November 16, 2021

Dear Members of the Rensselaerville Library Board of Trustees:

On 24 June 2021, Board President Linda Styer convened a group of Board Members and volunteers from the hamlets of Medusa, Preston Hollow, Potter Hollow, Rensselaerville, and Library Staff to develop a Strategic Plan for the Rensselaerville Library. This group formed the Strategic Planning Team (SPT). Over the course of eleven meetings it developed a Strategic Plan that looks to the future. Gordon A. Enk (Medusa) served as the Facilitator.

The Strategic Plan (SP) contains three Strategic Initiatives. The SPT reviewed the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis prepared earlier and designed the Strategic Initiatives to address what we determined to be the most important Strength, Weakness and Opportunity. Our decisions were made using Consensus Decision Making.

The SPT recommends that the Board view this as the initial step in an ongoing process for the Library based on a three year time horizon. The Strategic Plan should be reviewed quarterly, updated every six months, and then extended for an additional year each June. To ensure momentum it may be advantageous to have the Strategic Plan as a regular item on the Board's monthly agenda.

This SP incorporates the principle of “That which gets measured gets done”. The SP metrics are important for successfully addressing the future of the Rensselaerville Library. Through implementation of this Strategic Plan, we foresee an increasingly vibrant institution embracing the entire Town of Rensselaerville, the Helderbergs, and the surrounding School Districts.

Concurrent to executing the strategic plan, the Board and Library Director commit to work together to create, update, and implement codified written policies and procedures for all aspects of Library services and operations. Fulfillment of this commitment will include a review and revision of the Library’s by-laws and the development of manuals and planning documents including but not exclusive to a Board manual and calendar, Director’s manual and Library calendar, personnel management plan, employee handbook, emergency operations manual, finance manual, building and grounds maintenance manual and property inventory, and policy manual. These manuals will include the policies and procedures necessary to guide current and future Board trustees, library directors, and staff in the governance and operation of the Library.

We ask the Board to review the SP, ask serious questions and then approve its implementation with a strong sense of commitment to the future of the Library as one of our community’s greatest assets.

Sincerely,

Board Members: Linda Styer, Jerry Finin, Joe Frisino, Annemarie Martinez, Robert Pondiscio

Community Representatives: Justine Criswell (Potter Hollow), Maryanne Overbaugh (Medusa)

Library Staff: Heidemarie Carle

Community Advisor: Linda Mormile (Preston Hollow)



**Rensselaerville Library**

**Strategic** **Plan**

**2021-2024**

Rensselaerville Library

1459 County Route 351

PO Box 188

Rensselaerville, NY 12147

518.797.3949

Fax 518.797.5211

www.RensselaervilleLibrary.org

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**I. Mission Statement**

The Rensselaerville Library strives to build on our rich tradition as a learning center to foster lifelong learning, personal growth, inclusiveness, and strong connections across our town - Cooksburg, Medusa, Potter Hollow, Preston Hollow, and Rensselaerville, and associated school districts - Greenville School District and Middleburgh School District.  To achieve this vision, we provide diverse library collections and programs to enrich the quality of life across our community.

**II. Library Description**

The Rensselaerville Library is the heart of our community, providing intellectual and social resources that enhance and enrich the lives of children and adults alike. Besides providing traditional library services, the Library offers workshops, lectures, events, and other activities that keep alive the spirit of community and community involvement.

**III. Library History**

The Rensselaerville Library was first established in 1798 and was the first Library in Albany County. It contained about 200 books which were kept in different parts of town, wherever space could be found, and had 186 original patrons. The original Library was discontinued in 1832. The present library was organized in 1896 as a “Reading Room” in the former boot shop of William Felter, a row house that still exists today. Francis Conkling Huyck, Sr. purchased and renovated the building in 1906, adding the distinctive Tudor façade which was designed by the Felters’ son-in-law, Jacob Becker. In 1921 the Library was chartered as an Association Library by the State of New York Department of Education and charged with serving the entire Town of Rensselaerville and its five hamlets.

In 1995, the Library more than doubled its space by acquiring the adjacent property from the estate of the late Vivian Anderson Borthwick who, at the age of 15, and still a high school student, was the youngest public librarian in New York State history. The new building was named the Ann Ballinger Annex based on a substantial donation by the family to purchase the former Borthwick residence in memory of Mrs. Ballinger.

The original Library and Annex have undergone extensive renovations from 2002 to the present. Renovations have included a new circulation desk, computer room, a children’s area, improved lighting and access to the backyard. Work has also been done to make the building more accessible and energy efficient.

Today, the Library has a collection with over 16,000 items and more than 800 card carrying members. The Library’s collection includes a wide variety of physical and digital books and periodicals, reference materials, audio and visual media, downloadable resources, and access to online databases. As a member of the Upper Hudson Library System, Library patrons have access to millions more items through interlibrary loan. The Library provides several public access computers, a copy/fax machine, and 24/7 Wi-Fi access that reaches beyond the Library’s walls, providing a valued resource to a community where many have limited or no broadband access. The collection also includes resources for the blind and hearing-impaired, museum passes and even fishing poles. The Library includes the Sarah Prout Children’s Library, named to honor the librarian who served from 1939 to 1971.

**IV. Introduction to the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan**

In 2017, the Rensselaerville Library adopted its first long-term strategic plan. That four-year plan focused on improving services to the community, protecting and preserving the historic building in which the Library is housed, and building a sustainable future in which the Library continues to serve the community for years to come. Having achieved many of the goals outlined in that plan, the 2021-2024 plan continues and extends these primary areas of focus in new and exciting ways.

In 2020, the Library's Board of Trustees and staff began a long-range planning process. Our goal was to create a plan that was forward-looking, addressed library operations, and community needs. We sought to identify and review the community's needs for library services, examine the extent to which the Library's current programs and services--as well as its facility and infrastructure--supported fulfillment of these needs, and identify areas of improvement and potential new services.

**V. Methodology**

The Library's strategic planning process had three primary goals:

1. To ensure that the plan addresses the needs and wishes of the community;

2. To create a plan that is sufficiently forward-looking to anticipate short, medium, and long-term trends that might impact the Library's ability to achieve its mission; and

3. To articulate realistically achievable goals and objectives, against which the success of the plan will be measured.

A long-term plan can only be as effective as the information and data upon which it is based. In developing the Library's 2021-2024 Strategic plan, the Strategic Planning Team relied on information and data collected from the following sources:

1. A community survey

2. An analysis of the Library's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

3. Strategic planning committee members

Community Survey

To ensure that the plan reflected the needs and wishes of the community, we utilized a short anonymous survey that included a few open-ended questions to gather the broadest possible range of responses. The survey also collected data on demographics, library usage, perceived strengths, and unmetneeds, from both library patrons and others within the community who do not have access to library services.

A link to this survey was included in the 2020 Appeal letter that was distributed in November 2020 and was also included in several electronic Library Community Newsletters distributed in November and December 2020. Survey results were collected and aggregated, then shared with the Board.

SWOT Analysis

During January 2021, the Trustees and Library Director conducted an analysis of the Library's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning self-evaluation tool used to determine and define internal factors (Strengths and Weaknesses) and external factors (Opportunities and Threats) that may positively and negatively impact an organization's ability to fulfill its mission.

Between January and March 2021, the information and data obtained from the survey and SWOT analysis were reviewed, analyzed, and discussed by the Board, then used to formulate a strategic plan that would address the needs expressed by the community and help build a strong foundation to enable the Library to continue to meet those needs into the foreseeable future and beyond.

Facilitated Strategic Planning Committee

In June 2021 a strategic planning committee was formed to advance the development of strategic goals and objectives. The committee consisted of Library Trustees as well as members of the community.

* Board Members: Linda Styer, Jerry Finin, Joe Frisino, Annemarie Martinez, Robert Pondiscio
* Community Representatives: Justine Criswell (Potter Hollow), Maryanne Overbaugh (Medusa)
* Library Staff: Heidemarie Carle
* Community Advisor: Linda Mormile (Preston Hollow)

The work of the committee was facilitated by long-time Rensselaerville resident Gordon Enk. Over the course of eleven meetings the Strategic Planning Team drafted the strategic plan which was submitted to the full board for review

The following plan is the result of this year-long process. Throughout the document ‘Library’ will refer to the Rensselaerville Library.

**Strategic Initiative #1**

**The Library will improve and enhance library services and programs for all residents of the Town of Rensselaerville.**

**Objective #1: Solicit feedback about the Library and its services from residents of Cooksburg, Potter Hollow, Preston Hollow, and Medusa.**

Action Step #1: Hold town hall type meetings/discussions in at least two of the four hamlets to:

A) Discuss barriers to use of the Library by residents of each hamlet and how to overcome them.

B) Identify services residents of each hamlet would like the Library to initiate.

C) Develop a work plan to address and implement any actionable items that emerge from these discussions.

*Tentative Completion Date: April 1, 2022. (Responsible: Medusa - Robert P and Mary Ann O; Preston-Hollow/Potter-Hollow/Cooksburg - Linda M and Justine C)*

**Objective #2: Establish an ongoing Library presence outside of the hamlet of Rensselaerville**.

Action Step #2: Explore the feasibility of establishing a Library Annex in Town Hall or the Public Safety Building to provide Library Services and Programs, including free wifi access.

*Tentative Completion Date: December 31,2022. (Responsible: Jerry and Mary Ann O.)*

Action Step #3: Evaluate the Annex space for its suitability for different types of programs and services, including, but not limited to:

 A) Basic services including: free 24/7 wifi access, book drop off and pick up location

B) Establishing computer and printer equipped co-working space that could accommodate up to five people working at any given time. Use of a sliding fee scale?

C) A room to conduct medical/therapeutic services privately and confidentially.

D) Develop a plan and budget for staffing and equipping the Annex, and initiating proposed programs and services.

*Tentative Completion Date: TBD based on the configuration of the space procured, timing of the establishment of the Annex, etc. (Responsible: Jerry)*

Action Step #4: Attend community events in each of the four hamlets (e.g., the monthly Medusa Firehouse pancake breakfast, BBQs, Preston Hollow day in the park, etc.)

*Tentative Start Date: Dec 2021 (Responsible: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

**Objective 3: Initiate programming focused on the assessed needs of residents living outside the hamlet of Rensselaerville.**

Action Step #5: Conduct at least two general audience programs (talks, workshops, classes) in Medusa and Preston Hollow firehouses (or other identified spaces) by April 30, 2022. Then, based on attendance and post program feedback, develop a plan by October 1, 2022 for providing regular programming outside the hamlet of Rensselaerville.

Action Step #6: Design and present a program for Seniors to provide training programs on using modern technology, e.g., the use of computers, using social media, use of smart phones including how to use Google Maps for GPS navigation, etc.

*Tentative Completion Date: The first program in the proposed series will be presented at the fire houses in Medusa, Preston Hollow, and Rensselaerville or at the Library Annex by June 30, 2022. (Responsible: Annmarie, Jerry and Justine)*

**Objective 4: Increase outreach to the four hamlets by ensuring library programs and other public events in the hamlets are posted in social media platforms, website , newspapers, etc.**

Action Step #7: Create contact list for Rensselaerville organizations and contact them monthly for new events.

Action Step #8: Create public events listings in both electronic and non-electronic formats to post in all hamlets.

*Tentative Completion Date: January 1, 2022. (Responsible: Linda S)*

**Metrics for Strategic Initiative #1: How will we know if we have succeeded?**

Metric 1: Data will reflect increased usage of the Library by the residents of the five hamlets. [Need to establish a baseline.]

Metric 2: Data will reflect increased awareness of Library services and programs throughout the town and particularly in the five hamlets. [Need to establish a baseline.]

Metric 3: Library patrons in all five hamlets express a high level of satisfaction with Library programs and services. [Need to establish a baseline.]

Metric 4: Functioning partnerships with community groups in each of the five hamlets have been established.

**Strategic Initiative #2**

**The Board of Trustees will develop and implement a development plan, including capital investment to grow and stabilize the Library's funding base and to improve and preserve** **our historic library building. The Board will explore grant opportunities and/or conduct a capital campaign to fund these initiatives.**

**Objective #1: Develop a prioritized list of specific capital investment projects for our building based on recent reports and input from staff, trustees, and the community, including detailed plans and cost estimates.**

Action Step #1: Review the existing building needs assessment and building plans and develop a draft list of potential projects.

Action Step #2: Conduct surveys and town hall style meetings to obtain input from library users, building professionals, staff, and Trustees to identify the weaknesses in the library building that should be addressed.

Action Step #3: Engage appropriate professional expertise to develop detailed plans for library improvements and to provide cost estimates.

*Tentative Completion Date: June 30, 2022. (Responsible:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

**Objective # 2: Solicit feedback from the community about proposed building improvements and prepare a final Capital Investment plan.**

Action Step #4: Hold community town halls at two locations (e.g., Town Hall and Rensselaerville hamlet) to present proposed building plans, rationale, timelines and costs and to solicit community feedback.

Action Step #5: Prepare and disseminate the final building plan that incorporates the community feedback and plan to move forward.

*Tentative Completion Date: June 30, 2022. (Responsible:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

**Objective #3: Develop a plan to raise $80,000 for capital improvements.**

Action Step # 6: Analyze the Library’s fundraising efforts over at least the last three years and use these data to inform specific strategies.

Action Step # 7: Access funding for historic building restoration and improvement to support construction.

Action Step # 8: Establish capital fund goals for years one through three of the Strategic Plan.

Action Step # 9: Engage a fundraising professional or UHLS to help, including exploring grants to support engaging a fundraising consultant.

*Tentative Completion Date: Oct 30, 2022. (Responsible:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

**Objective #4: Initiate construction projects as fundraising permits.**

*Tentative Completion Date: All safety issues will be addressed by June 30, 2022. (Responsible:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

**Metrics for Strategic Initiative #2: How will we know if we have succeeded?**

*(The following Metrics will first require collection of existing baseline data by January 30, 2022. [Responsible Trustee?])*

Metric 5: All structural deficiencies in the Historic Library building will be addressed by December 2023.

Metric 6: Improvement in the level of satisfaction of Library patrons concerning the building and grounds. Monitored and reviewed by the Board annually.

Metric 7: Reduce the number of accidents, injuries, and complaints related to the building by 75%. Monitored and reviewed by the Board annually.

Metric 8: Annual capital fundraising goals have been met. Board to raise $80,000 December 31, 2022.

**Strategic Initiative #3**

**The Library will build strong working relationships with other non-profit, educational, and cultural organizations in the Town of Rensselaerville and the surrounding area in order to develop stronger connections with the community. Strategic Initiative #3 will be led by Robert Pondiscio.**

**Objective #1: Build sustainable working relationships between staff and board members of the Library and leaders and members of area community organizations (e.g. Churches, Fire Companies, etc.), educational institutions, and non-profits.**

Action Step #1: Build and maintain a comprehensive database of contacts for local community organizations, schools, education institutions, and non-profits.

*Tentative Completion Date: December 31, 2021. Responsible: Linda Styer.*

Action Step #2: Identify a targeted list of organizations that would like to work with the library on community initiatives and meet regularly with their leaders and decision-makers to plan and implement the initiatives.

*Tentative Completion Date: January 31, 2022. (Responsible: Jerry Finin\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

Action Step #3: Create and maintain a comprehensive community calendar to build and reinforce the Library’s position as a key community resource and information provider.

*Tentative Completion Date: February 28, 2022. Responsible: Linda Styer.*

**Objective #2: Build strong working relationships with Greenville and Middleburgh CSDs.**

Action Step #4: Board members and/or library staff will regularly be on the school board meeting agendas in Greenville CSD and Middleburgh CSD to discuss library programs and services that benefit the community. Report to be presented to the Board of Trustees quarterly.

*Tentative start date: January 2022. (Responsible:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

Action Step #5: The Library will offer Greenville and Middleburgh students internship and volunteer opportunities.

*Tentative start date: April 30, 2022. (Responsible:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

Action Step #6: The Library will produce and distribute materials promoting library resources, programs, and services of specific use and interest to Greenville and Middleburgh students and faculty.

*Tentative start date: June 30, 2022. (Responsible:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

**Objective #3: Work with non-profit, educational, and cultural organizations in the Town of Rensselaerville and the surrounding area to develop library programming, joint fundraising opportunities, and community service programs.**

Action Step #7: Leverage relationships with local organizations to host and/or collaborate on programming, joint fundraisers and community service activities.

*Tentative start date: Sept 30, 2022. (Responsible:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

**Objective #4: Leverage the Library’s visibility and reputation to launch, grow, and support the Library through creation of an active library corps volunteer group.**

Action Step #8: Identify and name a community leader for this volunteer group who will enlist larger numbers of Library volunteers.

*Tentative completion date: Jan 30, 2022. (Responsible:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)*

**Metrics for Strategic Initiative #3: How will we know if we have succeeded?**

Metric 9: At least two All-Rensselaerville Organizations (ARO) meetings will be convened by the Rensselaerville Library before the conclusion of 2022.

Metric #10: A Trustee or library staff member will make quarterly presentations to the Board of Education meetings of the Greenville CSD and the Middleburgh CSD during 2022. The Library Director will meet semiannually with Librarians of each school district. At least two volunteer student internships will be established by April 30, 2022

Metric #11: No fewer than six joint activities will be organized during 2022 in cooperation with non-profit, educational, and cultural organizations in the Town of Rensselaerville and the surrounding area. These may include, for example, educational programming, service endeavors, or joint fundraisers.

Metric #12: A community library corps volunteer group will be identified and appointed by the Board of Trustees no later than March 31, 2022. Ten volunteers will be enlisted and engaged with activities by June 30, 2022.