

BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY
REPORT OF THE CITY LIBRARIAN
May 20, 2020

Governor Lamont and Mayor Ganim announced at the beginning of May that government offices, parks, and selected business will reopen starting May 20. There are still guidelines and restrictions that must be followed, such as continued social distancing, maintaining health and hygiene protocols such as washing hands and “stay home, stay safe”, wearing masks when around others, and reducing total capacity in office buildings to 50%.

As a department of the city of Bridgeport, and as a member of the library community, I have drafted a five stage plan for reopening the library that is included for discussion and approval by the library board. This plan, in whole or part, will be shared with the Chief Administrator’s Office. While everyone recognizes that the COVID19 pandemic is one of a changing nature, I am confident that our reopening plan is flexible enough to accommodate necessary changes and adjustments as the city moves towards normalcy.

All staff must be tested for COVID19 before entering any government buildings, including the library. Temperature logs will maintain daily temperatures of all staff upon reporting to work and leaving for the day. Library staff are spending their days meeting via the videoconferencing platform Zoom to draft procedures that all library staff will follow in the coming days when we re-enter our library buildings. Virtually all library functions have been affected by COVID19, and the pandemic has brought out much concern from everyone, but dedication to the core values of library service have served to sustain BPL’s library during the past several weeks. Our reopening plan keeps those core values in mind while we and other libraries across the state slowly reopen. We will continue our online programming and have started receiving shipments of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) from our library vendors and the city’s vendors and are close to having what we need on hand to reopen. I have reached out to Scott Appleby for assistance in finding the Items we are having difficulty procuring, such as disposable gowns. We will need disposable gowns as part of our reopening plans to handle returned items.

I have received one quote for the moving service that will move books, shelving and furniture around as the carpet on the second floor is replaced. (The city has advised us to obtain three bids.) I have an appointment next week with a second vendor and am awaiting a third vendor to respond.

While I have not included staff reports this month due to the many demands on my time right now, our senior staff is has been very productive, meeting virtually to work on Summer Reading planning – COVID19 has forced us to modify our plans for programming, policy review, meeting with their staff, and offering training opportunities in their area of specialization and on how libraries can deal with COVID19. I am proud to say that senior staff is keeping up the good work of the library during these difficult times.

The security service selection committee has made a recommendation for a new security service that was recently bid, and we are prepared to discuss our selection and the need for security services, and how necessary this expense is, especially in the wake of the current climate of things.

The Newfield Construction is nearing completion and I have been advised by City Construction Director Nick Masciangelo that it is in the best interests of the library to meet with Ashlar to discuss the change orders still outstanding.

As a staffing plan by me has been greatly anticipated from this board, the COVID19 reality we currently face has prompted me to change course on a staffing plan. I believe that the COVID19 situation needs to be closely monitored as we consider adding staff at the present. The prospect of an increasing budget may not always be a given, and it is financially prudent for us to conserve our financial resources. Having said that, I do believe that there is one position that is essential for the library to add as it moves forward, and that is a library computer specialist. The Windows 10 Professional environment involves many more software updates, not all of which are ideal for our existing networked system, to manage and it is not realistic for us to rely solely on our outsourced IT assistance from Bibliomation because they serve several libraries in the consortium and are overwhelmed themselves in this new Windows 10 Pro environment. I believe hiring a library computer specialist is also necessary as we get ready to open our new tech center. In the coming weeks I will offer a more definite plan to the board as the COVID19 situation moves towards the certainty of restoring library services to near normal levels. We have a Maintainer I position, Custodian I, Accounting Clerk I, Library Assistant I (one full and one part-time), and one Page that has been approved for hire and these positions will be added as the budget allows. These positions were approved by the board as part of the plan to staff the library when the New Newfield Branch opens.

To end my report with good news, we identified an excellent candidate to serve as Librarian I for the East Side, but she eventually turned down the position for personal reasons. Since the second floor carpet project will ultimately result in moving HC to the second floor and with that more public services, I have brought on Meg Rinn, part-time librarian of the History Center as our new Librarian I. Ms. Rinn is qualified for the reference position and will also continue to contribute to the HC. Librarian Kristin Graff has been assigned to the East Side Branch to work with Luis Rodriguez and continues to make a great contribution there.

Elaine Braithwaite
City Librarian