

Library Director's Report

September 2024

HVAC Unit Replacements

At the August Board meeting, we met with Rob Warholc of Essential Constructs (EC), who explained how public bidding works through the cooperative and the process for becoming a TIPS member. He also explained expenses related to working with a vendor of our choice through EC. He said the fees added on to the cost of the vendor's quote are about 15 percent and include insurance and other fees, including project management.

The following day, I signed us up to become a TIPS member, but being troubled by EC's additional costs of more than \$50,000, I decided to contact TIPS to find out if there are other similar companies/vendors in NYS that we could work through that might offer different terms. I was eventually put in touch with a vendor called the Scarlette Group. They are familiar with EC and said that EC has gone in a different direction with the process than most vendors, in terms of being directly involved in agencies' projects (i.e. providing project management oversight). It sounds like the majority of these vendors are simply engaged in directing contractors to projects, conducting the bidding process, and guaranteeing that costs are regionally competitive. Scarlette charges the vendors 2-3 percent of the project cost which contractors typically pass on to the agency hiring them. I informed Mazza of the Scarlette Group, and they are now able to work through them. Therefore, the project total went from approximately \$405,000 through EC to \$375,830 working through the Scarlette Group (that includes the 2-3 percent costs being passed on to us by Mazza). I will contact Curt Wallace Engineering to see if he will provide clerk-of-the-works services to us again. In 2020, he provided these services for approximately \$5,000. While the savings are not astronomical, an on site project manager is unnecessary for a project of this scope which will not take more than a couple of weeks to complete at most, and where the actual removal and replacement of the units takes 1-2 days. The rest of the work typically involves building walk-throughs, thermostat replacements, and other tasks tying the new units into the existing footprint which they are designed to work with.

I have attached the new Mazza quote which is approximately \$6,000 more than the quote we received from them in February. Oddly, it is \$20,000 more than the quote they gave to EC in August. I asked Tom Ferrentino, Vice President of the Scarlette Group, about these price fluctuations. He responded as follows: "We will have a third-party company verify the pricing once you agree that you want to move forward. If they find the pricing is not within the parameters of what is considered fair market value, they will alert us, and the project will not move forward unless Mazza adjusts their pricing. If the pricing is found to be at or below fair market value they will provide a breakdown showing you what the pricing could have been at and what you saved. TIPS is the only cooperative company that mandates this for all their vendors for their members. I have confidence that this process protects you."

Scott Bova plans to visit the Library with his HVAC engineer later this month (9/26), and they will confer with Mazza to be sure the proposed units will work with the proposed expansion and renovations. Most likely the addition will require a 5th unit to be installed, but it's possible the new RMZ control unit will be sufficient to heat and cool the expanded area. Once Bova agrees to the units proposed by Mazza, we can move forward with approving Mazza to purchase the units which have a lead time of approximately 22 weeks. As a reminder, we were awarded \$253,469 in NYS Construction Aid for this project, based on a quote in the amount of \$337,959 in 2021.

NYS Construction Aid

As reported in an email to the Board last month, CCLS has over \$250,000 remaining in Construction Aid after receiving this year's round of applications from member libraries. Initially, OPL decided to sit this year's round out, as we are concerned that projects that won't be

funded for another year or two might be irrelevant by the time we go out to bond for the building expansion. However, I spoke with the architect after hearing about the unallocated funds, and he came back with a proposal to expand the current teen room as a standalone project that would be a part of the upcoming renovations.

I submitted the proposal to System Director Jan Dekoff, along with a quote in the amount of \$317,000, which includes our matching funds. Jan did say that a few other libraries also applied for some of the leftover funds, but they were smaller projects; therefore, I'm not sure how much is left for us to request. She said she will let me know as soon as she knows.

Manley Grant

We received notification in August that the Library's application for a Manley grant to purchase equipment for our emerging makerspace was funded in the amount of \$5,000! While our request was for just over \$7,800, it is not unusual for Manley to approve partial funding. The award letter stated "requests for funding...far exceed the amount that is available for distribution. The average amount approved...this year was less than \$10,000.00 per charity." We are certainly pleased by this award, and we may approach the Friends to see if they will provide the remaining \$2,800 to purchase all of the items in our request. I sent a thank you letter that included an invitation to Lynn Carleton, who oversees the Manley grant awards at Key Private Bank, to visit the Library if she is ever in the Olean area.

Annual NYS Property Tax Cap Filing

On September 3rd, I filed our annual tax cap form with the NYS Comptroller's Office. With PILOTS and Retirement System exclusions, and a levy growth factor of 1.02 percent, our total allowable tax levy for 2025 was \$1,127,623. We asked for \$1,124,663. Therefore, in 2025 our carryover amount for the 2026 budget vote will be approximately \$2,960; although, at this time the state has not factored in the Retirement System exclusion, which could reduce that amount. When we develop the 2026 budget for the May vote, I will check the tax cap website to see if the exclusions were entered and if that amount changed.

Building Insurance

Our building insurance policy with Utica recently renewed. Scott Brook came in to discuss it with me, and as part of that discussion, he asked if the amount we have the building covered for (i.e. to replace the building in the event of a total loss) was adequate. Our current building limit is set by Utica and is only for \$4,357,927. Our coinsurance requirement is to be covered for 80 percent of the building replacement cost. I told him I didn't think that was an accurate reflection of what it would cost to rebuild if such an event ever came to pass. He suggested I check with the architect to get a more realistic number for a building of our size. According to Scott Bova, to rebuild a 19,500 SF building, we would be looking at somewhere between \$10M-12M. Brook said that, depending on how much we wanted as the replacement cost, our policy would increase anywhere from \$1,875 for \$8M in coverage to \$3,909 for \$12M (\$2,670 for \$9.6M). He thinks the amount set by Utica is due to them viewing the building as a renovated supermarket.

Brook also advised that we might be able to drop our Crime Policy, which was purchased long ago to cover potential theft by an employee of the annual tax levy check. Reed agreed the coverage is probably unnecessary; however, Brook then informed me that when Lance purchased it, he said it was based on some rule requiring us to have the tax check insured. I have never heard of this, so I put a question into CCLS asking if they can find out if such a law exists. I do not think the school district would have implemented that rule, as they stand to lose nothing in the event one of our staff members stole the tax check. If we are able to drop that policy, it will save us \$1,075 annually at the current rate.

Third Lane Strategies Agreement Renewal [Action Item] (see attached)

Larry Sorokes' agreement with the Library to perform consulting services for our building project through his company Third Lane Strategies has expired and needs to be renewed. The new agreement has one new provision, which is highlighted in the attached agreement, that the Library will pay a monthly retainer rate of \$750. This is based on 10 hours of work per month. Additional hours will be billed separately and must first be approved by the Director. Larry previously billed us monthly for approximately the same amount, so this is intended to simplify the process.

July and August 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 July, we received \$1,000 from Merrill and Muriel Frable to purchase adult fiction titles and periodicals; \$50 from Carolyn and Randall Samuelson for the children's department; \$30 general donation from Jim Mahar; \$64.40 memorial donation for Shannon Debus; \$66.55 in anonymous donations. In August, we received a \$5,000 grant from the Manley Charitable Trust; \$100 memorial donation for Sandra Macfarland, \$100 memorial for Molly Wagner, \$100 memorial for MaryLou Muir, and \$14.85 memorial for Barry K. Miller; \$17.80 in anonymous donations.

Personnel Updates [Action Items]

The Board has to formally approve the following two appointments: Allison Braun was hired as a part-time library assistant on September 4th and Maddix Deschler-Gilfert was hired as a part-time library page on September 9th.

Employee Handbook Update [Action Item] (see attached)

A minor change is needed in the Employee Handbook. On page 5, it states, "The two-week pay period ends on a Wednesday for hourly employees and Friday for salaried employees." That may have been true at some point in the past, but now the pay period ends on Saturday for all staff. The Board should approve this change to the Handbook.

2025 Holiday Schedule [Action Item]

The 2025 holiday schedule is attached for the board's review and approval. No changes have been proposed to the schedule.

CCLS and WNYLRC Annual Meetings

The CCLS Annual Meeting will take place on Wednesday, October 9th from 3PM-@ 8PM. The first part of the meeting, 3-5 PM, will include workshops for staff and trustees. The evening portion of the meeting will run from 5:30-@ 8PM, consisting of a cash bar, the annual business meeting, dinner, and the keynote address, which will be given by AnnaLee Dragon, Executive Director of the New York Library Association. If any trustees wish to attend, please let me know as soon as possible. I must rsvp by September 27th.

WNYLRC's 58th Annual Meeting will take place on Tuesday, October 22nd, from 10AM-3:30PM at the National Comedy Center in Jamestown. The meeting will include the annual Business Meeting, announcements of this year's WNYLRC awards recipients (this includes our own Kathy O'Malley!), time to walk through the Center, and lunch. The guest speaker will be a representative from the National Comedy Center Archives. If any trustees are interested in attending, I can give you the registration information which must be done on the WNYLRC website. They are offering 50 percent off the registration fee for first time attendees.

Friends of the Library

As reported in an earlier email to the Board, the Friends of the Library nominated Coordinator of Children's and Family Services, Kathy O'Malley, for WNYLRC's 2024 Library All Star Award. WNYLRC notified the Friends that they selected her as the recipient! The award

was created to honor individuals from a WNYLRC member library who work towards enhancing the experiences of patrons and/or library operations, and providing excellent engagement and outreach within and outside of their library and neighboring communities. In the letter sent to the Friends, WNYLRC stated “Her long history and dedication to the Olean Public Library, including rising the ranks and experiencing different areas of the library throughout her career, was noted as well as the dynamic programming she created for the children in the library.” Kathy will receive her award at the WNYLRC Annual Meeting, as noted in the previous section. She will be in attendance to receive her award. Kathy is very humble but I believe she really appreciates the recognition of her hard work and dedication to the Library and the community’s children and families.

The Annual Read Between the Wines event on September 6th was a big success. Approximately 100 people attended and seemed to really enjoy themselves. I noticed more people than usual stayed until the very end. The event brought in \$3,643 from tickets sales, the basket raffle, the 50/50 raffle, and buttons sold as part of the celebration of the founding of the Olean Friends of the Library in 1981. Retired Library Director Maureen Curry was invited to speak as part of the celebration, as she and then-Library Board President Alfred Eade, worked to create the Friends group during a time of austere funding cuts to the Library. I wrote an article for the Olean Times Herald in August that discussed the history of the Friends and how much they have helped the Library over the years. It’s no exaggeration to say that they have given hundreds of thousands of dollars in support to the Library since they first organized.

At the September meeting, the Friends presented the Library with the annual Book Endowment gift. They are required to give no less than \$7,000 from the Endowment annually; however, for as long as I have been at OPL, they have always given more than that. This year’s gift was \$12,000! Every year, the Board sends a thank you note to the Friends for this gift and for all they do to support the Library throughout the year.

FeBREWary has been tentatively scheduled for Friday, February 28th.

News from the Library

On behalf of all of the staff, I wish to sincerely thank the Board for the wonderful luncheon provided on Staff Development Day. Everyone really enjoyed the salad bar, and the choices allowed everyone to have something regardless of dietary restrictions. The staff truly appreciates it. Thank you also to trustees who were able to take time away from their busy schedules to spend some time visiting with and getting to know the staff. The day itself went very well. There were important trainings, staff asked a lot of good questions, and we held a number of meetings to plan and problem solve. It is nice to have the opportunity to hold a full-day training of this kind every year, and the staff seem to enjoy it and get a lot from it.