

Buckland Public Library

Strategic Plan 2019-2024

Mission Statement

The mission of the Buckland Public Library is to provide a community center for residents of all ages to gather for enrichment, enjoyment and edification through a balanced collection of reading, viewing and listening materials, internet access and special programming as well as planned and spontaneous connections between neighbors.

Vision Statement

The Buckland Public Library aims to be a place where community and ideas connect. In this rural community where distance can be isolating, we strive to bring neighbors of all ages and backgrounds together for conversation, entertainment, and education. We want to be the place where neighbors can go in times of community crisis for information and support, and where they come for uplift and inspiration.

Assessment of User Needs

-Our small, predominantly agricultural community has a population of about 2,000. It is spread out over a wide area with a small downtown that is some distance from many residents. The library, located away from downtown, is a place where residents can gather at no cost to connect with their neighbors for programming, entertainment, and enrichment in a beautiful and calming setting.

-We consist of farmers, tradespeople, artists, writers and educators. We have families, retirees, millennials and everything in between. Many of our residents have been in Buckland for generations. Others are transplants from near and far. Some are extremely digitally fluent, while others have no interactions with computer technology. Our materials try to reflect this, ranging from literary to light in all genres and formats.

-Our senior population is growing while our youth population is declining. Our regional school recently voted to eliminate some sports teams due to diminishing numbers. This has meant lower participation in children's programs at the library but increased interest in programming for adults. Programs that reach families and seniors are some of the most popular. Programs that allow patrons to wander in and out as their schedules and interests allow are more popular still. Our weekly Coffee and Conversation on Saturday mornings is an example of this. Often, we have an intergenerational crowd engaged in lively conversation, but sometimes it's just one or two patrons quietly reading newspapers. While scheduled programs for children have drawn few participants in the last year, our self-directed summer reading program had 25 enthusiastic children and 25 equally enthusiastic adults. About 60 people wandered in and out of our End of

Summer Reading celebration partaking of food and drink, listening to music, and engaging in a variety of self-directed activities.

-While most of the town now has gotten high-speed internet in the last year, the library's four public-access computers are still busy. Our surveys show that computer access is still an important service for many. Some residents do not own computers or cannot afford internet for their homes. Or, if they have computers, they may not have printers and come to the library to print out documents. Others come for assistance in doing internet searches that will yield reliable information. At tax time, residents come in to e-file their tax returns. Still others come to watch videos or play games.

-Two surveys in the past year have made it clear that strengthening our role as a community center is a high priority for residents who want to see more programming that expands their minds and their connections with others or is just plain entertaining. They are especially interested in hearing from and learning from their neighbors who include writers, artists, musicians, crafts persons, historians, traditional and alternative medical practitioners, and farmers.

Planning Methodology

As a library with a new director, we have sought information throughout the last year to determine what residents want from their library.

We conducted a survey in the fall of 2018 and another in late summer of 2019. Completed surveys have totaled 48 so far. They have reached a range of our population, from children to seniors and everything in between.

We also held an open forum in August of 2019 and asked residents to Dream Big about the future of the library. The forum was attended by most of the library's trustees and well as patrons including children, adults and seniors. A total of about 18 patrons and trustees participated in lively discussion lead by Michelle Eberle from MLS and based on the SOAR format.

Goals

If there is one thing that has been a constant in surveys and discussions it is that our patrons crave community. It can be seen in the numbers in which they come together for the library's wintertime Soup Nights, our Winter Shorts story-telling event, and our Pancake Breakfast. It can be seen on Saturday mornings when patrons gather for coffee after their weekly visits to the transfer station up the road. It is our number one priority and the first goal on our list. Every other goal is in service to this one.

Build Community—

Create ways for patrons to come together for food, for fun, for conversation. Provide options that will appeal to different populations—children, families, adults. Engage residents in these efforts to strengthen their sense of ownership of the library and what happens here. This can include such things as expanding weekly volunteer opportunities, taking advantage of local talents to

create visual and structural enhancements to the library such as signage, lecterns, and outdoor space, and engaging residents to share their skills and interests with others.

In addition, we must find more ways to reach the public and let them know what we are doing. We have an attractive website and an active Facebook Page. We send out a weekly newsletter via email to more than 400 patrons telling them about new materials as well as upcoming activities. We place listings in local newspapers. However, it is clear that there are many in our community who we are not reaching. Especially because we are not in a central location, we need to find more ways to make the library visible and an essential destination.

Goal—To reach as many residents as possible and inform them of the activities and opportunities at the library, including technology, materials, and programming.

Actions—

- The director and assistant director will gather as many email addresses as possible to add to our newsletter mailing list. We will use reports from CW MARS and also be diligent about asking patrons for the information and adding it as it is gathered.
- The board will include information in the annual appeal that informs residents about events and opportunities at the library. This could be a brochure or a magnet or bookmark.

Increase Programming—

The best way to build community is to increase programming. Our challenge is to find ways to create programming for a population that often can't be in the same place at the same time. A common refrain heard during registration for the summer reading program is that kids are so scheduled that they can't come to the library for specific events at specific times. This is true for adults as well. Many work full time and aren't available for daytime programs. Others don't like to come out to programs that are held in the evening because they prefer not to drive at night. We are also limited by the library's schedule and the staff's limited hours.

Programs that are somewhat self-directed seem to be more successful.

Goal—Creating a programming committee will accomplish several goals. It would help us meet patrons' requests for more and varied programming but giving us more points of view on what kinds of programs would be viable. It would also give us more connections in the community beyond those of the staff and trustees. Finally, it would give us more hands to help accomplish our goal and help avoid burnout for staff and trustees.

Actions—

- The library trustees and the director will outline the goals and objectives for a committee that will serve under the trustees and work with the director to enhance programming for all ages. They will determine the ideal number of members for the committee and seek out and appoint members to the committee.

- The Director will work with the committee to determine what kinds of programs would be most effective for our community. The committee will help reach out to potential program facilitators and work with the director to do the work necessary to make the programs happen. This would include buying materials, arranging space, producing and hanging flyers, notifying local newspapers and spreading the word through social media.

Take it Outside—

Taking the library outside became a topic of discussion at the open forum and has since been discussed at Trustee meetings. We have a beautiful library building, and part of what makes it so beautiful is its setting. This can be seen from inside the library, but being able to enjoy it from the outside would give not only an added way to make the library visible, but also increase our activity space during the summer months. We have a sizeable front yard as well as some space at the back of the library’s parking lot that could be used for outdoor programming or just to sit and talk or read. The space is “wired,” and people do take advantage of that while sitting in their cars in the parking lot when the library is closed. But we could make better use of our outdoor space.

*Goal—*To make use of the library’s beautiful setting, increase library space, make outdoor programming more viable, and make the work of the library more visible.

Actions—

- The board will find out about town regulations regarding building an outdoor shelter for picnic tables, seating, and outdoor activities such as barbeque nights, musical performances, and book sales. If a permanent structure is not possible, the board will purchase folding tents.
- The board will look into purchasing or building equipment for outdoor grilling.
- The board will look into purchasing picnic tables and chairs for outdoor events.

Strengthen Fundraising—

Programming costs money. Supplies and equipment for such things as power point presentations, movie nights, and sewing bees costs money. The library has a good-sized meeting room that could be used for more events than it is if it were equipped with up-to-date technology such as a digital projector and laptop as well as room-darkening shades.

While some things can be gotten through donations, and many presenters happily donate their time and skills, fund-raising gives the library flexibility in its spending in addition to giving donors a stronger sense of ownership of the library.

*Goal—*To allow us to continue to improve programming and materials offerings as a way of increasing our visibility in the community and drawing residents to the library.

Actions—

- The board will determine the best time to send out the annual appeal letter and ensure that it is sent in a timely manner.
- The board will work with the programming committee to create additional events that will serve to raise money as well as build community.
- The board will work with the director to create locked donation boxes for the ongoing book sale and tag sale to ensure that donations are secured until they can be collected by staff. The two sales are in areas that are open to residents when the library is closed and currently donations are left in glass jars.

Improve Energy Efficiency—

The building is LEED certified for energy efficiency, but it could be even better. When the addition was completed in 2010 plans for solar panels were cut due to limited funding. As a result, the heating and cooling system is entirely electric, leading so some sizeable bills during the cold winter months and the heat of summer.

*Goal—*To reduce energy costs and usage.

*Actions—*The board will investigate grants and other sources of funding to install solar panels on the library with the aim of going solar as soon as possible.

The board will explore the cost and feasibility of replacing existing light fixtures with more efficient LED lighting.

Approved by the Board of Trustees September 17, 2019

Board of Trustees

George Dole, President

gldole@yahoo.com

Jorie MacLeod, Secretary

Horace Taft-Ferguson, Treasurer

Patricia Donohue

Ciara Hayden

Kristin Howard

Cass Russillo

Director

Jane Buchanan

jbuchanan@cwmares.org