Director’s Report

Prepared by Donita Ward: August 10, 2026

Attachments: available on website

- Agenda including links to current policies up for discussion
- Statistics & Digital Statistics
- Balance Sheet
- Profit and Loss Report
- Draft minutes from previous meeting
- Sales Tax collection and trends report from HDL
- Updated Job Descriptions for managers

Sent separately:

- 3 bids for landscape planning

Budget Adjustments:

- None at this time

Finance & Administration:

Sales tax income remains strong. If we use the first 6 months’ average, we will bring in well over the budgeted $2.5 million this year. This is good news, as the cost of all the things we do, from the AC bill to performers, seems to be going up every time I look at the bills.

We may have a contested election again this year. It tends to happen on the even number years, perhaps because the community is having political thoughts for other races and offices. In any case, if we do, I will contract with the county per usual and do everything I can to keep the election work from causing a delay in other administrative tasks that could impact renovation or services.

The finance committee met in July. Discussion included a possible rework to the check signing process, incentives we could offer to employees outside of basic wages, and expenditures after renovation. As mentioned at previous meetings, I have a running list of ‘after renovation’ wishes and dreams to look into, many of which are quite costly. I have put my draft (it’s only a wish list) at the end of this report. I’ve also come up with a list of possible staff incentives that we could offer. If these are tasks the board would like me to pursue, I can put the incentives into a survey to employees to make sure we spend our efforts on things they really do value.

Outreach & Branding:

Lauren continues to deliver requested items to the people who’ve registered for delivery service. She is also regularly doing onsite events at Affinity and the

Conservatory. This month she will be at the back to school events for Joe Lee Johnson and Pflugerville ISD.

The Armada swim team reached out at end of season and sent us a team photo to display as thanks for our sponsorship. We will continue to watch for other similar opportunities to get into the neighborhood.

Operations:

Soon we will have private study rooms. We do not have a policy for their use and access. Until we see how they are being used and what issues arise, we cannot make good decisions about their management. We can gather information about how they are managed at other libraries, which I have done. The computer chip doors and reservations systems (like they have at Round Rock) have been less than optimal. First come/ first serve only works if we have a turnover schedule in place. The leadership team have been working on this and determined that a good starting point is to mimic the system we have for computer use as far as eligibility and time limits, with the caveat that only adults can 'check out' a study room.

Rooms can be used, when available, for an hour with a 30 minute extension if another room is open when their time expires. Patrons can use a room twice a day, guests can use them once a day. We will have keys at the info desk and keep a paper log to begin. Staff will verify eligibility, unlock the room, and write down the time. We might even put a timer in the room to help patrons keep track. Someone who makes a mess or causes a problem could have their future eligibility restricted.

This will require adjustments and reevaluation as we see how our patrons use them, but it's a starting point. The teen area will have study spaces for individuals and groups, and an adult can check out a room to use with a child, but a group of children unattended would not be able to use these rooms. If we see a need for youth private spaces after Phase 4, we can look at options.

Our next inventory is scheduled for August 27th and we will be scanning the Adult Fiction section. Brodart deliveries are getting faster, so book acquisition is finally picking up for us. Dayna played a large part in this as she's been reaching out to the distributor regularly to 'remind' them to send our items. While this should not be necessary, it has proven effective.

Our gate counts are not accurate. Most of our entryways did not have good counters on them during our patron flow changes. That said, we seem to always be full and busy. People find their way in and stay a while. And, with only a couple of very silly exceptions, our patrons appreciate and value what we are doing with the building and that we are finding a way to stay open and deliver programs and services, even when it's rather sticky.

Our physical circulation statistics are down a bit from last year. It is harder to find some of our items to borrow. Digital circulation is up 14% per month from last year's average. Physical and digital combined circulation is higher for 2026 than 2025. Notary services and passive program participation are notably increased.

Internal Affairs:

We have lost an employee to higher education. Tiffany is going out of town to get her degree. To cover the gaps on desks, I am going to try reinstating the Page position. A page is truly entry level, often a student, with limited responsibilities and expectations. Historically, we have had this position to offer a first job to area teens, but it would also be great for retirees.

The Safety Summit in Cleveland made me very grateful to NOT work is an urban facility. There are so many things we just don't have to deal with here. That said, it's important to be proactive so I'm looking at possible steps we can take going forward. One thing that stands out is that we do NOT have anyone on 'security'. I don't think we should, as we're in the middle of the neighborhood. We also don't have anyone on 'social services'. That's something I want to look into after renovation. We could also consider having someone as a doorman of sorts, a greeter and general handy person who would be on site for incident intervention.

I went to Waco for the Texas Workforce Commission's Conference for Employers. This is one of those areas that is not covered in library school since most librarians and library managers don't need it. Since we are a district, we don't have a city support system for Human Resources and legal oversight. I went to the conference several years ago, but have not attended since COVID and there have been legal updates and changes to the laws. My biggest takeaways were: paying unemployment is better than paying to employ someone who isn't working out, document everything, ADA protections start before the interview, and we could benefit from a robust and well curated employee handbook.

Dayna and I have increased our efforts for team building. We are trying special events. For example, on National Ice Cream Day (and the day after, so all staff could participate) we provided supplies to make ice cream sundaes and had cute socks and enamel pins for staff to take. We provided a pizza lunch on National Pizza Day as well. Dayna sends out an appreciation email to all staff when someone reaches their work anniversary. I've also started working the public desks again, covering for people who are out.

I met with every employee in June for a midyear strategy session. We reviewed goals, training needs, successes, and challenges. There were very few surprises. All staff were <u>**very happy**</u> with the bonus gifted to them.

The batch of job descriptions I have for this meeting is our Managers. We have five positions- Youth Services Librarian, Volunteer Services Librarian, Bilingual Services Manager, Outreach Services Manager, and Program Support Manager. The tenure for this group ranges from two to eleven years. They are permanent, nonexempt positions.

These employees carry building keys, have alarm codes, and work between 28 and 38 hours per week depending on their schedules. All are eligible for full benefits.

Technology:

The new alarm system is covering our doors and motion sensors. The old system is still monitoring for fire. It's a bit tricky to balance, and there have been more than a few late night call outs, but we have it working. We also have the new phones onsite and are checking the available access points to get VOIP in place during phase 3. Part of the security alarm system has live overhead cameras at the doors. There is no recording equipment and the view does not allow someone to see what items are borrowed, so patron privacy is intact.

There are four new kindles in circulation. Primary use for those is bookclubs. The patron computers, printers and document station are working consistently despite their age. We are hoping to replace the patron desktops during this renovation. When we do, it will likely be to an open office style software as Microsoft no longer offers locally installed office suite for public machines. Expecting all of our patrons to setup and log into personal office365 accounts would be a big pain point for a group that is already uncomfortable with technology. Many of our computer users are on our machines because they don't have a computer at home, so these are not tech savvy users.

Facilities:

Phase 1 of construction is almost done. We have doors in place for the lobby and full access to that side of the building. The bathrooms are in use. There is still a list of hanging tasks to complete, most of which are cosmetic with the exceptions of a number of interior doors which have to be received and installed. Right now, we have temporary doors in their place and it isn't as pretty. Once the real doors are here, touchup work around the frames can be done. We are also waiting on the televisions that go around the main doorway for program information and the monitors that go into the large program space, the wall covering in that space, the double sink in the women's restroom, and a few other odds and ends.

Phase 2 is well underway. We have a wall blocking off the work area from the public spaces. We have the LAB set up as a temporary work space for me, Dayna, and Karen as well as staff kitchen and break room. The space is tight. All programs are back in the large room. Our ability to host multiple events simultaneously is still reduced with no access to many of our spaces. We also have no restrooms in the library proper, making the single use and women's room in the program space the only facilities for staff or patrons to use. There have been a few accidents in the children's space.

For Phase 3 (scheduled to start in the fall) it is *POSSIBLE* that we could forego the temporary wall. That saves time and money, not to mention the mess and landfill space of the structure. There is no extended demolition in that phase. For the contractors to replace the lighting and ceiling grid, they would need a few days of unfettered access. If we close the library to the public for Tuesday October 13 (and potentially Wednesday October 14), we could get through Phase 3 without blocking off any large areas of the building. Staff could work out of the LAB and workroom, or take a long weekend of PTO without arranging coverage.

Another roof inspection will happen this month. We have an outside company scheduled to do a full leak check for $2500. They're going to use a pressure hose to shoot water over the entire roof and see if/where it comes through.

Laura expects to complete the mural in the stroller parking area this week. She has also drawn some beautiful mockups for the restroom hallway as a future art site. The art rail itself is in place and we will be able to hang the Heart of Texas Tolers Storytime Mural history pieces once sturdier clips arrive.

Programs:

Special summer programs wrapped up last week. In June and July, we had 23 programs per week including 2 teen activities, 11 storytimes, 5 adult offerings and 3 programs for elementary ages. We also had 14 special performers.

Participation for summer reading incentives dropped this year. We had almost 3 weeks (of the 8 week series) without program space. The June kickoff and first couple of weeks have historically been our strongest participation drives, and we missed those in 2026. By the end of July, 141 kids and 30 teens completed the reading program this summer. In total, there were 171 youth, which is down from 189 in 2025. We had 80 adults complete the programs this year.

Storytime programs are always well attended. The head count can vary with the weather and any number of factors. Our most popular is still Wiggle Worms. We offer that one twice a week and he's had up to 82 people in a single program. Our Sunday bilingual storytime has not picked up as we'd hoped, but we will keep trying. The Baby Signs ASL storytime had 42 this morning.

This summer's big winner for the afterschool crowd was Kaitlyn's "Who Would Win?" program based on the popular book series. She had up to 19 students in a single session. We will likely keep that one in the rotation. Puzzle partners did not do as well as we'd hoped, and the Friday Film Club had low attendance until we added a craft/activity.

The most popular teen program was Tiny Tails. It's always Tiny Tails. That said, we had 15 kids come to the tie dye program as well, which is an amazing turnout for teenagers. The weekly talk & craft program we tried this summer was not well attended at all.

Kids' concerts and performers are crazy popular. We had 52 attendees for Hot Toast, 67 at the Austin Reptiles, 65 for Mr. Blue Shoes, 71 for Silly Sparkles, 60 for Amber Blue, and 57 for Stacy Gray. Obviously, the large program space was needed.

Nick also had 50 for his Pokemon Trainer program with the parents as involved as the children.

Our all-ages cultural series remains a disappointment for the ROI. The performers have been great, but people just aren't coming. We thought the issue could have been the time slot on Friday evenings. We changed it from First Friday to Culture Corner hoping to capture more interest with a different time slot and emphasis that it's a specifically cultural program. Over the summer, we have been putting these on Sunday afternoons. We are still having attendance under 20 for performers charging over $400.

Adult programming numbers are creeping back up as people realize we have more space again. Crafts are always the best attended, but the headcount at Elder Wisdom is picking up as well. We've had a few programs cross the 20 participant mark- Ceramic Painting, Texas Archeology, and the Craft Extravaganza.

Passive programming, as mentioned earlier, was very successful this summer. There were 111 people who turned in sheets for the Fossil Scavenger Hunt and there were over 800 votes on our World Cup Soccer wall.

Random List of Possible $$ Projects for after Renovation

The priority would be to complete the renovation well, then look at what our new usage and community trends are to determine what is most valuable. That's the best use of public money.

- Replace monument sign
- More instruments in the front yard
- Shade sail in the front (if we remove enough concrete)
- Big party
- Permanent storywalk
- Can we get a truck like Dripping Springs? Bookmobile ish thing, but really just programs and tech- outreach stuff. Where would we even take it if we did?
- Landscape committee and beautification
- Open craft lab hours with tech help. Maybe someone stationed in there all the time?
- Glowforge
- 1 hr. full time, 30 min part time each week paid time for staff to play in the lab and learn to use the equipment
- More staff-led book clubs and programs
- Movies
- Great discussions
- 1 on 1 training appointments
- Vaccine clinics? Candidate Forums? Blood Drives?
- Wells Branch could take a bigger role in the library community at large. Host things, serve on committees as paid time
- Sustainable library certification
- Make admin position full time to take on election and public information work
- Home delivery, or at least research into how it could safely be done
- Purchase the property from the MUD
- Bird strike glass
- Expanded hours
- Performers are getting more expensive- much more expensive. We didn't schedule as many in 2026 due to room availability.
- Gatekeeper to serve as greeter, general building service, and incident interruption
- Janitorial Services every night
- Make our lobby open as warming center 8am-10am and 8pm-10pm?

Potential Ideas for Staff Incentives

- Sabbatical program
- Create a robust employee handbook
- Expand benefits to dependents at partial library expense
- Replace the EAP- One Health is $1500-$2600 for a year to cover all employees and their families for mental health services
- Alliance EAP is $4500 per year. It's the one we used to have. Counseling 6 visits per person per issue, safe ride home, unlimited online training, 2 hours onsite training, legal aid, help finding child and elder care, etc.
- Dave and Buster's type thing- off site team building. Bowling? Zoo?
- Stash of food and drinks
- Matching charity donations up to 5% or $100/m per employee
- PD volunteer time as outreach- up to 8 hours per month for employees to wear a library shirt and volunteer at parks, shelters, etc.
- More closure days or work/training days
- Calm App: 15 people and their families is 942 per year
- Cafeteria plan for Lifestyle spending accounts to cover things like manicure, massage, chiropractor, marriage counseling, weight loss hypnosis, gym membership, Noom, spa day, etc.
- Staff teams like community experience, image/branding, staff cohesion, vulnerable populations, safety, workflow documentation, nonuser information dissemination. Teams meet off site at a local restaurant on the library dime as paid time.