

Date: June 16, 2017
To: Chair and Members of the Board
From: Paul Takala, Chief Librarian/CEO
Subject: **Meeting User Needs IV – 2nd Review**

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Hamilton Public Library Board approve Meeting User Needs IV as a background planning document.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Strategic Plan provides overall long term direction for the Library. Annually the Chief Librarian/CEO's Goals provide specific objectives for the year. **Meeting User Needs** reports have been used by HPL to provide longer term context for addressing challenges facing Libraries.

BACKGROUND:

In June 2010 the former Chief Librarian/CEO, Ken Roberts, completed a document called [Meeting User Needs III – Thoughts on our Next Decade](#). That document helped form the strategic planning process and helped challenge staff to remain focused on ensuring library service continues to evolve to meet new and emerging needs. As part of developing the new strategic plan we have identified the importance of updating the document. The following document **Meeting User Needs IV – Thoughts on our Next Decade** provides several high level assumptions to assist with our longer term planning.

The eight challenges listed in 2010 have been combined into five. Before listing the new challenges and the explanatory statements, the 2010 assumptions have been listed beside the 2017 assumptions. The updated assumptions reflect the reality that we have made significant progress towards addressing the challenges identified in 2010. For example, assumption #3 from 2010 stated: *"More library buildings require renovations than our funding will allow"*. Given the progress we have made towards facility renewal since then, the assumption has been updated to reflect a reality that while still challenging is less ominous. In general, we have attempted to update these to be realistic, balancing the challenges public libraries face while recognizing our strengths and the opportunities the changing environment presents us. A final point to make is in the last 15 years the need for HPL to meet new needs and demands without expecting an increase in our overall funding from the City of Hamilton has become better understood and integrated in our planning. The updated assumptions reflect that fact.

Assumption #3 has been updated to reflect Board feedback from the May meeting.

2010 Assumptions	2017 Assumptions
1. Our very survival as an organization is dependent upon us remaining relevant and vital to the lives of people.	1. With future disruptive changes ahead, libraries will need to continue to focus on enhancing our ability to adapt. The health of our organization will be dependent upon us remaining relevant and vital to the lives of residents and to communities we serve.
5. Current services and processes will continue to change repeatedly.	
6. Future jobs will be less repetitive and will focus more on public service.	
2. All of our funding is vulnerable.	2. There will be significant competition for funding. Operating budgets will continue to be constrained and accessing sufficient capital funding to maintain all our facilities will be an ongoing challenge.
3. More library buildings require renovations than our funding will allow.	
	3. Public libraries are uniquely positioned to contribute to the health, education and prosperity of the communities we serve. To accomplish this we must continue to develop successful partnerships and actively participate in broader community initiatives.
4. Electronic material will soon form a significant portion of our circulation.	4. The trends toward the increasing the importance of digital content and growing competition from the private sector to provide access to it will continue. The circulation of physical books will remain a core service and the unique local content held and made accessible by HPL will become increasingly important.
7. Competition from the private sector for services we once considered our exclusive domain will continue to increase.	
8. Privacy/intellectual property issues will become more complex.	5. Network security, privacy and intellectual property issues will become more challenging. With content we control, we have an opportunity to model best practices that facilitate effective sharing that creates the maximum benefit to society.

2017 ASSUMPTIONS – MEETING USER NEEDS IV

Assumption #1: With future disruptive changes ahead, libraries will need to continue to focus on enhancing our ability to adapt. The health of our organization will be dependent upon us remaining relevant and vital to the lives of residents and to the communities we serve.

In the last decade we have seen significant changes in technology that have impacted how we deliver content and services. Looking ahead to the next 10 years, changes in technology and society will continue to accelerate and create disruptions. Some of those disruptions can be predicted. For example, we know that advances in technology will lead to more work being performed by machines and demographically the number of seniors in our community will continue to grow. In addition to predictable changes, there will be other rapid and significant disruptions (some positive, some negative) that we cannot identify today. In this landscape the focus should not be on trying to predict all the major trends, but rather to focus on ensuring the public library is an adaptive and resilient organization. The single best preparation we can make for this future is to continue to practice and enhance our ability to be responsive and adaptive.

Customer expectations on how our services should be provided and what those services should be will largely be shaped by their experiences outside of the library. We will continually need to ensure our services are provided in ways that meet their needs and expectations or we will lose them as customers. Investing in staff development will be key. We will need to hire new staff and support existing staff to become lifelong learners who embrace supporting customers changing needs. Flexible facility spaces will continue to be essential. As customer demands change, our facilities will need to change along with them, offering not only flexibility in space usage and layout, but also with respect to service hours. To be successful we will need to embrace ongoing evaluation and continual adjustments to our work. Our primary emphasis will need to be on making persistent incremental changes, however, when circumstances dictate we will need to be ready to embrace big challenges and opportunities.

Assumption#2: There will be significant competition for funding. Operating budgets will continue to be constrained and accessing sufficient capital funding to maintain all our facilities will be an ongoing challenge.

All levels of government will continue to face significant budget pressures. That is especially true for municipal governments which are the primary funder for public libraries in most of Canada. To continue to be successful at attracting funding we will need to be effective on several fronts. Demonstrating transparency and excellence in financial management will be necessary but insufficient. We will also need to clearly demonstrate how the public library advances government priorities. New and emerging needs will need to be met without increasing our overall staffing and funding levels. To accomplish that, we will need to continually internally adjust our

resources and utilize innovation to shift to work of higher value. We will need to compliment our core municipal funding with other sources of revenue.

Current building code standards and the high cost of construction for public buildings will mean most projects will require significant resources. To help defray these costs, we will continue to see more emphasis on the development of multi-use facilities. Although HPL has made significant progress towards getting to a more sustainable facility footprint, maintaining all locations to the proper standard will be a challenge. We will need to leverage other investments to attract limited capital dollars. Future capital maintenance costs of existing facilities will need to be carefully considered before pursuing new library locations. As well, investing in regular repairs and lower cost renovations/updates that maintain and enhance existing facilities will need to be an important part of strategy.

Assumption #3: Public libraries are uniquely positioned to contribute to the health, education and prosperity of the communities we serve. To accomplish this we must continue to develop successful partnerships and actively participate in broader community initiatives.

With changes in technology and the economy over the last 25 years, public libraries have become more vital to many. Our spaces are increasingly important as community places that provide free access to technology, support lifelong learning and reduce social isolation. Public libraries play a supporting role in advancing the education, culture and health of the communities we serve. We need to recognize that we contribute to good outcomes but we do not work in isolation. Moving forward we will need to continue to advance our maturity at partnering in ways that enable us to support our mission more sustainably while we advance key community initiatives. We have seen that increasingly governments are funding initiatives that can demonstrate meaningful collaboration. Collaborations are necessary when trying to address complex issues and they can play an important role at reducing the duplication of effort between different agencies. As we continue to evolve our program and service offerings to meet new needs, we must work with governments, educational institutions and other organizations that align with our mission.

Assumption #4: The trends toward the increasing importance of digital content and growing competition from the private sector to provide access to it will continue. The circulation of physical books will remain a core service and unique local content held and made accessible by HPL will become increasingly important.

The proliferation of tablets and quality eReaders around 2010 led to a rapid adoption of eBooks. That shift was seen in public libraries and the broader book industry. After seeing several years of what appeared to be exponential growth in digital usage we are now seeing modest growth overall. Our current eBook circulation is constrained by the cost and terms with which publishers make eBooks available to public libraries. Some progress has been made with publishers over the last few years but more work needs to be done. HPL will need to continue to be engaged

nationally on this issue with other libraries. Looking at the shift from physical to digital formats, we should anticipate the physical book will be a more enduring popular format than DVDs and other physical media that provide access to music or video. Looking forward we will need to carefully and continually monitor trends to ensure we are purchasing materials in the formats that people want. We will also need to ensure we understand the local picture and anticipate different trends may happen in different parts of the City.

Services such as Amazon, Netflix, iTunes and Audible demonstrate that the private sector can successfully provide access to large libraries of digital content at relatively low cost. We will need to continue to monitor usage patterns and market developments to ensure the public library continues to provide free access to a broad range of content for a large and diverse group of residents. One likely outcome of this development will be that some residents, especially those with financial resources, may not need the public library for many of their digital content needs. In this case other library services may become important for those individuals, such as, our spaces, technology access, storytimes, learning programs and cultural events. In this environment we will need to continually assess the amount of space our collections take-up and ensure we have the right balance in how our spaces are configured.

In this changing content landscape, the importance of local content should not be underestimated. The role our Local History & Archives Department plays in preserving local history and telling local stories resonates strongly with residents. Our relevance is enhanced by expanding access to this material through digitization and by the Library supporting the creation of new digital content. As we foster the ability for people to move from content consumers to content creators we nurture the skills needed to succeed in the workplace, we help people find their own unique voice and build a stronger more inclusive community.

Assumption #5: Network security, privacy and intellectual property issues will become more challenging. With content we control we have an opportunity to model best practices that facilitate effective sharing that creates the maximum benefit to society.

With the increasing sophistication and proliferation of hacking, public libraries will need to be diligent to ensure privacy is protected and the integrity of our information systems is preserved. We should anticipate we will need to dedicate more resources and attention to keeping our systems secure as new threats emerge.

Libraries facilitate access to copyrighted material. As new technologies emerge that make it easier to share, modify and edit content, the content publishers will continue to face challenges to their business models and will push for legal protections including restrictions on fair use. Libraries have a unique role to play in advocating for copyright rules that effectively balance the rights of copyright holders with the rights of users.

As HPL facilitates the creation of local content we need to ensure the licenses they are made available under are as open as possible given the circumstances. To facilitate

access to some material where we do not own the copyright we will need to develop agreements that are mutually beneficial. We should continue to use and embrace standards such as the Creative Commons licenses.