

A Letter from the CEO about HPL Branch Restructuring

July 3, 2017

Good Afternoon:

I wanted to share an update with you about some significant changes planned at HPL which you may have seen announced in the local media.

The Hartford Public Library has been engaged in a robust strategic planning process for the past nine months. This process, led by a Strategic Planning Committee of the Board of Directors, has included our staff at all levels, our users, public and private stakeholders (elected officials, donors, partners, institutional leaders) and community groups throughout the process. We completed a detailed eco-system/asset map and interviews with key institutions and service providers throughout the City; we prepared a thorough assessment of community needs and demographic data. We compiled years' worth of financial and usage data and determined key service quality factors as aspirational measures. We developed comprehensive service logic models to ensure we understand impact and required resources. Detailed comparisons measured HPL against national and statewide peers serving similarly sized and resourced library systems regarding the number of staff, locations, programs, budgets and need. Feedback from this process and from assessments indicated that we needed more hours, more programs and more services in our branch locations—particularly those that serve high need and under-resourced neighborhoods. But level (at best) funding and rising costs have taken a toll on service hours and service quality. This plan needs to address those challenges. Over the past two months, the Board President, the Chair of our Strategic Planning Committee and I have held 16 presentations with constituent groups detailing alternative service scenarios, three of which included some degree of consolidation.

In order to prepare the final report, a key decision was needed from the Board – how many locations can we sustain? We currently operate 10 locations, three of which are small storefront locations. The Board met and voted on a direction to pursue with the plan. On Monday July 3, 2017 the Board announced a strategic branch restructuring plan which will create an enhanced and more sustainable service model that will enable HPL to deliver more hours and better service system wide.

The restructuring will keep the Downtown Library, and Albany, Park, Dwight, Barbour, Camp Field, and Ropkins branches open; Ropkins will operate during after school



hours only. The Goodwin and Blue Hills branches will be closing and their staff will be redeployed across the system. The Mark Twain Library will be transitioned to a mobile branch through additional services provided by our Library on Wheels. There will be no staff layoffs. This plan will enable us to provide service enhancements including more open hours and days of services, and additional programming in the branches. We will also be prioritizing capital projects including building a new, larger location in the North End of the City to replace the Barbour Branch and expansions at the Camp Field and Albany Avenue branches. A new facility to replace the current Park Branch library has been fully funded, and we are currently in design development for this beautiful new library.

As you can imagine, going in this direction was a difficult decision, and one the Board, Committee and staff took very seriously; focusing on more open hours, better services and sustainability has been the key to our decision making process. Open and regular communications with our community created a transparent and data driven method that welcomed community feedback. As we begin operational planning for implementation of the new service model, we will be holding public forums at each of the affected branch locations to provide as much support and information to residents and users directly affected by these changes.

This restructuring is not the result of any specific financial crisis—we have a balanced budget in place for 2018. However, we know that our structural deficit grows each year, and the only way to ensure that we can deliver great services is to consolidate our resources. In the coming weeks we will be determining new service schedules (days and hours) and scheduling public forums at the four affected branches. This information will be posted on our website and via Facebook and Twitter.

Thank you for being a part of the Hartford Public Library, and for everything you do for us.

Sincerely,

Bridget Quinn-Carey
Chief Executive Officer
Hartford Public Library

