

New Library Planning Committee Charged with Advancing Library's Strategic Plan

Citing the need to continue the development of the strategic planning process started in 2014, the Board of the Elk Rapids District Library has formed a planning committee co-chaired by Board Vice Chair Barb Johnson and community volunteer Gera Witte. The strategic plan serves as a blueprint for both immediate and long-term improvements in library services; the committee will focus on information gathering and planning related to four key goals identified in the plan.

"Because community needs are ever-changing, planning is a continuous process," says Johnson. "We are working as a group to execute several previously-identified strategies and will be developing additional strategies and action plans to ensure we're being responsive and evolving to deliver programs and services most valued by our community."

The goals under review revolve around: 1) Library as a center of the community, 2) Programs, 3) Collections and 4) Technology.

Johnson says the group identified information collection as a first step, particularly reaching out to community groups and organizations as well as parents of school age children. Committee members are scheduling exploratory meetings with several local groups and organizations over the next few weeks to gather input and ideas that might lead to opportunities for collaboration, uncover valuable resources or identify possible new programs or services. "This is a very important part of our process," explains Johnson, "and we're hoping to receive a strong response from groups representing a diverse cross-section of our community."

"The committee has also developed a survey that will be distributed to parents of school age children," says Johnson, who explains this is a segment of the community that was not highly represented in survey results in 2014. "Children, teens and young families are the future of this community – we recognize their needs are unique compared to other library patrons. It's important that we continue to hear from as many residents as possible representing different ages, interests and needs."

Any resident or library patron who would like to participate in the current survey is welcome to do so. The link will be published on the library website, Facebook page and published in the newsletter. Hard copies will be available in the library.

Johnson describes the planning committee composition as diverse and enthusiastic. "We really wanted to get a good mix of people together to represent varying ages and viewpoints to stimulate lively discussion and fresh ideas. We've already had some great conversations with members sharing a lot of good ideas, asking tough questions and showing enthusiasm for the planning process ahead of us. It's been very positive and I'm very appreciative of the energy and commitment demonstrated by this group."

The library planning committee members include: Susan Calkins, Char Gretel, Barb Johnson, Rowland Johnston, Nannette Miller, Kim Ranger, Matthew Rainey, Corinne Prabhaker, Amanda Rubert, Cathy Walle, Chris Weitschat, Chris White and Gera Witte.