

**OSSINING PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
**Director's Report**

**Karen LaRocca-Fels, Library Director**

Normally, I try to start my monthly report with an overarching highlight or observation from the previous month, followed by a "looking ahead" sentiment. I write this as Executive Orders fly around, or are put on hold, or are interpreted and reinterpreted, and as we try to make sense of many quickly changing situations. We will do our best to manage each situation as it comes and will always keep our eyes on the mission and vision of the OPL. I'm so thankful that I work with a staff and board who keep the big picture in mind and who value the mission of the library, our service to our community, and the well-being of our staff, our community, and each other.

**Board and Committee Work**

I have been in contact with a fellow director who also is looking into a paid treasurer position for her library. She shared with me what they are planning, and I'll share this information with the Finance Committee and the Board.

Buildings and Grounds Committee information is below.

**Budget and Finance**

Bob Majernik put together the bulk of the budget as a starting point for me. I have been working through reviewing the budget and staffing needs of the departments. I also worked with Allison Robbins, who prepares a technology budget every year for me, to plan for our technology needs for next year. There are some unknowns this coming year, budget-wise, but we'll do our best and make it work, as we always do. Many thanks to our excellent team who help me pull it all together.

**Building and Grounds**

Amanda Curley, Phil Rice, Molly Robbins and I met with Alita McCoy-Zuber and Mary Fox Alter to brief them on the progress of our building project. We also had a large kickoff building project meeting with our various consultants to plan for our schedule and to get on the same page with numerous moving parts. Subsequently, our engineers and architects met with the library's attorneys to plan for the SEQRA review, and the Buildings and Grounds Committee met with SGH and Calgi to discuss plans for the wall and parking lot. Mallory Marinaro has arranged for a briefing/planning meeting with Ginnie Blake West to move ahead on our marking efforts. I have briefed our insurance agent on our project and will keep him apprised of our progress for insurance purposes. I am working on trying to get another tour of Washington School/HORAC for trustees and staff. This will likely be scheduled in early March. And finally, Molly, Mallory, and I are attending department meetings to bring staff up to speed on our project and to gather questions, concerns, and ideas as we move forward. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

We'll be having a meeting with the architects on Thursday, February 13<sup>th</sup>, to walk through the final schematics and to approve moving forward with the plans as they stand. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

## **Foundation**

Amanda Curley, Meghan Huppuch, Molly Robbins, Mallory Marinaro, and I met with the Foundation Board on January 10<sup>th</sup> to discuss the building project and possible fundraising opportunities. We look forward to hearing from the Foundation about what they'd like to fundraise for. I'm so thrilled for the Foundation Board – what a great group they have put together! Welcome to the new members – we look forward to working with them. And a big thank you and shout-out to the not-as-new members – they worked hard to put together an excellent team for the future. (Goal 1.1)

We are very excited about the sold-out screening of *SingSing*, on Saturday, February 22, at 2:00 at the OPL, sponsored by the Ossining Library Foundation. I know this will be a great event. (Goal 1.1)

## **Friends**

The Friends' Board has been very busy in their preparations for what I think will be an epic mini-golf event. I'm so excited for their success and look forward to a fun event.

## **Grants**

Through a series of events, the OPL found itself in the enviable (if sudden) position of being one of 60 applying libraries to go on to the next phase of the application process for the Carnegie Corporation's "Libraries as Pillars of Education and Democracy" grant. Diana Lennon, Suzy Zavarella, and I had about ten days to prepare a grant application to support ESL/ENL and college readiness programming. We prepared an application requesting just under \$400,000, with supporting documents, and submitted it by the deadline. The Carnegie Corporation received it and will review. We should know by mid-February if we are selected to go on to the next round. A big thank you to Tiffany Paovella, who put us in the running, to the board for shifting around meeting schedules to accommodate my extra work, to Suzy and Diana for being willing to apply and for working so hard with me to put this together (including zooming in while sick in one case), and the rest of the staff (you know who you are!) who exercised patience with us as we put other tasks aside to make sure we could complete and submit the grant on time. I want to stress that getting the grant would be a long shot, as we are up against large libraries and library systems with established grant writing teams and substantial programming infrastructure. But why not try? (Goals 1.3, 2.3, and 4.3)

## **Personnel**

Steve Hamilton and I reviewed our suggested changes to the draft Employee Handbook with Public Sector HR at the end of January and were provided with a draft revised handbook, which we are currently giving one more review. Next steps: I'd like to review parts of the handbook with the Policy/Personnel/Bylaws Committee, as they represent policy changes in some areas.

We await Westchester County Department of Human Resources' official decision regarding our Superintendent of Buildings position. It is frustrating that it takes over year to approve a position that already exists on their roster of acceptable positions for organizations. That and a few other questions to civil service remain pending.

### **Projects, etc.**

Allison Robbins and I are moving ahead with Quipu/PITS, the online security incident reporting software that will make our building-wide communication about security incidents more seamless and much easier. We have a kickoff meeting on February 11<sup>th</sup>, during which we will be walking through the set up.

I have not yet begun the Annual Report. This year, I'll be training Steve Hamilton to complete the report in the future.

Nate Hill and I had a brief check in meeting during which Nate updated me to the Library Field project. They are still moving forward on their due diligence work with the site and are hopeful. (Goal 4.1)

### **News from the Public Library Directors Association and the Westchester Library System**

I unfortunately was not able to attend the PLDA meeting in January due to a last-minute conflict. I await the minutes.

### **Some Meetings, Trainings, Etc:**

January 13: Board of Trustees Meeting

January 14: Building Project Planning Meeting

January 21: Community Outreach Committee Meeting

January 21-31: Many meetings to write the Carnegie Corporation grant

January 23: Traffic Circle Meeting with SGH and Molly Robbins

January 24: Meeting with Nate Hill (METRO)

January 28: Meeting with Public Sector HR and Steve Hamilton (Employee Handbook)

January 29: Meeting with the Children's Department, Molly Robbins, and Mallory Marinaro (Building Project)

February 3: Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting

February 7: Finance Committee Meeting with Buildings and Grounds component

Below please find reports for our Leadership Team.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen LaRocca-Fels

### **Molly Robbins, Assistant Director**

January brought the usual burst of projects and meetings that seemed to slow down during the holidays. Much of my work centered on gearing up for the next phases of the bond and building projects. I made a detailed presentation to the Foundation Board of Friday, January 10, we had our “big meeting” of key players (architects, engineers, consultants, legal representatives, staff, and board members on January 14. The next critical meeting was with the school district to share our details and the key points where they will act on our behalf. I met with the Adult Services dept. on January 15 to share current details of the building project. (Goals 1.1, 5.5, and 5.6)

I regularly reviewed detailed project notes and drawings from SGH and Lothrop as we move forward in our design phases with both firms. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

Around the building the usual maintenance work goes on. We have also had Clean Air Quality Services in to replace aging critical equipment and perform routine maintenance. Twinson Electric came in to address a problem with the lower-level lighting caused by a burned-out connection. Tracking down the problem along what seem like endless wires in ceiling was done in impressive time by Twinson. I have the burned-out part in my office, and it is a bit scary to look at. Despite multiple detailed cleanings of the gas fireplace components, the fireplace has continued to start reluctantly or not at all. Steve has arranged for a more detailed service coming up. Allison Robbins and I continued working with Granite/EPIK to switch out our last few analog lines related to the elevators, fire, and burglar alarm systems.

### **Diana Lennon, Adult Services**

The New Year started with an interesting month! January ranged from weather and staff illnesses (including myself) to films and book clubs and getting back on track after vacations. Others were trying to get back on track too, as I was contacted by five individuals/organizations who wanted to set up meetings to discuss projects and ideas for this year. This included working on an upcoming Local History display with Mariandale; a potential guitar teacher; a “Know Your Rights” session; and discussing a new ESOL website that a high school student developed, which we can use in our programs. This new resource complemented the start of our new ESOL class on January 24<sup>th</sup>. Exciting plans are forming for this year.... (Goal 4.1)

During the last two weeks of January, Karen, Suzy and I spent long hours working on our submission to the Carnegie Corporation for a significant grant that would expand our ESOL and college readiness programs. I think we have a good chance of moving successfully through their multi-step application process. (Goal 1.3)

Some programs that we are looking forward to in February are the "Cardboard Comes to Life" Art Exhibit and workshop conducted by African American Artist Tanya Evans-Johnson. I also am thrilled that Ossining's own Sarah Bracey White will perform her “Afternoon of Live Theater” on February 15. Sarah and I have been planning this for about a year and we are expecting a big crowd. Also starting in February is the free Tax Aide program on Thursday mornings which James coordinates. This is an incredible service, and we are always pleased to host the AARP program. (Goal 2.1)

Guillermo is hosting the Multicultural Film Series through February, and Mark and I are looking forward to planning another Bonnie Katz Film Series for the spring. There also will be a Smart Driver Course in April, which is also very popular with patrons. James, Cristella, and I continued or restarted our Book Clubs and have most of the year's selections chosen. Additionally, the Department Heads have been meeting about intergenerational programs, some of which include Summer Reading and a potential Community Read for all ages. (Goal 2.1)

We also have anticipated an increased request for legal information about immigration and citizenship topics and have gathered resources for patrons and staff. We have discussed various library policies and procedures that are applicable. Some staff will take an information session offered by the Westchester Library System in February. (Goal 2.3)

Our nonfiction audit continues, with Mark, Cristella, and Marci working hard to finish the 700s; Cristella taking on the health section (600s) and going back to the clean up the 300s. "So many books, so little time" has taken on a new meaning for us! (Goal 2.2)

### **Ignayra Lopez, Children's Services**

The children's services department is looking forward to a new year of engaging the community in new and exciting ways. Our list of goals continues to grow with the priority always being the community. As a team we hope to continue to expand our services to the Spanish speaking families in our community including 1 on 1 help for students, expanding the Spanish collection and providing an English class to ESL children. We have all also agreed one goal is to bring in a big-name children's author for an author event. We'd also like to integrate more technology-based programming such as coding and robotics. This has been a long-term goal of mine while here at OPL. Here's what some of the team members hope to accomplish. (Goals 2.1, 2.3, 4.1, 4.3)

### **Joy Atler**

I am looking forward to finding creative ways to weave skill-building and children's literature into programs that support the independence, self-esteem, and engagement of our patrons. Examples of programs that I have developed in the past and will continue to enhance include Family Yoga Story Time and DIY Make and Take.

### **Alexandra Pintado**

This year I'm looking forward to continuing to support the team and learn more to improve the skills I have acquired so far. I feel more comfortable doing programs now, but I will also examine what could be done, on my part, to improve and therefore provide better services to the community.

Suzy and I met with Julia Schonberg from Bethany Arts Center once again on January 7<sup>th</sup> to flesh out our collaboration this April during Poetry month. We will host a workshop for tweens and teens that will coincide with an Open Mic Night happening at BAC on Friday, April 4<sup>th</sup>. The hope is that the participants will want to share their work at the Open Mic Night. Julia and I are also collaborating on an idea called The Big Playdate, an outdoor play extravaganza for little ones, where we emphasize that play is the main ingredient in a small child's development. This is something the children's room already incorporates in our daily

activities but bringing this to the grounds of BAC will be a whole new level. (Goals 4.1 and 4.3)

On January 31<sup>st</sup> I met with Stephaine Rosado, Director of the Family Resource Center at Neighbor's Link. Stephaine and I have worked together in the past and after a long hiatus due to her being on maternity leave, we have connected once again. We discussed OPL partnering with the program Adelante Juntos to host monthly parent workshops in Spanish on various topics related to reading, early literacy and OPL. The program meets on Wednesdays 1pm-3pm and they just added another day, Mondays 1pm-3pm. I'm very much looking forward to building this partnership with Stephaine, her team, and her constituents. (Goals 2.1, 2.3, 4.1, and 4.3)

### **Mallory Marinaro, Patron Services**

We've all seen the memes about January lasting 247 days, but what this opening paragraph lacks in originality, it makes up for with its epic truth-telling because I think I speak for the universe when I say that we packed weeks' worth of activity into a single month that, as of my writing this report, has technically not ended yet. Italics and exclamation points for emphasis: *technically not ended yet!!!*

Part of the January exhaustion comes from the fact that it was a wildly busy month, full of meetings, desk shifts, and planning for the year. All of this is very good and exciting (have you heard that we have an immense building project taking shape?!) but it's also a lot of a lot (interrobang for emphasis: have you heard that we have an immense building project taking shape?!)

### ***Ossining Library Foundation***

The Foundation is kicking off the year in style, with an already sold-out screening of *Sing Sing*, featuring an Academy-award nominated performance from Colman Domingo.

I met with Leslie Allen and Brian Avenius at the beginning of January to discuss the event as well as a philosophical conversation about how best to incorporate the Foundation into the Library's messaging. To that end, I put Brian in touch with Jefferson Quituisaca, our social media maven who is continuing to bolster our online presence from Binghamton, and the two of them are working in concert on regular Foundation communication.

The Foundation board met in mid-January with myself, Karen, Molly, Meghan, and Amanda to discuss the building project and parts of the project that the Foundation could fundraise for. It was exciting to see how much the Foundation board has grown over the past couple of years and how Leslie, as chair, has networked and built a board that is fully engaged and committed to the Foundation's mission—and to uplifting the Library in the community. I'm looking forward to working more with all the new members and I was so gratified by their excitement over the building project. (Goal 1.1)

### ***Friends of the Library***

The Friends are in full swing with a huge event of their own, with Library Mini-Golf. A massive amount of thanks go out to Michele Tagg for her truly tireless work getting this exciting

venture off the ground. Molly and I met with Michele to discuss promoting the event and the fundraising opportunities available for local businesses. I helped the Friends with some Save the Date signage to make the promotional tee and hole a bit more eye-catching in the lobby. I can't wait to see how this event goes! (Goal 1.1)

### ***Building Project***

I don't take for granted how lucky I am to be a small part of the committees working on this project—even as my to-do list expands rapidly, I'm grateful for the opportunity to be involved in conceptual discussions and planning, and to hear firsthand from our epic group of architects and engineers, which has allowed me to comfortably field staff questions and ease concerns.

This month's big project update meeting was very galvanizing, as this (huge!) project began to officially move from abstract to actual, and work went from reviewing spreadsheets and surveys to action items and next steps. I'm so excited by this—and while I realize that this is coming across as borderline manic and evocative of Jessie Spano practicing for a talent show on *Saved By The Bell*, I'm being sincere. This large-scale and mildly scary work seems like just what the doctor ordered to snap out of the January gloom. (Goals 5.5 and 5.6)

### ***Planning for 2025***

I know, look at me planning with a purpose! This month, I was a part of two meetings that are going to lead to some tremendous things happening this year.

Following a meeting with the school district last year, Ignayra Lopez, Suzy Zavarella, Diana Lennon and I started to talk about doing a community read at the library and doing more intergenerational programming in general. We've hosted a several programs recently—specifically Two by Two Animal Haven—that have transcended typical demographics and we all agreed that it's important to keep this momentum going and creating diverse programs that will appeal to all ages. We're in the early stages of planning a summer series, as well as a community read—stay tuned for more details. (Goals 2.1, 2.3, and 4.3)

Marie Trapasso, Allison Robbins and I also met this month to help plan for Patron Services this year and came up with some fun and creative ideas for what we'd like to accomplish this year and how best to engage the various elements of circulation, marketing, and technology to make them happen. I am so very fortunate to work with Marie and Allison, who are serious about service to the community, have limitless patience for my own sort of bonkers ideas, and a big-picture view of library services.

### ***Allison Robbins, Technology and Training***

**Budget:** Karen and I began our work on the technology budget. We are integrating a small number of new things into the budget, such as our upcoming pickup lockers and new information screens with new software to replace those that are failing. Other than that, our budget includes items that are very similar to last year as well as expected price increases across multiple services.

**Erate:** Karen and I were pleased to receive some competitive bids for a new internet service contract. I have submitted our paperwork to our Erate consultants, and we will await Erate's decision on our funding request. (Goal 5.1)

**Patron Services:** Mallory, Marie, and I met together to discuss some of our goals for this year within our department. I have some technology ideas "brewing," and we are looking ahead and thinking about what we can do for our community with some of the renewed challenges it may face. (Goals 2.1, 2.3)

**Granite/POTS Lines Conversion:** We had our site survey in January and the implementation work was scheduled for February. We are looking forward to wrapping up this project. (Goal 5.1)

### **Marie Trapasso--Circulation/Technical Services**

What a long year this month has been. Looking back at the month, I feel like some of these things happened 2 months ago and not 2 weeks ago.

### **New WLS App**

WLS discontinued the old app with an assurance that a new app would be in place by mid-January. The Android version was available by the second week of January. However, mobile checkout was not working correctly so they disabled it. The Apple version took a very long time to be put into the Apple Store. We just got word that it's available and is being tested. I asked Jenny, Allison, Sumbul and Mallory to download it and let me know what they noticed worked and what didn't. Jenny and I both explored the app on Thursday, January 30 and we noticed a few things that we didn't like and a few things that seemed to be similar to the old app. WLS plans to roll out the apps next week. Stay tuned...

### **New Page**

It was becoming clear to me that we needed to hire another Page, so after checking with Karen, I posed for the position. I interviewed a few qualified candidates and I hope to have someone on staff in February. I need to shout out our new Staff Assistant, Steve Hamilton because he has been great about explaining the paperwork to new hires and just being a great resource in general. He is responsive to questions and will find answers as quickly as possible. He is a definite asset to our staff.

### **Promotional Materials**

I created 12 screen graphics for promotion of February programs and schedule changes for the flatscreens around the building and 2 placards for program promotion in Aspen.

**\*No stats are available at the time of the writing of this report.\***

### **Suzy Zavarella, Teen Services**

We kicked off January with a DIY Beaded Earring program, which saw a record-breaking attendance of 36 participants. Together, they created over 200 pairs of earrings, all generously donated to women's shelters.



Max, a senior at Regis HS, is completing his Senior Service Project at OPL. Max began volunteering with us when he was in middle school at St. Augustine's and has been one of our most dependable volunteers ever since. For his project, he is here on Saturdays and helps with a variety of tasks, including creating book displays and updating our monthly program brochure. He also helps with the setup and taking down of the bulletin boards, which is huge for me because I do not like standing on the counter-top!

We had our first Teen Advisory Board meeting, and we were pleasantly surprised when five teens showed up! The teens that participated hope to meet with us monthly and are excited to come up with program ideas.

Led by Tiffany, teens had the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities, including making pancakes, a book-themed cupcake battle, homemade soap and scrapbook boards. The Youth Bureau reached out to me to collaborate on a job readiness program. We're set to begin in February. We will offer 8 sessions on various topics including resume building, interview techniques and job search strategies.

On Friday, January 17th, Tiffany shared some exciting news—she had completed a survey earlier in the month that she never expected would lead anywhere. The survey, which she found on LinkedIn, was for a significant library grant opportunity. To our surprise, Tiffany was notified that OPL had advanced in the selection process. As a result, Karen, Diana, and I dedicated many hours during the last two weeks of January to writing a concept paper aimed at expanding our ESL and College Readiness programs. Fingers crossed. (Goals 1.3, 2.1, 2.3, and 4.3)

Ignayra and I met with Julia from Bethany Arts. This was the first time that I had the opportunity to meet with Julia and her energy and enthusiasm is contagious. We discussed programming with teens for National Poetry month in April, including the possibility of hosting a workshop at OPL followed by an afterschool Open Mic. We also brainstormed some collaboration ideas for our upcoming summer reading program. (Goal 4.1 and 4.3)

Coming up in February: a chess tournament with partners Rye and Scarsdale libraries, a visit to Brookside School with the Project Lit Book Club, Laser Tag, Foodie Fun, Teen Art Club focusing on Black voices and a screening of *Wicked* and the addition of new round tables and computers in the teen room. (Goal 4.1)