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To: Library Board Chair and Library Board
From: Paul Takala, Chief Librarian/CEO
Subject: **Mid-Year Progress Report on 2022 Goals**

Introduction	2
Current Challenges	2
High Priorities for Library Services	3
Library Service Hours	3
Facilities Renewal.....	4
Library Programs	5
High Priorities for Strengthening Staff	5
Transitioning to Normal Planning Processes	5
Optimizing Problematic Procedures.....	5
Supporting and Developing Staff	6
Recruitment	6
Positive Labour Relations	7
High Priorities for Organizational Development.....	7
New Strategic Plan	7
Advancing HPL Strategic Partnerships.....	8
Other Priorities for 2022 and 2023	9
Expanding Access and Promoting Quality Library Collections.....	9
Digital Access and Inclusion	9
Advancing Culture and Inclusion	10
Library Membership Growth	10
Revenue Diversification	10
Community Research Platform.....	10

INTRODUCTION

Since March of 2020 HPL has focused on adapting our operations to support the emergency response and provide as much service as we safely can. The community response to HPL's efforts has been very positive. HPL has demonstrated our ability to effectively adapt during challenging times. As we approach the mid-point of 2022, staff have been assessing our progress on our goals for this year and engaging staff to identify things that are not currently working optimally for HPL. We have also monitored what other libraries are doing and workplace trends impacting organizations.

HPL's business plan was approved on December 15, 2021. That report was approved as new variants of COVID-19 were emerging that would worsen the pandemic outlook in Hamilton. We began 2022 with an open letter to members from the Board Chair and CEO/Chief Librarian asking them to limit the number and duration of their in-person visits to HPL¹. While HPL remained open during early 2022, it was a period of high COVID-19 risk. As we move into the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2022 the prospects of reduced restrictions look promising if not certain. Our plan for the last half of 2022 continues to be one of a gradual restarting of in-person group activities. We are resisting organizing any large events until after the summer and will continue to be mindful of the risk COVID-19 presents in our community. Should risk increase we are prepared to take a measured approach, following public health guidance.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

The global pandemic has created significant disruption impacting organizations like HPL. These challenges are not unique to HPL, but they need to be factored into plans as HPL lays the groundwork for services in 2022 and beyond.

Pandemic Risk & Fatigue – Although HPL is transitioning into a period of few public health restrictions we need to keep in mind that COVID-19 is not over. There could be mutations or other developments that impact Library operations in the coming months. We will need to monitor what is going on and continue to recognize that the long duration of public health restrictions, like masking and physical distancing, have left many people tired and frustrated. We will need to navigate this environment thoughtfully and continue to follow public health guidance.

Staff Wellness - The pandemic has been a challenging period for most people. The behaviour of some members has been a strain on public service staff. Not having to enforce the mask bylaw has significantly decreased angry confrontation from members. As we transition into recovery, advancing staff wellness and giving staff tools to be resilient when facing challenges will be an important focus of the second half of 2022.

Changing Work - A lot of the way we do our work has changed during the pandemic. Adapting to changes outside of our control enabled us to continue to have a positive impact while facing serious restrictions. This has not been easy, and several procedures were changed without the normal level of testing and training. Optimizing procedures and technology and ensuring staff are effectively trained in their roles will be a major focus of the second half of the year.

Staff Recruitment - During the pandemic HPL, like many other organizations, have seen an unusual number of staff deciding to retire early, or otherwise leave the organization. The pandemic has also created significant challenges to recruitment and effective on-boarding and training of staff. With restrictions lifting that process is getting easier and recruitment is progressing.

HIGH PRIORITIES FOR LIBRARY SERVICES

LIBRARY SERVICE HOURS

In late 2021 the Library Board approved “Target Service Hours” for 2022. Implementing this simplified and expanded schedule will improve access to HPL and bring HPL up to GTHA service standards. We are currently on track to achieve the targets later this year. Please refer to the June report on Library Hours to see the expected sequence of the last part of the rollout.

If problems emerge with our implementation plan, we will report back to the Library Board. Also, these hours represent a significant change from pre-pandemic hours and will need to be reviewed. At this point we are recommending the Library Board plan a review of service hours in early autumn of 2023. That would enable that discussion to feed into the 2024 operating budget.

TARGET OPEN HOURS 2022									
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Open Hrs/ Week	2019 Hrs/ Week
Central	8-9	8-9	8-9	8-9	8-6	8-5	12-5	76	69
Regional Branches*									
Dundas	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-6	9-5	1-5	65	60
Red Hill	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-6	9-5	1-5	65	60
Terryberry	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-6	9-5	1-5	65	55
Turner Park	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-6	9-5	1-5	65	63
Waterdown	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-6	9-5	1-5	65	55
Valley Park	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-8	9-6	9-5	1-5	65	47
Community Branches									
Ancaster	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-6	9-5	---	57	56
Barton	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-6	9-5	---	57	43
Kenilworth	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-6	9-5	---	57	43
Binbrook	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-6	9-5	---	57	51
Concession	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-6	9-5	---	57	43
Sherwood	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-6	9-5	---	57	53
Locke	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-6	9-5	---	57	35
Westdale	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-6	9-5	---	57	56
Parkdale	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-6	9-5	---	57	--
Saltfleet	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-6	9-5	---	57	53
Stoney Creek	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-7	9-6	9-5	---	57	35
Rural (Extended Access)									
Carlisle**	8-8	8-8	8-8	8-8	8-5	8-5	---	66	32
Freelton	8-8	8-8	8-8	8-8	8-5	8-5	---	66	60
Greensville	8-8	8-8	8-8	8-8	8-5	8-5	---	66	17
Lynden	8-8	8-8	8-8	8-8	8-5	8-5	---	66	60
Rural (Without Extended Access)**									
Mount Hope	1-6	10-3	1-6	10-3	1-6	12-5	---	30	18
Total Hours								1387	1064

* **Evening Study Halls** will run from Closing until Midnight Monday to Thursday at Central and Regional Branches.

****Carlisle** after the new location is open the branch will transition to Extended Access Hours when the set-up is complete.

FACILITIES RENEWAL

Below is a list of major capital projects that are in progress or recently completed. HPL has made great progress at bringing all facilities up to current library and accessibility standards. We will continue to incorporate future capital maintenance costs into our Facilities Master Plan and long-term planning. Here is an update on the status of major capital projects:

- **Carlisle** - The major renovation of the former bank building is complete, and the new branch is set to open in June. We appreciate the generous donation of the TD Bank building in Carlisle. Rural Extended Access will not be available right away, but we are working on getting that operational for later in June or July.
- **Greenville** – The new branch opened in September 2021 with Extended Access implemented in 2022.
- **Mount Hope** - In September 2019 the Library Board approved use of \$75,000 from Library Reserves to undertake a feasibility study for a new or renovated branch that would address accessibility issues and provide for long-term sustainability at that location. The feasibility study is currently underway. Staff will report back to the Library Board in the Fall of 2022.
- **Terryberry** - A roof, HVAC and windows replacement is scheduled to be completed in late June or early July. There has been a delay in the delivery of one of the five new rooftop HVAC units. If the delay extends beyond June, we will be able to reopen the branch with 4 of 5 units operational. We will likely require a brief day or two closure to install later in the summer once the final unit arrives.
- **Valley Park** – The new branch opened in May. In the summer we plan for an in person opening celebration that unveils the public art work and thanks the Heritage Green Community Trust for their generous contribution of \$1.25 million to the project that has allowed us to incorporate two (2) 1,500 sq. ft. community rooms that can be combined together into one large space.
- **Westdale** - A roof, and HVAC replacement is scheduled to be completed in late June or early July. Additional interior work includes the reflooring of the programming room and shelving. There has been a delay in the delivery of the new rooftop HVAC units that are to be installed. Expected delivery is now August. We will be opening the branch with the existing rooftop units still in place once the roof work is completed in late June/early July and then will likely require closing the branch for a week when the new units arrive and are ready to be installed later in the summer.

In addition to the major projects listed above, several other facilities projects have been completed or are in some stage of planning. These include:

- **Restoring Capacity and Furniture** – The process to put our furniture back in place and clear program rooms with excess furniture and equipment is well underway.
- **Smaller Priority Projects** – Staff are looking to identify high impact projects with modest cost that will improve our spaces and operations. Projects were identified in the Reserve Funding Request for Various Projects Report approved by the Board in May. Projects like the Central Library exterior refresh, staff space and equipment, Waterdown Makerspace will help improve staff work areas, public spaces and operations at various branches across the system.

LIBRARY PROGRAMS

The pandemic prevented HPL from being able to host in-person programs. In May we restarted in-person group events. We are taking a gradual approach to building up our program schedule. With COVID-19 still presenting a risk, we are deferring having larger events until after the summer. Staff are also taking time to ensure we effectively implement the *Working with Us Policy*. With our staff discussions identifying process challenges and the need for training, we are recommending that we continue with a careful approach, ensuring our staff have the time to do necessary training and process optimization, so that in 2023 we are better prepared to expand our program schedule.

HIGH PRIORITIES FOR STRENGTHENING STAFF

TRANSITIONING TO NORMAL PLANNING PROCESSES

The pandemic required HPL to move into an emergency planning mode where we were required on short notice to respond to changing regulations, restrictions and needs. In that context, our ability to adequately plan and consult was limited. During the pandemic we articulated clear principles that would govern our approach. While that approach helped us respond effectively, for staff seconded to positions or moved to new locations with evolving procedures, that has created a sense of not knowing what is coming next.

A lot of the transitioning is about establishing the new norms that will govern our organization over the next few years. Key elements of this transition include:

- Shifting from emergency response decision making to “normal order”. This includes restoring effective engagement into management’s decision-making processes and putting more emphasis on advanced planning. This process is well underway. Some internal staff committee work was paused during the pandemic and we are now in the process of restarting more of that work. Our goal is to return to having a robust internal system of cross departmental steering committees and working teams but with more focused mandates than prior to COVID-19. The experience we have had with virtual meetings will benefit our ability to engage staff throughout the system in these teams.
- As the public health restrictions have been mostly eliminated, SLT has developed a *Working from Home* policy that is suitable for our context. With most staff in public facing positions the option to work from home is very limited. For now, the limited number of staff with positions that can be done from home will be able to do so for up to 2 days a week with approval. This will be reviewed in 2023.
- During the pandemic we shifted from in-person meetings to virtual and we are now moving into a hybrid model. Developing protocols for hybrid and online meetings that make sense and ensure effective engagement will require some work.
- Ensuring a mindful closure of the pandemic that includes appropriate acknowledgments and a review of the emergency response

OPTIMIZING PROBLEMATIC PROCEDURES

The pandemic has caused HPL, like many other organizations, to adopt new processes and procedures without the normal testing and piloting. We are currently in the process of identifying procedures including, but not limited to, responding to customer service calls and using new technologies that were implemented or modified during the pandemic and need review for potential changes. We have been working with staff to identify those simplify and develop updated process

and procedures that will enable staff to use time effectively and productively and better serve members. This process will lead into our staff training program.

SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING STAFF

As we come out of the pandemic, we are making a high priority to support staff in their work, professional development and personal wellness. Our staff development focuses on supporting staff to provide effective and consistent support to members, improving resiliency and the ability to adapt and excel in our rapidly changing world. There are a number of areas of staff development that we are focused on in 2022.

- **Job Advancement** – In an organization like HPL that normally sees limited turnover, the exodus of staff during COVID-19 increases opportunities for internal staff to advance provided they are properly qualified. To help staff qualify we have created *Experiential Learning Programs (ELPs)* for - Librarians, Youth Services (Q4 start) and Technical Services. The ELPs provide training and temporary job placements to give staff the opportunity to gain experience, so they can qualify for advancement.
- **Onboarding** – HPL has an effective and comprehensive system of onboarding that ensures new staff are able to provide service and comply with policies and regulations. With the relaxing of pandemic restrictions, this process is getting easier and will be a major focus as we welcome new employees to HPL or as existing staff transition to new positions.
- **Staff Wellness and Resiliency** – There are a number of important initiatives that are currently being worked on to equip staff with strategies to improve their personal wellness and resilience. These include the training developed as part of the research project with McMaster University, HPL and several local libraries on Emotional Labour. The *Emotional Labour and Resiliency* training is going to be rolled out in Q3. HPL is certifying managers and coordinators in the *Workplace Mental Health Leadership Certificate* with the goal to having all staff in those positions certified by the end of 2022. *Prepare Training* from the Crisis Prevention Institute has been used by HPL for several years to help staff learn to successfully diffuse situations and protect themselves. This training has been more effective in-person and is being restarted.
- **Overcoming Bias, Discrimination and Racism** – In recent years we have seen an increase in racism and other forms of hatred. As we work to be a constructive voice in bringing people together and embracing differences, it is essential that our staff have a solid grounding in understanding how systemic discrimination is experienced and what we can do to assist. Initiatives that we are currently working include the *Gender Identity and Expression Protocol Training* with the City of Hamilton and the *Call it Out, Anti-Racism Training* from the Human Rights Commission. An important long-term training program we are in the process of planning for an organization wide rollout is the *Intercultural Competence Using the IDI*. Our goal is to complete this training with Library Board members in later 2022 to get feedback on its application to HPL.
- **Technology Assistance** – One of the biggest long-term challenges we face is keeping up with technology and the ongoing demand for technical support to our members. Using vacancies, we have created a number of Digital Technology Assistants (DTAs) positions that are based at larger regional libraries to provide support to members and to mentor and train staff in issues around effective support for technology.

RECRUITMENT

The pandemic has led to a significantly larger number of vacancies than we would normally have. The process to recruit and fill vacancies has taken a lot of effort and will continue to do so. Like

many other unionized workplaces, when a job that is a part of the Union becomes vacant, we need to first see if there are any current union member qualified and interested in applying for the position.

We have a long history of creating opportunities for internal advancement. Our use of ELPs and Learning Institutes has helped many staff gain the knowledge and experience to successfully move into new positions. This approach does however create challenges for recruitment. It means that when a senior position opens, internal staff generally fill those positions, leading to another posting. We then only recruit externally when we are left with no internally qualified candidates. This year over 107 staff have transferred to new positions. 50 jobs were posted in May 2022- 39 permanent positions posted, and 11 temporary positions posted. We have filled several of these posting already and many are in the process of being closed.

For Non-Union Staff (Managers, Directors...), that are not members of the union, we generally post internally and externally at the same time when hiring for a permanent vacancy. Where appropriate we use absences like parental leaves, to give internal staff some experience as an Acting Manager, helping them improve their chances of getting a permanent management position.

As part of our recruitment process, we post external postings on websites such as the Job Partnership Board which is Library focused as well as other external job boards like Indeed and LinkedIn. Our communication department sends our external job postings out to partners like the St. Joseph Women's immigrant centre as well as posting on social media. After a recent Board discussion, we have started to email Board members external postings, so you may promote them through your networks if you are able to.

Our recruitment process is thorough and there are timelines outside of our control such as for posting internal for 7 days first before going external, 7 days preparation time for presentation and tests. For context, some postings that are external have more than 200 resumes per job that need to be screened that were already pre-screened by the system. In an effort to move this process forward more quickly we have added a temporary HR Clerk for 12 months to free up internal staff to assist in the recruitment process.

Recruitment is always an ongoing effort at HPL, but in 2022 we are seeing the level of effort needed much greater and needs to be factored into what other activities we are doing.

POSITIVE LABOUR RELATIONS

In May 2021 the Library Board ratified a four-year collective agreement for the period 2021-2024 with CUPE 932. During the pandemic many staff and the Union Executive were very supportive of HPL staff doing pandemic related work for the EOC. I want to personally thank the CUPE 932 Executive for being a positive force during the pandemic, helping mobilize their members to support our critical work. Although we have a good and constructive relationship, the pandemic has been very stressful for a lot of people, and we need to continue to work with Union Executive to help support staff.

HIGH PRIORITIES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2021 HPL commenced the development of our next plan, which will focus on increasing HPL's relevance and positive impact in the years ahead. The pandemic has highlighted the obstacles and

challenges many people face in our community. As HPL develops our new strategic plan we will continue work in collaboration with other trusted partners. Some key community challenges that HPL's programs and services are particularly aligned to help address are:

- Inadequate literacy and reading skills in all age groups but especially youth
- Digital access, connectivity and the skills to function safely and successfully online
- Lack of inclusion and social cohesion. Many people do not spend time together with people of different cultures, faiths, economic backgrounds and age groups. Our diverse membership provides us with a unique opportunity to help overcome divisions
- Lack of knowledge of local history and understanding the different peoples of this area
- Social isolation particularly of older adults
- Challenges of integrating newcomers successfully so they can contribute fully to our community success and prosperity
- Lack of barrier free access to arts, culture, music and other kinds of performances

Progress is being made on the plan with the goal is to complete it before the end of this year, as a new Library Board will be appointed in early 2023.

ADVANCING HPL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The Hamilton Public Library [Working with Us Partnership and Program Policy](#) articulates three (3) core reasons we engage in partnerships. In 2022 and beyond we will be looking to engage in partnerships that help people get through challenging times and thrive. We are looking to work with others to support educational success, personal wellbeing, economic prosperity and social cohesion. With such great need and serious financial challenges facing governments at all levels, HPL wants to work with other organizations that are focused on working together to make meaningful impacts. A key part of our strategy is our work on the **Red Book Hamilton**ⁱⁱ that provides up to date information on services available in Hamilton.

With a lot of activity paused during the pandemic, we are in the process of reconnecting with key partners to explore our work together in 2022 and beyond. A couple key partnerships that are at the top of our priority list for this year:

- **Public Health** – HPL continues to work on a partnership with City of Hamilton's Public Health Services. We anticipate this partnership will result in a Social Worker (MSW) Program at select branches across the system.
- **Urban Indigenous Strategy** - We look forward to continued work with UIS as we work towards the Calls to Action in both the UIS and Truth and Reconciliation. The library has submitted a 5-year work plan to the UIS and Haudenosaunee Development Institute for their consideration and recommendations. We partnered with the Urban Indigenous Strategy on the Saturday Indigenous Markets and are currently exploring ways we can deepen our relationship and work together to advance reconciliation.
- **Civic Institutions Projects and Passes** - In addition to working with the Museum teams at the City on the Library Card partnership, the library is looking forward to working with the Heritage Resource Management Team on the Museums Strategy. The Library has partnered with the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Provincial and Regional Parks to also provide loanable park passes for the members. We continue to work to arrange other pass opportunities for members to reduce access barriers.
- **McMaster University and McMaster Library** - HPL partners with McMaster in multiple ways, including in the annual Writer in Residence. HPL is a key partner in two national research initiatives led by McMaster Researchers, one explores the effectiveness of digital literacy

programs and services in the public library and the other is exploring strategies to keep seniors socially engaged and developing.

OTHER PRIORITIES FOR 2022 AND 2023

HPL's focus in 2022 will be on high priority items outlined above to ensure we use resources in the most critical areas to create a solid foundation as we recover from the pandemic. As capacity allows, HPL will focus on other priorities that support both community growth and our strategic plan priorities throughout the year into 2023. HPL will continue to explore ways to expand access to quality collections, provide digital access, advance culture and inclusion, grow library membership, explore other revenue sources and plan for sustainable security camera coverage.

The new Strategic Plan will guide our long-term strategic plans and each year the annual business planning process will provide the Library Board with an opportunity to set direction.

EXPANDING ACCESS AND PROMOTING QUALITY LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

HPL will continue to work on expanding access through Reading Programs, partnerships like Internet Archives: Open Library and services including Borrow by Mail. Two key areas where HPL will have a strong focus on access are Local Authors promotion and LH&A.

- **Canadian and Local Authors Promotion** – The library launched [Spotlight on Local](#) in 2022 to support Canadian and Local Authors. Members can find over 3000 Hamilton Author titles by searching the catalogue for Hamilton Author, the search result will also include Book Club Kits. These titles are also highlighted with authors from Ontario on a Read Local List via OverDrive/Libby.
- **Local History and Archives (LHA)** - Working with the Internet Archives and reviewing a Digital Asset Management Plan we are working to develop a strategy to support an acceleration of the digitization of key collections. We continue to explore how to work on Truth and Reconciliation and acknowledge local landmarks and residents.

DIGITAL ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Digital access and inclusion have been a strong focus during the pandemic as many workplaces and schools transitioned to virtual environments. This shift highlighted the need for greater support and access to devices, data and digital literacy. HPL will work on partnerships and services that support digital access and support services like virtual court and elections by focusing two main services areas identified below.

- **Wi-Fi Improvements** - HPL is reviewing existing HPL Wi-Fi coverage and quality of the service to improve the service and add new features like push notification, new items arrival, hold item notification, etc. The library is undertaking a few pilot initiatives to test numerous Wi-Fi solutions to improve free internet access and provide quality Wi-Fi service to Hamilton residents in and around HPL branches. The library is also working in collaboration with the City of Hamilton's Chief Digital Officer to investigate solar-powered cellular solutions to increase the external Wi-Fi coverage range while exploring broader opportunities for connectivity.
- **Public Computers** - The library is upgrading all public computers, including monitors, privacy screens and updated Windows 10 and office software in a staged replacement over a few years.

ADVANCING CULTURE AND INCLUSION

Advancing culture and inclusion supports social cohesion by providing members with opportunities to engage with others and explore community resources and events they may not normally have access to. HPL's continued partnerships with BIAs, Farmer's Markets, Hamilton Arts Council, Hamilton Music Collective, Parks and Recreation, EarlyON, City School by Mohawk and use of community space for health promotion will help advance these efforts to provide opportunities to engage members from diverse backgrounds and create an environment of learning inclusion.

LIBRARY MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

Staff will continue to look for ways to ensure that we are able to increase the number of residents that benefit from our services. Currently we have over 127,000 active customers (people who have a library card and have used the library in the last 2 years). That represents 22% of the City's population. Pre-pandemic, membership growth was increasing, and we were nearing 30% membership. Now that visits and activity levels are increasing once again, we expect our membership numbers to begin increasing as well. Our goal is to reach 35% by 2025. One area of emphasis is ensuring students have active cards and are using HPL to advance their studies.

REVENUE DIVERSIFICATION

We will continue providing the Board with an annual report that highlights alternative sources of funding we received in the previous year. This will include fees, donations and special grant funding. We will continue to focus on ways we can supplement our funding consistent with our vision and values as an organization. In the medium-term HPL will be focused on contributing to the economic recovery of residents and the City and helping create a more inclusive prosperity. We will work with the broader Canadian library community and allies to advocate for a fairer and more sustainable funding systems in Canada and Ontario for municipalities like the City of Hamilton.

COMMUNITY RESEARCH PLATFORM

In collaboration with the Faculty of Social Sciences at McMaster University, HPL is developing a conceptual community research platform to support current and future Community-Based Participatory Research initiatives. The platform will formalize the partnership and support these initiatives, providing McMaster faculty and researchers with access to the community via the Library; in turn, the Library benefits from the scholarship to inform decision-making about our programs and services and to contribute to demonstrating the Library's social impact. This work includes a Researcher in Residence position at HPL.

ⁱ <https://www.hpl.ca/sites/default/files/22-01-04%20SpecialMessageServiceChanges.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://redbook.hpl.ca/redbook>