

Pawlet Public Library Strategic Plan 2019-2023

DRAFT 4/02/2019

PLANNING SUMMARY

In August 2018, the Pawlet Public Library Board of Trustees hired a consultant to lead the organization in a strategic planning process that engaged the library's primary service community, the Town of Pawlet, which includes the villages of Pawlet and West Pawlet. The goal was to produce a strategic plan for the next four years that resonates with the local community and serves as a dynamic, living document to guide the Library's decisions about programming, funding, staffing, facility needs and other organizational considerations.

Erica Freudenberger, Outreach and Engagement Consultant for the Southern Adirondack Library System, introduced an engaged planning model to create a plan that is rooted in the needs and aspirations of the community, while leveraging resources and developing relationships through partnerships and collaboration. She led the work in four phases.

Phase 1 (August-September 2018), *Orientation and Training:*

The Board designated a Strategic Planning Committee comprised of two trustees, the library director, and three community members. The committee included trustees Kathryn Lawrence and Diane Mach, library director Mary Lou Willits, and community members Tom Atkins, Jacki Becker, and Nancy Bryant. During two retreats with the consultant, planning committee members established a timeline, roles and expectations, and received training in conducting information gathering exercises with groups and individuals.

Phase 2 (October 2018-February 2019), *Gathering Public Knowledge:*

The Strategic Planning Committee completed information gathering exercises with 13 community groups and seven individual community members. The individuals represented Pawlet Food Cupboard volunteers, farmers, retirees who moved to Pawlet, and long-time residents. The groups interviewed included:

- Bone Builders
- Home School Parents
- Mettawee Community Church
- Mettawee Community School
- Rupert United Methodist Church
- Pawlet Community Church
- Pawlet Library Strategic Planning Committee & Board Members
- Pawlet Library Volunteers
- Pawlet Volunteer Fire Department
- Pawlett Historical Society

- Town of Pawlet Planning Commission
- Town of Pawlet Select Board
- St. Frances Cabrini Church
- Individuals representing Pawlet Food Cupboard, farmers, retirees who moved to community

During each group exercise, two Strategic Planning Committee members asked three questions:

1. What are your aspirations for your community?
2. What challenges do you face in reaching these aspirations?
3. What changes are needed in your community to reach your aspirations?

One committee member conducted the exercise, while the other recorded notes on poster paper that were later transcribed to a community input template.

Individuals were asked three questions:

1. What kind of community do you want to live in?
2. Why is that important to you?
3. How is that different from how you see things now?

A committee member took notes during the interview that were later transcribed to the community input template.

Phase 3 (March-April 2019), *Assemble Data:*

The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed the community input template, analyzed the data looking for repetition of themes, and from these determined three service priorities for the library. Upon approval of the service priorities by the Board at its March 12 meeting, a report of the information gathered (along with the library’s approved service priorities) was shared with the community at a public gathering on April 28. The information report and the community input template were made available in print and on the library’s website. In the final step in this phase, the library director and the consultant drafted the strategic plan that includes goals, objectives and activities over a four-year period.

Phase 4 (April-May 2019), *Plan Completion:*

The Strategic Planning Committee presented the draft plan to the Board at its April 2 meeting. After hearing comments from the Board and from the community, the library director and consultant finalized the strategic plan, which was presented to the Board at the May 7 Board meeting and approved. The approved strategic plan was publicized and shared in print and on the library’s website in May.

Phase 5 (Years 1-4), *Implementation and Evaluation:*

At the end of each year, progress towards goals will be reviewed, activities revised or refined, and a new Annual Work Plan will be created by the library director and Board. At the end of the fourth year (May 2023), the Library Board Chair will appoint a committee to review the goals and the implementation of this plan, resulting in a recommendation to the Board either for continued implementation of the plan or the creation of a new strategic plan.

HISTORY OF ORGANIZATION & DEMOGRAPHICS

The Pawlet Public Library has been in continuous operation since 1903. It was housed in a small room in the Pawlet Town Office building until 2002 when the library was moved to the historic former grammar school building, which was renovated for this purpose. Since then the library has expanded, making full use of the building's 2,800 square feet of space. It now boasts over 10,000 items in its collection (books, audio books, DVDs) for adults and children and participates in inter-library loan. It also provides wireless high-speed internet access and online services to download additional eBooks and audiobooks.

As a municipal library, the Pawlet Public Library benefits from the Town of Pawlet, which owns and maintains the building and pays the salaries for its two part-time staff members. The library board, volunteers and staff raise \$25,000 each year to provide the operating income for the library collection and for public programming. In its 2018 Annual Report to Vermont State Libraries, the library documented 4,800 visits, and a total circulation of 4,560 items. The number of public programs for adults and children totaled 160.

The Town of Pawlet, according to [*American FactFinder ACS Demographic & Housing Estimates, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*](#), has 1,350 residents. Of those:

- 20% are younger than 15
- 31% are between 15 & 45
- 75% are older than 18, with 55% between the ages of 18-64
- 49% are 45 or older
- 20% are 65 or older

The population is 95% white, with a median household income of \$46,417. 15.3% of our friends and neighbors live below the poverty level. The community values education: 35% of people 25 years or older in the Town of Pawlet have a bachelor's degree or higher; 25% have some college or an associate degree; 31% have graduated from high school or have earned an equivalent degree; and 9% have not graduated from high school.

Given the age demographics of the community and the value placed on education, it will be important that the library offers educational programs, collections and services for all age groups. With a total of 51% of the population 45 years and younger, the continuation of programs for children and young families is evident. In considering the median household income and the percentage of residents living below the poverty level, it will be important to support programs that are offered free of charge or with

minimal fees. For the same reason, the library will continue to offer access to the collection free of charge.

VISION STATEMENT

The Pawlet Public Library is an essential player in sustaining and celebrating a vibrant, revitalized and resilient community.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Pawlet Public Library's mission is to provide a leadership role in unifying the community through shared resources and meaningful experiences for all generations.

VALUES STATEMENT

The Pawlet Public Library commits to the following values to support the intellectual and creative life of its residents:

- **Community:** We are a public forum and community meeting space enhancing the quality of residents' lives by encouraging open communication on a wide range of issues.
- **Welcoming:** We provide a safe, reliable, friendly place for people to connect and explore.
- **Unifying:** We foster and model a passion for lifelong learning, democracy, and community.
- **Supportive:** We celebrate the talents and creativity of our community by providing space, resources, and time to showcase their expertise.
- **Growth:** We are a learning organization that pursues excellence through thoughtful risk taking and is willing to tackle tough problems.
- **Roots:** We celebrate, honor, and preserve our history while looking to the future.
- **Inclusive and Accepting:** We welcome and serve everyone with respect, dignity, and courtesy while celebrating and embracing our differences.
- **Encouraging:** We provide materials and space to inspire curiosity, exploration, innovation and enriched perspectives.
- **Engaging:** We play an active role in the life of the community by providing resources for people to be active participants in society.
- **Cooperative:** We organize, participate, and communicate in a positive, productive manner with other organizations to identify collaborative solutions to community-wide challenges.
- **Collaborative:** We cultivate relationships with and leverage the expertise of local organizations and businesses to participate in the growth and development of our community.
- The library adheres to the American Library Association Library Bill of Rights and Core Values.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- I. Provide a place for people to gather for social activities and community discussions.
- II. Offer programs and activities that bring people together and bridge community divisions.
- III. Facilitate Town and community organizations in working together and sharing information and resources with each other and the community.

GOALS

Priority I: Provide a place for people to gather for social activities and community discussions.

Goal One: Increase the number of community groups that use the library facility for meetings, classes, community discussions and social gatherings.

Project Leader: Board of Trustees

Objective: To become a hub for community gatherings.

Measurement/Evaluation: An increase in the number of community groups that use the library spaces for their activities.

Action Steps and Timetable for Achieving Goals

1. Year 1: Determine a solution for securing library property when community groups use the library outside open hours.
2. Year 1: Determine a solution that limits access of community groups to agreed upon times/dates when the library is closed (unlocking/locking and for security alarm disabling/setting).
3. Year 2: Determine a solution for handicapped accessibility of the library main floor during the winter months and a second meeting space year-round.
4. Year 2: Review and update the existing User Agreement and Acceptance of Responsibility form, including fee structure.
5. Year 3: Actively promote the use of library spaces by community groups through print and digital media and word of mouth.
6. Year 4: Measure success by comparing the number of community groups that used the library spaces for their activities in Year 1 compared to Year 4.

Priority II. Offer programs and activities that bring people together and bridge community divisions.

Goal One: Produce an annual programming schedule that brings the community together.

Project Leader: Library Director

Objective: To bridge the divides in the community and foster unity among diverse groups.

Measurement/Evaluation: The frequency of programs, the number of community members who participate.

Action Steps and Timetable for Achieving Goals

1. Years 1-2: Create a series of intergenerational potluck programs that foster understanding of diverse groups (farmers, newcomers, natives, young families)
2. Years 1-2: Create a series of Vermont Life Skill-Sharing programs that welcomes newcomers (for example: canning, fishing, heating with wood).
3. Years 1-2: Offer two performances (for example: Washington County Band, Square Dance Band) that entertain all generations.
4. Years 1-2: Continue weekly Play Group for young families with children birth through K, including annual Halloween Parade, and social time with members of Bone Builders.
5. Years 1-2: Continue Summer Reading Program for elementary school children grades 1-6.
6. Years 1-2: Offer classes for parents with volunteer literacy coach, and offer literacy coaching for young children.
7. Years 1-2: Continue to offer two adult reading groups, Tea Read and Classics.
8. Year 3: Evaluate Years 1-2 programming by the frequency of programs and the number of community members who participated.
9. Years 3-4: Responding to evaluation of programming, create fresh programs that foster community unity.

Priority III: Facilitate Town and community organizations in working together and sharing information and resources with each other and the community.

Goal One: Provide leadership for Town and community organizations to work together.

Project Leader: (Year 1) Library Director; (Year 2-4) Library Community Coordinator

Objective: To increase organizations' effectiveness, to share resources, to inform the community about events and initiatives, and to attract more people to public service.

Measurement/Evaluation: The number of completed or active collaborative initiatives that serve the aspirations of the community.

Action Steps and Timetable for Achieving Goals:

1. Year 1: Compile an email list of heads of Town and community organizations to simplify communication between groups.

2. Year 1: Host a potluck gathering in April to publicly share information gathered during the strategic planning process and showcase the library's three service priorities.
3. Year 1: Complete a written report of information gathered during the strategic planning process and disseminate the report to all groups that participated.
4. Year 1: Create a library webpage with the library's strategic plan that references raw data that was collected.
5. Year 1: Identify a volunteer to assume the role as library community coordinator until such time funding becomes available to hire a part-time staff person to serve as the library's community coordinator.
6. Year 1: Volunteer library community coordinator schedules regular monthly coffee meetings of organization leaders at the library to share activities and projects.
7. Year 1: Volunteer library community coordinator promotes the Town of Pawlet monthly e-news to organization leaders and encourages them to contribute news, sign up their members via e-mail addresses, or print hard copies for their members who do not use computers.
8. Year 1: Library director applies for temporary grant funding to hire a part-time library community coordinator to facilitate Town and community organizations in working together and sharing information and resources with each other and the community.
9. Year 2: Library hires library community coordinator.
10. Year 2: Library community coordinator compiles a current reference document of Rutland County service organizations, a summary of what they do, and contact information to share with Town and community groups.
11. Year 2: Library community coordinator works with other organizations to create a town-wide asset map in which community members identify their own skills and willingness to be involved.
12. Year 2: Library community coordinator attends and facilitates all monthly coffee meetings of organization leaders.
13. Year 2: Library community coordinator identifies and cultivates potential additional leaders to become involved in public service.
14. Year 3-4: Library community coordinator evaluates activities during Year 1-2, consults with participating organizations, and establishes plan for Year 3-4.

Goal Two: The library provides Town and community organizations with reference resources for expertise in economic development, transportation improvements, access to natural areas, and affordable housing, and offers the neutral space of the library as a place to convene for community discussions.

Project Leader: Library Community Coordinator

Objective: To encourage and empower additional leaders to participate in solutions for town improvements and to drive initiatives to completion.

Measurement/Evaluation: The number of new leaders involved in public service.

Action Steps and Timetable for Achieving Goals:

1. Year 2: Library community coordinator compiles a current reference document of regional, county and state agencies/organizations with expertise, a summary of what they do, and contact information to share with Town and community groups.
2. Year 2: Library community coordinator attends all monthly coffee meetings of organization leaders to facilitate collaborations and resource sharing.
3. Year 2: Library community coordinator identifies and cultivates potential additional leaders to participate in solutions for town improvements.
4. Year 2: Library community coordinator develops a volunteer recruitment and training program for the library.
5. Year 3: Library community coordinator supports new leaders in driving community initiatives to completion.
6. Year 4: Activities are evaluated by the number of new leaders involved in public service.

RESOURCES NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE OUTCOMES

Facility

1. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, every person in the community needs to have year-round access to library services on the main floor of the library building.
2. To provide adequate space for increased community use outside library hours, the library needs a meeting room that is handicapped accessible year-round and includes a handicapped accessible bathroom.
3. To secure library property while parts of the building are being used by community groups when the library is closed, the second accessible space needs its own entry and security system.
4. To restrict access to community groups for agreed upon dates/times in the second accessible space, a new security zone needs to be installed.
5. In order to accommodate library programs expected to exceed 65 people, the library will need agreements with other organizations to use their spaces.

Staffing

1. To meet the goals of Priority III: Facilitate Town and community organizations in working together and sharing information and resources with each other and the community, the library will need one additional part-time staff person to serve as community coordinator.
2. To continue the Book Sale, which raises over half of the library's operating budget, additional volunteers will be needed, especially those who can lift and move boxes of books.

3. In the event of attrition of current volunteer staff in the library (circulation desk, database manager, playgroup educator, literacy coach, heavy lifter), additional volunteers will need to be recruited and trained.
4. The library director completes the Vermont State Libraries Certification Program.

Funding

1. To support new programming, there will need to be an increase in the programming budget from \$1500 to \$2500 per year.
2. To support the new position of part-time library community coordinator, there will need to be an increase in revenue to cover an annual salary of about \$12,000 (16 hours per week x 52 weeks x \$14 per hour=\$11,648).
3. Facility improvements will need the approval of the Town, and funding of the improvements will require the financial support of the Town.
4. Friends of the Library organization should be created to raise funds for the library and provide a vehicle for some grant opportunities. Volunteer board members for the new organization must be identified in order to apply to the Internal Revenue Service for 501 (c) (3) non-profit status.

Governance

1. The Library Board would benefit from succession planning for new board members, including officers, to forward the Strategic Plan to completion and to develop a new plan in 2024.
2. For organizational stability, Board members avail themselves of board development training and resources offered in person and online by the Vermont Department of Libraries and establish orientation for new board members.
3. To comply with best library practices, the Board completes the full roster of recommended policies and annually reviews existing policies.
4. In the establishment of a Friends of the Library organization, a memorandum of understanding between the Friends organization and the Library Board must be approved by the Board.