

Chelsea Public Library Three Year Strategic Plan

2014-2017

1. Introduction

Chelsea Public Library traces its beginning to the 1841 Chelsea Library Foundation. The first library was located on the second floor of the Union Store building (the current Mascoma Bank building). In 1892, a fire destroyed the building and its contents. Almost immediately, there was a movement to establish a free public library. A former resident of Chelsea, Alden Speare, then a prominent Judge in Connecticut, gifted \$5,000 for a town building specifically for use as a town hall and library. The town approved the allotment for the remaining funds and the current building was completed two years later.

For over 120 years the library has presided over the northwest corner of the North Common in this typical small, somewhat isolated, Vermont town. Due to our rural landscape and small community we attract diverse population of folks; from those who find the area perfect for a second home, to those whose families have lived here for generations, to folks who are on limited incomes. This diversity brings a complexity to the makeup of the town and hence the patrons of the library.

Our town has several stores and services, along with a K-12 school, courthouse and health center, and a higher than average rate of home based businesses. Due to Chelsea's limited industry, many folks need to travel about 1/2 hour or more to work each day. Despite being a Shire Town we are not an affluent town that has seen any significant growth for decades. Its approximately 1200 residents rely upon our small library for information, recreational reading, a meeting place, and to stay in touch. The Library becomes a hub for the community members and neighboring communities. Commuters benefit from the audiotapes, older residents appreciate the large-print books, and school children find the library a safe haven to land after school. In addition, the library is also used as a meeting place and as an educational resource for parents who home-school their children. Community comments and the continual yearly increase in patron use has shown how vital and necessary we are to Chelsea life.

2. Mission

The mission of the Chelsea Public Library is to be a focal point of the Chelsea community by maintaining and preserving and granting access to a universal collection of knowledge that helps educate, enrich, entertain and inform future generations and make physical resources and technology available to all those in the community.

3. Purpose of Planning

The purpose of the strategic plan was to figure out what the future Chelsea Public Library looks like and what we aspire to become for the Chelsea Community at large. In late 2012 it was determined by Library Board and Library Director should create a Strategic Planning Committee that would help steer the Strategic Planning process.

4. Planning Process

In March 2013 a committee consisting of 5 community members and one Library Trustee was chosen by Library Director Virgil Fuller to help decide the future of the Chelsea Public Library. They were as follows:

- 1) Carol Olsen
- 2) Tom Batey
- 3) Carol Frenier
- 4) Marion Lent
- 5) Heidi Allen Goodrich
- 6) Susan Elder (Vice Chair, Chelsea Library Board of Trustees)

Our first meeting took place in April with the committee, the library director, and two members of the board of trustees in attendance (Susan Elder and Peter Calore) and State Library Consultant Michael Roche acting as the moderator. During this meeting general ideas were discussed and Michael Roche gave the enthusiastic group ideas as to where to start with the process. Shortly thereafter, the Library Director went to a planning workshop with other librarians and trustees from around the state to gather and share ideas.

Our next meeting took place in early June with 9 people in attendance: 5 committee members, Library Director and Library Assistant, Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees, and one member of the community. Michael Roche once again moderated the meeting with plenty of chatter coming from everyone, which included presentations from Michael Roche and Library Director. Moving forward it was determined to hand out surveys to the community and for Library Director and trustee to talk to all users of the library, particularly teens and seniors.

In July, Virgil Fuller and Carol Olsen attended a retreat for historic libraries and churches in Grand Isle, VT. The purpose of the retreat was to learn options for the current library space moving forward as most that had responded to the survey at that point had indicated they thought the library could use increased space. While there, Virgil and Carol heard about what other libraries and churches were planning on doing with their historical spaces and both Carol and

Virgil spoke on behalf of the library. Ann Cousins of the Preservation trust recommended that she come take a look at Chelsea Library's space, which she did in August.

Later that month, Susan Elder went and spoke on behalf of the library to the Senior Center and handed out surveys. Virgil held a program for teens about the library's future and also handed out surveys. Surveys were also handed out to folks in town and it was also listed on the library's Facebook page, website and sent out to its email list. In September the Planning committee met again, this time to narrow down its goals to the library board. Presentations were made by Michael Roche, Virgil Fuller, Carol Olsen, Tom Batey and Heidi Allen Goodrich. Once presentations were made, the survey results were discussed and the following is what the committee came up with for the future of the Chelsea Public Library.

The Plan

Approved by the Chelsea Library Board of Trustees: 4/14/2014

1. What we do well and what we will continue to do well:

Based on polling, it was decided that we perform a number of things well. Over the course of the next three years, every effort will be made to continue to perform these duties well. It was decided that we provide **helpful and friendly service** overall, with special kudos going to our **fast Inter-library loan service and availability of wireless internet**. Our **selection of materials** was deemed “excellent” considering our limited space and small operating budget. Both parents and teens alike like the fact that we have become a **good place for kids to come after school**. Our **collaboration with the Farmers Market** received rave reviews as well as Friday’s story times have become a place for parents to send their kids while they are shopping for fruits and veggies. Lastly, everyone seemed to agree that we do a great job **of adapting to change** and that continuing to do so would be in our best interest.

2. What does the Chelsea Public Library look like in 10 years:

- More space and increased comfort of that space
- Increased Children’s services
- More hours for both staff and public
- A café area where folks can sit and have a cup of coffee while reading a good book

3. What are our goals over the next three years:

Space- have a building committee in place to act as liaison between town and library. They will also start fundraising, writing grants and explore options available to us as a historical space. Within 10 years of committee inception have new space available.

Timeframe: 2014

a. Increased hours/ accessibility

More Hours open to the Public- Based on polling, these should take place on one or all of the following days: Tuesday (22%), Thursday (21%) or Saturday (24%). Most folks indicated they would like these hours in the evening.

Timeframe- 2014

More Hours for staff- Increased hours for Director would go up to 25 (currently 20) which would allow the library to be open 6 days a week. Increased hours for Library Assistant would go up to 11 (currently 9) with the additional two hours coming on Saturday afternoon.

Timeframe: 2014

More Shelving- Make room for more items by modifying and adding onto current shelving.

Timeframe: 2014

b. Improve Services:

Advertising- This would include better signage within library to encourage more self-service and advertising in paper, electronically and around town about upcoming programs and new acquisitions

Timeframe: 2014

Children's Services- This would include having more programs for kids and working in collaboration with the school.

Timeframe: Ongoing throughout the plan and beyond-2014-2017

Digitalize Vertical File and Oral History Tapes- By digitizing and putting these collections online, we would preserve these items for future generations and make them available to everyone with an internet connection 24/7. We will start this project with the assistance of a Vermont Technical College work study student. All scanned documents will be put in a google drive folder which will be made available to the public

Timeframe: 2014

Increased Community Partnerships with other venues in town- These may include but not limited to: Chelsea Historical Society, Chelsea Public School, Orange County Parent Child Center and Brookhaven.

Timeframe: When the opportunity presents itself

Increase Adult Programing/education- Tech help, movie night, book club

Timeframe: Starting as soon as possible and going throughout the duration of the plan and beyond.

Wish List

The committee decided that while these goals might not be feasible in the next three years, they are too good of ideas to be left off completely. These may be added to the Chelsea Public Library's next three year plan

Café area- Make snacks and coffee available to patrons to provide a more home like atmosphere.

Timeframe: 10 years

A new, expanded space- As indicated above this may be a 10 year goal. Ideally would like to have space for teens and space for children at the very least. We could use <http://www.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/files/programs-and-services/library-buildings-and-con/library-space-planning-gu> as a guide in this process

Timeframe: 10 years

IPads/ computers- To stay on top of the technology trends currently happening in 21st century libraries.

Timeframe: Present -5 years

Foreign Language education- Have folks fluent in different languages come in and teach folks in town how to speak another language.

Timeframe: This would be dependent on someone in the area who knows another language to volunteer their time to teach those interested.

Book mobile and County Library Card: Combine forces with other area libraries to make more resources available. This would be done in a similar fashion to the Home Card System currently in use in Chittenden County. Having a bookmobile would give access to materials to homebound patrons who otherwise would not have access.

Timeframe: As soon as possible but likely within 5-10 years because area libraries would have to agree to it and possible purchase of a book mobile.

Teen space- Create a teen space so that those after school would have comfortable place to hang out.

Timeframe: This would be part of the expansion and or new building.

Hiring a Part time Children's Librarian - In the polling done, it was indicated that folks wanted more programming for children at the library. While the current staff will try its best to fill that need, if it appears down the road that a specialized children's librarian would be better, we would look into hiring one.

Timeframe: Unsure

Friends Group- We had one once, it would be good to have one again to help with fundraising.

Timeframe: As soon as possible

Objectives- *Intentions that will help us achieve Goals and Wish List*

1. **Technology Plan-** By putting together a technology plan, the technology goals laid out in this strategic plan will be easier to achieve.
2. **Building Committee-** Will make the expansion and/or new building site easier to achieve.
3. **Updated Policy and Procedures Manual-** By updating, we would be able to better execute the goals laid out in this Strategic Plan.