

Neighbourhood Reader

Spring 2005

RPL Board Asks for 3% Budget Increase

On Wednesday, April 6th, 6:00 p.m. Darlene Hincks, Chairperson of the RPL Board will be making a presentation to the Regina City Council to ask for a 3% increase in the Regina Public Library Board budget. If you want to support the increase in the budget, you will have to be there. The special budget meeting is likely not going to be broadcast on Access Communications. **If you want to see what and how the City Council is going to do with the RPL budget proposal, you will have to be there.** Within this budget, there is an intended plan to fill all currently vacant positions. Most of the rest of her presentation is a reiteration of some of the Board's activities and plans from past announcements. **If you want to show solidarity with others for our library, you should attend the special budget meeting.** For a copy of the text, go to the city webpage, www.regina.ca/meetings.php3 . Included on the page is other delegation presentations. For the FRPL letter, go to page 2 of this newsletter.

Friends of the RPL Sets up permanent structures

As it is seen that the Friends will have to be around for a few years if not permanently, the Friends have been formalizing a lot of what grew organically from the fight. Last fall, we had our first official Annual General Meeting. At that time, the Steering Committee was elected. Prior to that in June 2004, a number of Friends got together and developed a strategic plan with goals, objectives and some immediate tasks. For more details, look further in the newsletter.

What are the Goals of the FRPL?

1. To promote transparent, accountable, democratic decision-making within and about the Regina Public Library.
2. To promote equitable access to library services to meet the needs of diverse communities.
3. To promote the maintenance and enhancement of RPL programs and services including those that support literacy and provide cultural opportunities for all.
4. To actively promote the value of library services throughout the community.



Friends of the Regina Public Library

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www.friendsofrpl.ca

Friday, April 01, 2005

Dear Mr. Fiacco and Members of Council,

Re: 2005 Library Budget.

This letter of support for the Regina Public Library comes from the membership of the Friends of the Regina Public Library. We are a mix of patrons, concerned citizens, community-based organizations, staff and parents who value the important role that the Regina Public Library plays in our community for all of its residents.

Throughout all of our campaign to save the Prince of Wales, Connaught and Glen Elm branches, the Prairie History Room and the Dunlop Art Gallery, we have always valued open communications, a respect for all people, informed and reasoned decision-making, a cooperative community and being inclusive of ideas and representation.

The budget before you is similar to previous RPL budgets, except for 2004. We have an intact system of branches and services, very much valued by the residents of this city. We have a more responsive board willing to discuss and dialogue with the community about the community's vision for its neighbourhoods. We have the beginnings of a new strategic plan that has the potential to return this library system to the place it had in this city and across Canada. We are seeing efforts to build trust and to build relationships with the community in its fundraising endeavors. We are seeing an increase in the library's operating budget. We are seeing a willingness of the Board to advocate for the library system this city wants and deserves.

What the 26,048 petition signers said in 2004 is that the RPL should have the increased funding that was required to sustain library services for all Regina citizens. We strongly support the RPL's decision to seek an increase in their 2005 operating budget. It's an appropriate increase when paired with sound cost management by the Board, administration and staff. We also feel the City administration should go farther in 2005 and join with the RPL to repair and upgrade library facilities. Libraries are a key piece of Regina's public infrastructure that is too important to be left solely to the private sector to maintain and enhance. We call on members of City Council to stand in support

of this treasured institution by approving the RPL 2005 budget request and by contributing to the fundraising effort.

We look forward to your support for the RPL and to working with the Regina Public Library Board in the community in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Elliott
for
Merrilee Rasmussen, Chairperson
Friends of the Regina Public Library Steering Committee

cc. Darlene Hincks, Chairperson
Regina Public Library Board

More about the Friends

We have set up a number of committees to tackle the likely tasks needed:

Internal Communications and Membership—Membership, Newsletters, Phone and E-mail Tree; External Communications—Media, Website; Strategic Planning—Setting of Tasks and Annual Evaluation; Fundraising—Self explanatory; Working Group on Consultation—Liaison with RPL Board.

We have also set a standard date for our Steering Committee meetings—Third Thursday of each month.

There is a website and is being regularly updated— www.friendsofrpl.ca

We have an e-mail address— frpl@sasktel.net

We have a telephone number 757-3061 and a mailing address Box 38009, Regina, Sask. S4S 5W4

This newsletter will go out quarterly.

The fundraising committee has developed a t-shirt for sale. It is \$20 and is in either white or grey, S, M, L. For information, contact frpl@sasktel.net

If you see something you want to work at, let us know and we will provide some ideas and guidance.

How to Become a Great Public Place

Want to Attract More Users? Fred Kent and Phil Myrick of the Project for Public spaces suggest you look to your welcome mat.

In an exclusive interview for American Libraries, librarian and e-columnist Marylaine Block (www.marylaine.com) talked with Fred Kent, founder of the Project for Public Spaces and Phil Myrick, PPS's assistant vice president, and the yin and yang of transforming libraries into great public spaces----in other words desirable destinations for citizens looking to mingle, meander, and meditate, as well as to access information.

The Project for Public Spaces (www.pps.org) is a non-profit organization that offers courses across the United States and abroad on topics such as "How to Turn a Place Around" and "Creating a Sense of Place in Neighborhoods". PPS also conducts visioning workshops and shows communities how to gather and analyze data, observe activities, conduct interviews, and use research to understand the problems and opportunities inherent in the design of their public spaces and buildings and to find ways to improve them.

Block, Kent and Myrick exchanged phone calls and e-mails between January 29 and February 10. The following is a question-and-answer transcript, edited for clarity and length.

Question: What qualities do people value in public spaces? How do you know?

Answer:

Kent: Using techniques like time-lapse filming, systematic observation, surveys, and town meetings, we've found four qualities. Every great public space has access and linkages, comfort and image, uses and activities, and sociability.

Access and linkages:

There is easy subway access. A wide bank of shallow steps along Fifth Avenue welcomes people up to the main entrance and a large "front-porch" area spans the width of the building; there's also a well-marked door on 42nd Street. Pathways lead from the front and sides of the building around to the lovely Bryant Park in back, and also provide handicapped access.

Comfort and Image:

This sumptuous building seems to equate intellectual riches with luxury, with loads of marble, brass, and carved wood inside, and stately paths, steps and benches outside. There are also plenty of tables and chairs outside (and one need not purchase food to use them). The lions flanking the main steps have become city icons and are decorated for holidays and special events. Lush landscaped areas adjacent to the sidewalk provide a bit of a buffer and welcome greenery in a district where concrete and asphalt dominate.

Uses and activities:

In addition to books and all other forms of information, the library organizes and hosts an array of exhibits. Outside, two large food kiosks draw

substantial crowds even in chilly weather. And, of course, there are the steps, a favourite spot for meeting, and for people-watching.

Sociability:

NYPL seems to draw as many eaters and people-watchers as readers and researchers. Although few people seem to know each other (this is midtown Manhattan, after all), there is a palpable sense of goodwill and well-being that comes from the welcoming surroundings. Even loners and loiterers seem becalmed.

- from *American Libraries* – April 2003, pp. 72-76.

Speaker's Corner

This space is reserved for you and your opinions. We will put forward some questions and through e-mail, we will compile and present your thoughts on this page.

They won't be attributed to anyone specifically and will likely be edited or shortened to bring as many ideas or thoughts as possible to this page. We do reserve the right to not put your ideas forward but we will attempt to be as accepting of all views as possible. If you are of one mind, we might have to fill the space up with other information or thoughts. So try to be short and to the point when you send in your ideas. One opinion to each member, please. Send your responses to frpl@sasktel.net . Here are the questions. Please pick one and go for it.

1. Do you think the RPL should depend solely on fundraising to cover its capital costs or should it come from the tax levy or a combination of both (please provide percentages?)
2. What are the benefits of having a library in your community? What role do you think they should or do play?
3. Do you have a question of the RPL Board that you want answered?.
4. Are you a budding reporter and are looking for a place to blossom? If you want to write, send your articles in. Remember we can't be too generous with our space but 300-400 words should be a good start.