Long Range Plan 2010

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Long Range Plan 2010

Cook Memorial Library, Tamworth, New Hampshire

Adopted by the Cook Memorial Library Board of Trustees on Monday, November 8, 2010.

Profile of Cook Memorial Library

Cook Memorial Library in Tamworth is one of the four earliest libraries in the state, having been established in 1796 and adopted by the town in 1892. The existing building was built and dedicated in 1895. Today, it is home to a collection of more than 28,000 materials and boasts a circulation that is nearly double the national average for its population. It has been enlarged several times, and there have been two additions to the building. In 2005, a major renovation project was completed which included a new community meeting room, now host to more than 100 meetings a year. A recipient of funding from the NH Land & Community Investment Program (LCHIP), the building is also listed on the National Historic Register.

CML delivers a wide variety of services to its rural community. Some of its notable strengths include a strong, motivated Board of Trustees; a stable, knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff; a modern and functional facility; a well-managed collection of materials; a dynamic roster of programs for all ages; a modern network of computers for staff and the public; 24/7 wireless access inside and outside the building; a growing online presence; and an extensive local history collections. A special relationship has been built with the Friends of Cook Memorial Library, whose enthusiastic support and innovative ideas were recognized this year by the NH Library Trustees Association. The Friends received the first-ever Susan Palmatier Award for Outstanding Support by a "Friends of the Library Group" in 2010, presented by the NHLTA.

CML meets all – and surpasses many – of the qualitative standards recommended by the New Hampshire State Library for libraries of similar size, providing an enhanced level of services. Library policies are up-to-date, and reviewed in their entirety every three years; the Disaster Plan is reviewed and updated yearly.

Since completion of the 2009 renovation/addition, the conditions of the building and its related systems are regularly monitored. Warranties are still in effect on all structural work completed as part of the building project. Routine building maintenance and repair is funded through the library's annual operating budget.

As a building on the Historic Register and recipient of NH LCHIP (Land & Community Heritage Investment Program) funding, yearly inspections are conducted on all safety equipment, electrical and heating systems, fire and security alarms, etc. The results of these inspections are reported to the CML Board and to the state through the Historic Resources Annual Monitoring Report. The Town of Tamworth’s recent energy audit of town buildings highlighted the library’s energy efficiency and identified additional future options.

In recent years, the library has built a Capital Reserve Fund through an annual warrant article request ($2,000). The board is now working with Tamworth’s Capital Improvement Program Committee to identify priority needs for the future. Despite all efforts to maintain the building, there will no doubt come a time in the next 5-10 years that will likely require a significant expenditure to repair, replace, improve or otherwise maintain the library.
**Additional library information:**

- Despite a relatively stable population in Tamworth, library circulation and attendance have doubled, and computer use has quintupled since the 2001 renovation.

- The 2009 circulation per capita is 11.93 – nearly twice the national average (6.0). Annual circulation of library materials for the past five years:
  - 25,987 in 2005
  - 29,023 in 2006
  - 29,912 in 2007
  - 31,535 in 2008
  - 31,600 in 2009


- Physical visits in 2009: 17,874.


- Eight public access computers, plus open wireless since 2005. In 2009, 4,382 computer sessions were logged, and an additional 1,124 on wireless inside the library. In 2009, 930 patrons checked out materials, but in addition, many others came in to use the computers, or to attend programs and meetings. There were 103 programs with 2,033 people attending, and 131 meetings with 1,091 in attendance.

- Open 33 hours on four days each week: 10am-8pm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10am-5pm on Friday, and 10am-4pm on Saturday. (Chocorua Library is open on the alternate days.)

- Six part-time staff, who have all been employed at the library for four to 14 years, work a total of 88 hours per week (2.2 FTEs,) with an additional weekly average of 8 volunteer hours.

- 0% are professional librarians (MLS), although four have Masters’ degrees in other disciplines, and all have undergraduate degrees.
2010 Planning Process

- **Excellence must be defined locally -- it results when library services match community needs, interests and priorities.**

- **Excellence is possible for both small and large libraries -- it rests more on commitment than on unlimited resources.**

- **Excellence is a moving target -- even when achieved, excellence must be continually maintained.**

  - *The New Planning for Results, Sandra Nelson for the Public Library Association*

Tamworth is changing, and CML needs to continue to grow and change with it. To help determine and plan for the future needs of library users, and to engage non-users, the library’s Board of Trustees convened a long-range planning committee in Dec. 2009.

The last plan was developed more than eight years ago, and it is time to undertake the planning process once again to ensure continued effective use of resources in meeting community need. The long-range planning committee is under the direction of the Board of Trustees and led by Board Chair Sharon Malenfant. The committee is composed of at least 3 Trustees, 3 Members of the Public, 2 Friends of the Library, 2 Library Staff (including Director), and a Selectmen’s Representative. Together, they were invited to evaluate the library's current strengths and identify possible future opportunities.

The committee used standard public library planning process as the framework for developing the plan, including *The New Planning for Results by Sandra Nelson, for the Public Library Association* and *Strategic Planning Manual by the Center for Public Skills Training*. This process created a collaborative effort with significant input from trustees, staff and community members. The emphasis was on ensuring community input into the development of the plan, creating a document that the Board of Trustees are accountable for, and Library Director/Staff implement as part of the annual operations of the library over the next 3-5 years.

The committee met four times in 2010 and at each meeting worked on the components of the planning process:

Jan. 21, 2010 – Process and mission review; Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) exercise.

March 4, 2010 – Most important SWOT items; community survey draft review.

April 29, 2010 – Survey results summary and review.

May 20, 2010 – Recommendations of broad goals based on SWOT and survey results.

The goals and recommended strategies were circulated to the committee for their review and additional input, after which the full plan was presented to the Board of Trustees for discussion and approval.
SWOT ANALYSIS (Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats)

As we began the planning process, the committee’s first exercise identified internal strengths and weaknesses of the library. These are things over which the organization has direct control, such as its facility, technology, collections, staffing, programs and services, community image and financial stability.

Additionally, the group looked at opportunities and threats – external changes at the national, state and local level that may have significant impact on CML over the next 3 to 5 years. These might include the effects of significant demographic, lifestyle, economic, technological and philanthropic trends on the organization.

In all, the committee identified numerous items as they worked through each category. Ultimately, the group was asked to identify the most important ones in each section. Following is its consensus:

Strengths:
- Competent friendly staff
- Location at center of village
- Available technology

Weaknesses:
- Lack of outreach to non-users
- Taxpayer support can be fickle - budget/funding vulnerability
- Building maintenance costs

Opportunities:
- Establish an endowment fund for operating expenses
- Encourage planned giving
- Outreach - Increase public knowledge about library
- Develop outside areas for sitting and other uses

Threats:
- Public funding vulnerability
- Staff turnover
- Keeping pace with technology
- Rising maintenance costs
- Relevancy for younger people

At the annual library staff retreat, a similar exercise was done, asking that they identify areas of importance to them in carrying out their jobs:

- Outreach to the community - PR
- Technology
- Young Adult Programs
- Library as “Community Center”
- Volunteers
- Collection development
Long range planning survey and summary

A community survey was created to solicit input from all Tamworth residents about library services. The anonymous survey was distributed at the March 2010 Town Meeting, and made available at the library and local post offices. It was also available online and could be accessed from the home page of the library’s website.

In all, there were 130 respondents to the CML Long Range Planning Survey. This represents 5% of the town’s population or 14% of the library’s known users in 2009. Of those who responded, 83% are regular users of the library with 60% saying they use the library at least once a week. 96% of the respondents identified themselves as full or part time Tamworth residents.

Among those who identified themselves as non-users, 35% used other libraries and 30% said they didn’t have time to use library services. Other responses included conflicts with the timing of library programs and to offer a diverse range of social and political themes in the collections.

Many respondents said they had great difficulty identifying only three major strengths of the library, but an overwhelming 88% said the library staff was first of the three, followed by 62% choosing the location at the center of the village. The second tier of strengths was fairly well distributed at quality of the collections (39%), the facility (29%), no fees or fines (25%), and technology (24%). Some committee members expressed surprise that having no fines ranked as highly as it did (as a strength).

Survey respondents indicated that their library usage was greatest for books (82%), DVDs/movies (74%), and new books (67%). A second tier of usage included recreational reading (48%), meetings (45%), art exhibits (41%), general information/research (40%), adult programs (40%), magazines & newspapers (35%), and audios (35%). Comments identified the use of inter-library loans (ILL).

The library staff was most highly rated in friendliness (96% excellent), courtesy (95% excellent) and helpfulness (92% excellent). In the areas of assistance via email and assistance via the library website, half of the respondents indicated these were not applicable. One respondent asked if the staff could be identified in some way to differentiate them from patrons.

Library services with the highest excellent ratings were circulation desk service (93%), building maintenance/cleanliness (83%), interlibrary loan services (79%), general atmosphere/noise level (61%), public meeting space (61%), and art exhibits (60%). The quality of collections was rated as excellent by 44% and good by 43%. The highest percentage of services identified as not applicable included children’s reference and information (51%), children’s programs and events (37%), local history and genealogy research (34%), library website (27%), and availability of public computers (21%). 67% of the respondents said computer/internet training was not applicable, but nearly half of the comments indicated that respondents did not know this type of training was available.

The areas rated most as needing some or a lot of improvement were outdoor seating, hours of operation, landscaping around the building, parking, and noise level. Areas cited most often as excellent/okay included staff attitude, staffing, ability to find what you’re looking for, programming, and ease of access to the building. Multiple comments in this section addressed the subject of more open hours, noise levels, collection shelving (too high, too low, a layout map) and improvement of the outdoor settings.

Respondents identified the top areas for the library to focus its future resources on as recruitment/retention of qualified staff (58%), keeping technology up-to-date (49%), and opening more hours (43%). A second tier of priorities included building an endowment fund (32%), recruitment and retention of volunteers (30%), and increasing public knowledge about the library (23%). Several comments in this section identified increasing/updating collections as an important priority that was missing from the list. Other comments addressed the desire for more open hours and the noise level.
CONCLUSION

After compiling all of the information from the survey as well as the SWOT exercises, the Long Range Planning Committee revisited the library’s existing Mission Statement, and suggested some wording changes.

They also developed seven broad goals and recommended strategies based on all of the collected materials. The resulting plan was submitted to CML’s Board of Trustees for review and adoption as the library’s current Long Range Plan. It is being implemented by the Library Director and staff, with updates to the board.

Timelines and progress on the active strategies will be evaluated at least once a year by the Board of Trustees. The actions will be deemed successful and completed, approved to continue with or without changes, or determined to not be feasible at the time. A record of these outcomes will be maintained as part of the 2010 Long-Range Plan and can serve as an integral part of future planning processes.

Sharon Malenfant, Chair
Board of Trustees

A note from the Chair: A huge “thank you” to all who participated in some way in this planning process. It truly was a collaborative effort and the resulting plan will help set a progressive direction for the library in the years to come.
MISSION STATEMENT

Cook Memorial Library provides educational, cultural, recreational and information resources through the work of its dedicated and knowledgeable staff. The library offers opportunities for learning, leisure reading, local history and genealogy preservation, study and research. It is accessible to all as a welcoming and comfortable center of community activity.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL I: CML will undertake outreach efforts to expand community awareness of the library and its many services.

Strategies:

• Increase the frequency and subject matter of publicity about the library, its activities, programs and successes.

• Offer a range of programming that appeals to diverse populations.

• Evaluate ways to reach non-users and to solicit input from summer users.

• Partner with other libraries and organizations for collaborative projects.

• Maintain the library's availability as a community meeting place.

GOAL II: CML will be maintained in a way that preserves its historical significance while offering a modern, secure and accessible facility.

Strategies:

• Evaluate ways to increase energy efficiency and implement where feasible.

• Maintain the historic portions of the building to the standards set by its participation in NH's L-CHIP program and as a building on the National Historic Register.

• Evaluate options for development of outdoor areas.

• Determine additional signage needs throughout the building.

• Annually review functionality of all building systems, including security.

• Evaluate use of downstairs meeting space and whether there are any unmet needs for hosting activities in that location.
GOAL III: CML will adopt and use current computer technologies for the benefit of its patrons and staff.

Strategies:

• Conduct an annual review of staff and patron computer usage and identify unmet or additional needs for technology.

• Maintain a strong presence for CML in new and online media that enhances access to the library, its collection and activities.

• Provide staff training that ensures their ability to assist patrons with computer technology and utilize it in their work.

• Evaluate seating challenges in CML as patterns of computer usage change.

GOAL IV: CML will develop and maintain its collections for the benefit of its patrons and local interests, as well as aspiring to meet current public library standards set by the American Library Association.

Strategies:

• Determine need for new and/or additional signage to direct patrons to special collections.

• Use changing displays to feature aspects of the collections. Create tie-ins with current events, seasonal displays, “Staff Picks” and other methods to highlight different parts of the collections.

• Maximize use of clock room space to alleviate crowding in Adult Non-Fiction.

• Participate in the maintenance of town history and genealogy collections, including oral interviews. Create programming that exposes these materials to a wider community audience.

• Ensure patron privacy by conducting regular reviews of privacy-related policies and practices.

GOAL V: CML will recruit and retain the most qualified staff and volunteers by providing a supportive and engaging work environment.

Strategies:

• Include support for continuing education and training for the library director and staff in the annual budget.

• Actively seek volunteers who are a good fit with the library’s needs, and recognize their efforts.

• Make an annual comparison of compensation and benefits for similar library staffs and seek to fund a mid-range for CML staff.
• Encourage community support and continued funding for current staff as number one asset of the library.

• Enhance work environment through staff meetings, annual reviews, frequent recognition, and continuing development.

• Provide for the continuation of quality staffing through succession planning for the library director position.

GOAL VI: CML will offer programming and services that are responsive to the needs of the community.

• Evaluate the cost of opening the library for additional hours in response to community request.

• Promote and support the use of the Inter-Library Loan program.

• Identify ways to increase and enhance the use of the library by young adults.

• Maintain and promote children’s programming that encourages their use of the library and its services.

• Initiate and seek out opportunities to collaborate with other libraries, schools and organizations in ways that support CML’s mission and purpose.

GOAL VII: CML will operate in an efficient and cost-effective manner within an annual budget approved by the town and supplemented by additional philanthropic support.

• Develop an annual budget that meets the needs of the library and staff and is accountable to the town taxpayers.

• Prepare and review annually a Capital Improvement Program report for the town which identifies anticipated uses of CML’s capital reserve fund.

• Support and recognize the Friends of Cook Memorial Library for their continued enthusiasm and financial contributions to CML.

• Encourage and publicize philanthropy towards the library through memorial gifts and bequests.

• Pursue opportunities for additional revenue through grant funding.

• Evaluate the feasibility of an endowment fund specifically designated for defraying future operating costs.