

June 21, 2022

What's your purpose?

Start there. In the absence of a strategic plan or even a basic mission statement, this should be the first question asked. What is your purpose? What is the purpose of Rock Creek Public Library to the community? What is the purpose of the staff, the director, the fiscal officer, the board of trustees?

We are here to provide services to the community. Public and social services are basic, simple expense. We are not revenue generating. We are all expense, nothing but cost. The community makes the decision if the services provided are worth the costs incurred. In our case we get funding from state taxes in the form of the Public Library Fund (PLF) as well as local property tax levy, with roughly 2/3 from the state and 1/3 locally. The service district of Rock Creek Public Library voted 470 to 159 (75% approval rate) to generate a property tax levy to help fund their local library.

In exchange for this we provide library services. The Ohio Library Council has some generally accepted guidelines for how our total revenue should be spent:

Budget Considerations

Personnel costs, operational costs, library materials and furniture/equipment costs are the four major areas of consideration for budget documents. Suggested ranges are **50-70 percent for personnel (including benefits)**, 15-25 percent for library materials, 15-25 percent for operations and 10-15 percent for furniture/equipment. Establishing personnel costs for the next year during the final quarter of the current year facilitates the rest of the budget preparation. With the fixed costs determined, library materials and furniture/equipment costs can be estimated. To prepare the next year's budget request, all programming, staffing needs, raises/promotions, special events, conferences, equipment needs, and building concerns should be reviewed.

In reviewing the budget documents provided monthly I have noticed a significant carryover. I have inquired more than a few times about it but have not gotten any answers. So I did some research looking at the available reports submitted to the State Library of Ohio between 2007 and 2021.

In reviewing the data it became clear that after the levy passed for the most part not much changed. No additional services were provided. No additional staff were hired. The collection despite my belief that it grew remained relatively constant with slight decrease in numbers. The community gave the library roughly \$100,000 more annually and it was not clear that the money was being spent according to the generally accepted guidelines from OLC that most libraries in Ohio adhere to.

As a consequence, a considerable carryover was established. In most situations where a carryover of that size accumulates, the county budget commission would step in and ask for an explanation. Many libraries would begin a building and repair fund and set that money into a special fund balance in the budget. We have listed in the latest budget documents \$56,000 in a building fund with another \$21,000 in a capital repair fund. Meanwhile we have \$594,000 in our general fund for a library with an annual revenue of around \$300,000 currently. If I compare this to the library I previously ran that had revenue of around \$9 million, that would mean \$18 million in the general fund. The county budget commission would absolutely be inquiring as to what we intended to do with that money and how on earth did we accumulate that amount. How were we not spending money that we should have spent?

Based on the data in the chart below, Rock Creek Public Library has been drastically under spending on salary and benefits for the staff. I don't believe it was intentional. It just happened. But I am here now and I am suggesting that we remedy this situation.

RCPL Annual Revenue and Expense with Carryover since 2007

Year	Total Revenue	Total Expense	Salary benefits	Percent	Carryover
2007	\$196,673.00	\$202,845.00	\$104,687.00	0.53	\$6,172.00
2008	\$198,928.00	\$204,957.00	\$100,444.00	0.50	\$6,029.00
2009	\$171,324.00	\$179,238.00	\$101,013.00	0.59	\$7,914.00
2010	\$152,351.00	\$136,013.00	\$84,171.00	0.55	\$16,338.00
2011	\$166,812.00	\$147,069.00	\$82,389.00	0.49	\$19,743.00
2012	\$149,616.00	\$158,383.00	\$92,295.00	0.62	\$8,767.00
2013	\$157,168.00	\$153,649.00	\$88,447.00	0.56	\$3,519.00
2014	\$158,132.00	\$202,739.00	\$99,227.00	0.63	\$44,607.00
2015	\$277,333.00	\$199,374.00	\$108,052.00	0.39	\$77,959.00
2016	\$268,791.00	\$210,246.00	\$116,047.00	0.43	\$58,545.00
2017	\$272,050.00	\$229,368.00	\$116,284.00	0.43	\$42,682.00
2018	\$276,486.00	\$215,395.00	\$118,765.00	0.43	\$61,091.00
2019	\$285,188.00	\$221,198.00	\$117,703.00	0.41	\$63,990.00
2020	\$282,813.00	\$201,124.00	\$108,056.00	0.38	\$81,689.00
2021	\$306,951.00	\$259,921.00	\$132,264.00	0.43	\$47,030.00
2022					\$0.00
2023					\$0.00
					\$399,097.00

If the board of trustees and fiscal officer read all of this and review the numbers of this chart, I ask, what is your purpose? If you don't want to pay the staff a decent wage with decent benefits, if you don't wish to attract and secure talented individuals to serve the public in your community, what do you want to do with the public money going forward?

This is included in the OLC Administrator's Handbook for library operations:

Budget Expenditures

The library director makes expenditures within the framework of the operating budget approved by the board of trustees. Proper procedures for encumbering and expending funds should be followed. Refer to the OLC's Ohio Public Library Accounting Handbook and the Administrative Code of the Auditor of State, Chapter 117-8 for more details. While the fiscal officer is responsible for accounting and reporting functions regarding finances, most library boards of trustees hold the library director ultimately responsible for the operation of the library. The board of trustees may stipulate that purchases over a certain amount must be approved by a resolution of the board.

I have worked in six library systems in Ohio since October 1992. I have been a library director of three library systems since 2011. I have a demonstrated record of enhancing services, improving facilities and increasing all usage statistics with numbers to prove it. I believe I was hired to achieve those goals here at Rock Creek Public Library. If the library board does not agree with this plan, then I can begin the process I promised when you hired me: I will help you find my replacement.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Worso