spaces to library programs.

- Go further in promoting our children and ten areas as "safe spaces" during certain hours.

D. Results

How can we identify outcomes of programs and services?

1. After a program, have attendees fill out forms sizing up the program itself and the quality of the program instructor or speaker.

2. Surveys

3. Search engine optimization: Using key words effectively on WPL website

SEO is the process of increasing the quality and quantity of website traffic by increasing the visibility of a website or a web page to users of a web search engine.

II. SERVICE PRIORITIES

Operating off a list of 18 possible service priorities, attendees were asked to choose five and then place a green sticky dot under each of their top five priorities (on a master sheet broken into 18 boxes). The most any one priority got was six. These were the top seven, listed in order from the top down: [*LINDA: Unclear from my notes where 'Make Informed Decisions' ended up. Please Ck sheets]

Six dots

- Young Readers

Five dots

- Understand, find, evaluation information
- Satisfy curiosity
- Be an Informed Citizen

Four dots

- Connect to the Online World
- Visit a Comfortable Place
- Know Your Community

The others all received three dots or fewer.

We talked a bit about the difficulty of removing a service priority to sub another one in.

III. MISSION STATEMENT

Our current mission statement: "The Wilbraham Public Library provides services and programs to educate, entertain, and enlighten its patrons."

Attendees were in general agreement that they liked the brevity of the statement and much of the statement itself.

Linda asked: How is our statement different from other libraries'? What does it say about our library, Wilbraham? If I'm looking to come in from another community, what does this tell me? Where is it on the website?

Attendees were asked to write down words they felt were important for such a statement. Among them: current, forged connections, informed, explore, inspire, community. The word "patron" left a few people cold. One attendee suggested subbing out "patron" for "community." Another thought we could do without the "The" at the very beginning and suggested changing "its" with "our." Still another though "services and programs" was redundant.

Linda asked if the library had a tagline, what would be? She gave the example of a dynamic new college president and the new tagline promoted by the college after he came in: "Be the Change." What might work here? A few suggestions were offered: Come Together, We've Got It Here, Enlighten, Love it Here, Engage.

SUMMATION

Linda ended the meeting by emphasizing the value of strategic planning and the importance of using it as a tool to guide future decisions.

Wilbraham Public Library

Strategic Planning

Focus Group

Tuesday, August 27, 2019

5:00 – 8:00 PM

Facilitator Outline

Worksheets

WPL Strategic Planning – Focus Group   August 27, 2019   5-8 PM

OUTLINE

Welcome & Pizza dinner (20 minutes)

☐ Intro facilitator (Linda Dagradi) – a bit about me and focus group role definition
  - Intro the recorder – Bernie
  - Purpose: To augment reports, SOAR exercises by trustees & staff with community input with the goal of writing a new strategic 3-year plan
  - Process
  - Respect time recognizing there is much to discuss
  - LMD will ask largely open-ended questions for the group to reflect on
  - Goal of equitable conversation with all participating
  - LMD role is to keep discussion on task; speakers try to be focused and concise; LMD reserves the right to interrupt speaker to promote timely responses and topic attention and to allow time for everyone to speak
  - We want everyone to participate – silence is not golden in this exercise
☐ Ground Rules
  - o All opinions are welcome and valid
  - o Disagreement is more than acceptable; disagree with being disagreeable
  - o Show respect for diversity of opinions
  - o Try to stay on topic – not to ramble or interject unrelated issues
  - o Speak openly, one at a time, do not interrupt
  - o Avoid side bar conversations
☐ Questions?
☐ Participant intros: brief statement about who you are; why you are here; what you want to achieve
☐ Non-threatening question: What is your favorite book? If you cannot pick one, pick a genre.

SOAR Exercise (45 minutes)

☐ Intro: Refer to the information sent by Karen in the email; acknowledge that staff and trustees have done this exercise; remind people of the time
☐ Briefly detail the acronym definition: Strengths; Opportunities; Aspirations; Results
☐ Major categories
  - Technology
  - Community/Audiences
  - Collections (physical and digital)
  - Space/facility
  - Programs & services
☐ 10-12 minutes on each SOAR area
☐ Handouts for people to list ideas-give them 2 minutes to list
☐ Discussion: use template to elaborate on example questions with 5 categories
  - STRENGTHS: What is the WPL's greatest strength? What does it excel at?
  - OPPORTUNITIES: What needs/wants are we currently not fulfilling for stakeholders?
  - ASPIRATIONS: What do you want the WPL to achieve/be like in the future?
  - RESULTS: Identify outcomes/measures that demonstrate goal/aspiration progress: What measures tell us if we are on track?
☐ Action: Complete SOAR Quadrant template

SERVICE REPONSES (45 minutes)

- ☐ Refer to handout with 18 options
- ☐ Goal of group: Identify 5 service options
- ☐ Think time -2 minutes-write choices on worksheet
    - ○ QUESTION: In terms of service, what do you think is the WPL's 'prime directive; what 'should' the WPL do?
    - ○ Discussion
- ☐ Action: Use 5 green dots and 'dot' the appropriate pages

THE WILBRAHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY PROVIDES SERVICES AND PROGRAMS TO EDUCATE, ENTERTAIN AND ENLIGHTEN ITS PATRONS

MISSION STATEMENT (45 minutes)

- ☐ Facilitator comments on constructing a mission statement
    - A good mission statement is useful tool for well-run organization. It's the "why" of the WPL
    - It is not a long statement-more like an expanded tag line
    - WPL opportunity to define its goals, ethics, culture, and norms for decision-making.
    - What does the WPL do for its community, patrons, staff?
    - Ask yourself, honestly, whether other libraries could use exactly the same statement.
    - Does it distinguish you from all other libraries?
    - We are not here to wordsmith but to brainstorm
- ☐ DISCUSSION
    - Rank the mission statement on your worksheet
    - Opinions on the current mission statement evaluation i.e. excellent; bland; misleading; good
        - ○ What is right with it?
        - ○ Wrong with it?
        - ○ Length?
    - Brainstorm 'why' WPL
        - ○ Key words - Use Big paper chart & Mission statement template

WRAP UP *(10 minutes)*

- ☐ Thank participants
- ☐ Ask for any closing comments
- ☐ Advise as to the next steps in the planning process
- ☐ Collect worksheets & big paper

SOAR EXERCISE

STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
ASPIRATIONS	**RESULTS**

WPL SERVICE RESPONSES

A. Be an informed citizen	B. Express creativity	C. Satisfy curiosity
D. Build successful enterprises	E. Get facts fast	F. Stimulate imagination
G. Celebrate diversity	H. Know your community	I. Succeed in school
J. Connect to the online world	K. Learn to read & write	L. Understand how to find evaluate, use information
M. Create young readers	N. Make Career choices	O. Visit a comfortable place
P. Discover your roots	Q. Make informed decisions	R. Welcome to the United States

CURRENT WPL SERVICE RESPONSES

1. Create young readers: Early literacy
2. Satisfy curiosity: lifelong learning
3. Visit a comfortable space: physical & virtual spaces
4. Understand how to find, evaluate and use information: Information Fluency
5. Connect to the online world public internet access
6. Making informed decisions: health wealth and other life choices

SELECT 5 RESPONSES

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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KEY WORDS