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I. Strategic Planning: Belonging to the Future

If one is engaging in strategic planning as a Board Director of the Murrysville Community Library (MCL) Foundation rather than as a Board Trustee of the MCL (though I am both), the task, one to the other, is not quite the same.

The difference is apparent in the Mission Statement of the Foundation. It is solely “to enhance our Library as a community resource by raising public and private funds for special projects and by building an endowment for the financial security and long-term excellence of the library.” That one phrase requires that the Foundation get potential donors to realize the full capacity and importance of having a public Library at hand in the community. “Full capacity and importance” includes local access to the Westmoreland Library Network (WLN) and the PA Office of Commonwealth Libraries (OCL). Without MCL in the community, then too without the WLN and the OCL.

In short, the Foundation’s task is to bring clarity to how the Library it represents to the public belongs to the future of the community. I want to tell you about some future initiatives in my mind, ones that you might like as special projects. The Foundation Board needs your input. And, Foundation Board Directors may from time to time over the course of the next year, as part of Centennial-year Strategic Planning, be asking you for your thoughts. So, please be thinking about these possibilities.

In the broadest sense, think about the two main growth trunks of any modern Library in common, and whether to focus mainly on (1) building paper collection and live programing as in the historical past or (2) building virtual service and virtual programing as in the more recent electronic age. Or, more likely, BOTH! If both, then how should these be apportioned?

Then, specifically, which of the following examples of possible new informal educational initiatives belong to the future (as, figuratively, new growth branches on a trunk):

- (1) Standards-based student learning in partnership with the school district, especially during what is characterized as “summer slide” for K-12 students;
- (2) Virtual programing streamed into and out of MCL (an existing TechNook capability);
- (3) Career-based learning emphasis, such as in digital skills, an initiative just beginning to surface in PA as measured by state grant offerings;
- (4) Standards-based STEM enrichment programing specifically (launched already within the WLN as Storytime STEM-packs™), related to career-based learning above;
- (5) Whether to expand interior programing space or to expand into an outdoor learning/programing space adjacent to the Library (in a COVID-19 time);
- (6) Extending the Library’s farther reach with hot spots and whatever comes after them.

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What do you think? And consider too that, optimally, the Foundation needs some skilled and committed people to join its Board: to bring new perspectives and insights, to help set a Centennial-year Strategic Plan that assures that your Library belongs to the future.

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