

II. Strategic Planning: Process

Pennsylvania's approximately 450 public Libraries are, nominally, registered non-profit corporations with tax-free status under IRS 501(c)3 rules. Just as for-profit corporations optimally operate under Strategic (Business) Plans, so also should non-profit Libraries. And both the Murrysville Community Library (MCL) and its fundraising partner the MCL Foundation do operate under Strategic Plans. Each can have a separate Plan, but they are always closely linked. So, you may be interested in how the MCL Strategic Plan 2022-24, just approved, was done.

An expert consultant, who is in particular well versed in the normal operations and challenges of Libraries in Pennsylvania, as well as being familiar with laws and codes that apply to Libraries statewide, was engaged to lead the process.

The first assignment from the consultant was that each of us, Trustees on the MCL Board and Directors on the MCL Foundation Board, prepare individual SWOT analyses (strengths, weakness, opportunities, and strengths). There are seven Trustees on the MCL Board, all appointed by the Council of the Municipality of Murrysville; that number is mandated by the state, although there are exceptions. Until very recently, there were only seven Foundation Directors (now nine); that number is limited by Bylaws, but seven (or nine) is well below the upper limit. Fourteen Board SWOT analyses therefore were prepared in advance for early November 2021 meetings with the consultant, each Board separately, at which time he presented and the Boards discussed a synthesis of the whole.

Prior to that, the consultant had had meetings with staff personnel and representation from the Municipality, from whom he also had inputs. The synthesis of this broader whole led to discussions with each Board in these areas: state, county, and municipal funding; grant and fundraising development; internal and outreach programing; technology; staff and other human resources; community relations, marketing, and public relations; Library policies; facility in the context of space needs, maintenance and capital budgets; and Board development.

As you can see, the discussion on the way to framing a draft Strategic Plan is very comprehensive and complex. It is the consultant's responsibility to guide the process and draft the working Strategic Plan addressing all the above issues, based on his conversations with the key groups of stakeholders. It is the business of the Boards to consider the consultant's framework and then agree on a final version. This is the process.

In a previous article (4/13/22 and archived at <https://www.murrysvillelibrary.org>), I told you about some of the more "new product/new service" ideas that were part of the SWOT process, and what that means for the MCL Foundation in particular. Drawing on that too, you should now have a little better taste of how the two Boards work together in laying plans for managing the Library, guiding the Foundation, and assuring a healthy future.

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A healthy future is what we all want!

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