

Library Director's Report

June 2024

HVAC Issues

As reported in May, there have been many problems with the older HVAC units, especially the larger one (RMZ-1), which is essentially 2 separate units, or "stages," in a single casing. It serves a much larger area of the library than the other 3 units. These problems and repairs have been taking up a lot of our time (Heather, Kim and myself).

Last month we discussed sending a letter to our prior maintenance contractor requesting reimbursement of some of the funds for the failed repairs done on RMZ-1 last summer. However, we cannot get an independent engineer to agree to give us a statement without coming in to the Library to learn about the history of the problems and to observe what is happening now. That would be expensive and may not yield definitive proof that the current problems are the result of poor workmanship.

That said, two of the techs who have been repairing the older units have stated to us that the problems are a result of needed repairs and testing not having been done. They said a lot of the leaks we have are from rusted out seals on the units, which appear to be the original seals. All of the leaks were identified to be in areas with rust. A good maintenance contractor would have seen the rusty components and replaced them in order to prevent leaks. They also would have known there were still leaks if they'd properly pressure tested the units (the current leaks are not new according to the technicians). These were also not small leaks, as the one stage on RMZ-1 had lost all of its refrigerant. According to the techs, it can take years for a unit with a small leak to lose that much refrigerant. They also discovered that a part called a solenoid was installed upside down in one of the stages, causing it to not run! In other words, only one side of the unit was operating after we'd paid thousands of dollars for repairs last year.

In any case, we may not be able to ask the previous contractor for a refund due to not being able to get a written statement of these issues.

On June 24th Mazza will be meeting with a rep from our fire alarm company, FSC, to determine how best to ensure that all 4 of the current units are all connected to our fire alarm system. At the last FSC inspection, only one of the 4 units shut down when the alarm was set off. It was one of the older units. They said it's possible the newer units are set to sense heat, but we don't want to be in a situation where the units are still blowing oxygen into the building until it gets hot enough for them to sense there's a fire. They will come up with a plan of action after the meeting on the 24th.

Finally, on June 12th I met with a couple of Mazza reps and a rep (Rob Warholic) from a company called Essential Constructs. The company works with contractors who have been pre-approved for public bidding, meaning that public agencies do not have to put their projects out to bid if they hire one of these pre-approved companies. From what I understand, at both the federal and state levels, a company can have its costs verified as competitive in the regions they serve, allowing public agencies to contract with them without having to go out to bid. I will forward the information sent to me by Rob that explains how all of this works. Essential Constructs would provide oversight of the project (in addition to anyone we might want to hire as a clerk of the works), including checking to ensure change orders aren't being used to drive up costs.

Mazza is quite insistent that our two old units are on the verge of complete failure and are encouraging us to move quickly on the replacements, especially as there is a long lead time for getting them (22 weeks or so). The bidding process will further eat into that time, as we won't be able to order the units until we decide on the contractor who'll install them. I think going out to bid is generally the right thing to do to ensure the best pricing. In this case, it is a little concerning to award the installation to a different company and then have Mazza service the units going forward. That seems to be fraught with the potential for problems. There are a number of libraries in NYS who have used Essential Constructs for major building projects,

including the Chemung and Broome County systems. According to Rob, they received NYS Construction Aid to help fund these projects. DLD requires competitive bidding as a part of receiving this aid, but as I noted, these companies have already gone through a bidding process and are therefore preapproved. I can call the library systems to find out how this has worked out for them and report back to the Board.

May Gifts/Grants/Donations [Action Item]

Per our Policy on Acceptance of Gifts, Grants and Bequests to the Library, the Board must formally accept the following: in May, we received \$5,500 from the Friends of the Library (\$4,000 for the annual programming gift and \$1,500 for the annual Summer Reading Program gift); \$4,481 – the first of two installments for the Frances Bean O’Connell Endowment; \$626.39 from the Paul and Betty Hanson Fund (\$328.95) and the Paul and Mary Janowicz Memorial Fund (\$297.44)—these annual unrestricted funds are administered by the CRCF; \$50 memorial donation for Daniel La Voie; \$37 memorial donation for Shannon Debus; 55 cents in anonymous donations.

Frances Bean O’Connell Endowment

As noted above, in May we received the first of two installments towards the annual Frances Bean O’Connell Endowment grant. Earlier this year, Kevin O’Connell moved another \$150,000 into the fund bringing it to a total of \$300,000. However, this was done late in the fiscal year and so the proceeds were less than expected (\$4,481). We received a call last week from the Erie Community Foundation letting us know that Mr. O’Connell moved \$6,000 out of another fund, and a check in that amount will be coming to the Library any day now. Kevin reached out to me on June 17th to make sure we were notified of this. He wanted “to make sure the Library receives at least \$10,000 until the entire endowment of \$300,000 is in full force.” We are so grateful for this gift to the Library, which allows us to offer amazing arts and crafts programs to patrons of all ages.

Manley Grant

Chad Taylor, Larry Sorokes and I worked together last month to put together a Manley grant application which was submitted on June 3rd. The grant request is for \$7,833.94 to purchase items for our emerging Makerspace. This includes sewing machines, a laser engraver, portable storage cabinets, and five laptop computers. The application referenced the tie-in with our popular lower technology arts and crafts programs, and that this request seeks to build higher level tech skills for those who already enjoy our programs. It also seeks to encourage people to learn the art of sewing and quilting, which are high-interest in our region and for which we have received numerous requests for program offerings over the years. The request also includes providing educational opportunities for learning more sophisticated software skills such as CAD, which can be helpful for jobseekers.

Bullet Aid/Grants in Aid

In May, CCLS Director Jan Dekoff announced that Assemblymen Andy Goodell and Joe Giglio released Grants in Aid funds (formerly known as Bullet Aid) to CCLS for distribution to member libraries to help pay for special projects. CCLS received \$40,000 for Chautauqua county libraries and \$30,000 for Cattaraugus county libraries. OPL put in a request for funds to replace a large number of older chairs throughout the Library, including at the public computers, scanning station, tutoring/ADA computers, microfilm readers, the conference room, and at the Information Desk. Our request is for 42 chairs totaling \$8,978. We realize there may not be enough funds to cover the entire request, so we will prioritize the chairs in most need of replacement with whatever funds we will hopefully receive. Thank you to Kim for doing the research on the most suitable chairs for each area.

Friends of the Library

At their June meeting, the Friends discussed the annual Book Endowment gift to the Library. Each year, they look at how their investments and fundraisers are performing to determine if they can give more than the required \$7,000 from the endowment. Since I have been at OPL, they have always given between \$10,000-\$12,000. This year, they feel they can give \$12,000, which will be given to the Library in September. The Book Endowment gift goes towards the purchase of circulating materials, including books, e-books, audio and e-audio books, and DVDs.

The Friends also approved a request for \$179 from Children's and Family Services Coordinator Kathy O'Malley to purchase a splash tower, which is a low-tech version of a dunk tank. When a person hits the target with a ball, instead of the person in the chair falling into a tank of water, they have a one-gallon bucket of water dumped on them. She plans to use this at outdoor summer programs, and already set it up for the Summer Reading Kickoff Carnival this past Saturday.

As always we are very thankful for the Friends' generosity to the Library.

News from the Library



As mentioned above, Kathy set up the splash tower as part of the Summer Reading Kickoff Party on June 15th. Les Baker, one of our building attendants, volunteered (or perhaps was volun-told) to be the "dunkee" and spent his time getting soaked at the event. We appreciate him being such a good sport! The event, which included a magic show by the Jeffers, was attended by 275 people!