

Winchester Public Library Strategic Plan 2022-2026



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INTRODUCTION

Initial planning began in the summer of 2019 with the hiring of Chuck Flaherty, Library Consultant to assist us with this project. Meetings took place in the fall of 2019 and the final meeting was held in February 2020. At that time we had no indication that a pandemic would close the library and seriously impact our services into the fall of 2020. Our Board of Trustees has further discussed this Strategic Plan in light of the pandemic affecting our services.

March 15, 2020 our library closed to the public. Almost immediately our librarians began virtual programming and we began curbside pick-up for Winchester owned items in early May. Statewide delivery between libraries abruptly ended and didn't resume until June 5, then patrons began to request items from our network.

Sixteen staff members were furloughed in May and most returned in August. Some chose to retire or seek other employment opportunities. Many staff worked remotely and in October there are still some staff members working remotely. Our hours of operation returned but without evenings and weekends and with limited one-hour appointments and some walk-ins maintaining occupancy at 40% with social distancing.

So at this time, we are desperately trying to serve the residents of Winchester and those from other communities who use our facility and services by choice. At this time we do not know when our full hours will be restored, when the general public can be in the building without social distancing and limits to occupancy, and when our general programming will return inside our building.

Hence this Strategic Plan will be implemented cautiously, in stages, and will serve as a planning tool for post-pandemic times ahead.

The Winchester Public Library presents this plan for 2022-2026. Over the last five years the library made improvements to its physical space and interior furnishings, hired new staff to replace those who retired, and embraced emerging technologies. This new planning phase will help us anticipate the evolving library and information needs of our community for the next five years.

On October 27, 2019, The Boston Globe published a very pertinent article by John Hilliard which described the change taking place in public libraries. Hilliard referenced the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners report that circulation dropped about 8% between fiscal year 2010 and 2018, statewide. But at the same time, libraries expanded their outreach. Special events, as one measure, nearly doubled in that same time period. Hilliard wrote, "To be sure, it's not as if our love of libraries is fading. But like any relationship, things change." We hope this new Strategic Plan will better help us to identify and address these changes.

Where We Were, and Where We Are

| | FY10 | FY15 | FY17 | FY19 | FY20 | % change from FY19 to FY20 |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---|
| Circulation | 577,187 | 512,334 | 471,745 | 451,996 | 363,606 | -20% |
| Foot Traffic | 312,192 | 269,797 | 258,707 | 244,000 | 168,853 | -31% |
| Items received from other libraries | 54,252 | 57,533 | 57,110 | 61,721 | 44,953 | -27% |
| Items provided to other libraries | 50,560 | 47,851 | 44,600 | 47,543 | 31,879 | -33% |
| Winchester residents that have a library card | 13,962 | 13,992 | 13,581 | 14,448 | 14,332 | -0.8% |
| Number of times meeting rooms were used, excluding staff meetings | 365 | 770 | 789 | 923 | 710 | -23% |

FY20 and FY21 services were severely impacted by the closing of the building on March 15, 2020. Curbside pick-up began in May and the public was allowed in the building in extremely limited numbers beginning in August. Perhaps by FY22 services will return to normal.

What's Changed Since the Last Plan?

- In 2011 the outside book drops were made available 24/7. The result was a significant decrease in foot traffic, but patrons were less frustrated by the lack of parking.
- eBooks and eAudiobooks continue to gain popularity. Movies, eAudio and eBooks are always available through the library's subscription to Hoopla.
- New furnaces and a new chiller for air conditioning were installed in 2019, through the generosity of Winchester residents and approved at Town Meeting.
- In 2019 there were 5,383 users of study rooms with 866 individuals turned away due to lack of availability. The Trustees have decided to use endowment Funds to construct two new study rooms on the main floor. The two new study rooms are being added in January 2020.

- English at Large holds three conversation groups per week for English learners at all levels. In FY '19 there were 24 learners enrolled in conversation groups meeting weekly at the WPL.
- Meeting rooms are reserved multiple times per day. Library programming has gained in popularity but the rooms are also reserved for community groups and non-profits of all types. Use of meeting space more than doubled in nine years.
- We now have a “Library of Things”. This collection is mainly associated with technology. Items include hotspots, a Philips Picopix projector, slide/film convertors, thermal camera to help detect heat loss, and a moisture meter to test for dampness in walls, doors and window sills.

Winchester is a Member of the Minuteman Library Network

- Winchester has been a member of Minuteman since 1985. Member libraries include Cambridge, Newton, Lexington, Arlington, Medford, Woburn, Bedford and many others, for a total of 36 public libraries and 5 academic libraries.
- Minuteman has a total of nearly 6 million items available to library card holders.
- 1,939,083 items were transferred between libraries in FY '19. Most recent data shows we sent 47,543 items to other libraries and received 61,721 items, annually. This translates into over 30 bins of items needing to be sorted, scanned, shelved and requires the notification of the person requesting the items. It is not unusual for us to have 900 items waiting to be picked up by the patrons requesting items.
- When the building was closed and we instituted curbside pick-up, we averaged 1,500 items on the holdshelf, waiting to be picked up by the patrons requesting the items.

Narrative of the Town of Winchester

Located just eight miles northwest of Boston, the Town of Winchester has developed from its seventeenth century colonial village beginnings into a thriving residential community noted for its fine public school system, beautiful homes, historic and inviting town center, two commuter rail stations and easy access to Boston. It's currently ranked as one of the top communities in which to live in Massachusetts.

Land Area: 6.04 sq. miles

Population (2000 Census): 20,810

Population (2010 Census): 21,382

Population (From Winchester Census): 22,800

The Town is home to Kidstock Theater, Winchester Hospital, the Jenks Center, the Griffin Museum of Photography, the Winchester Community Music School, and a vibrant farmers market. The Winchester Conservancy operates Wright-Locke Farm as a working farm with activities for people of all ages. It connects the community to its agricultural past and fosters land stewardship. The Town leases the historic Sanborn House to the Winchester Historical Society, which is restoring it for use by the community. Sports teams from golfing to baseball and soccer bring families together.

Today Winchester's population of 22,800 is undergoing yet another transformation as global corporations move into Boston and workers seek housing in communities with good schools and public transportation, both of which Winchester has. The result is a more ethnically diverse population.

Using *Census Bureau 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates*,

- The median age in Winchester is 43.3, an increase from 42.9 in only a few years.
- The median value of a Winchester home is \$1.125 million.
- 2.3% of the population are below the poverty level. 210 people age 60+ live below the poverty level. Approximately 15% of households have incomes less than \$50,000.
- The largest percentage of people fall into the 45 to 54 year age group with 17.7% of the population. This is also the same percentage of the population over age 65.
- Between 2011 and 2016 those age under 18 years, grew by 11.3% and those aged 65-74 grew by 15%.
- 4,094 people (19.3%) speak a language other than English.
- 3,792 people (about 17%) are foreign born.
- More than 833 children in the Winchester Public Schools come from households where a second language is spoken at home. The list of languages includes Arabic, Urdu, Bulgarian, Tamil, Greek, Russian, German, French, Chinese, and Malayan. (In 2010 there were more than 500 children from households where a second language was spoken at home.)
- Although 87% of the population identify as "White", Winchester's population has become more racially and ethnically diverse in the last decade. Census data reveal 14% of the Winchester population is now Asian, a dramatic increase from 9.3% in 2010.

Winchester Community-Wide Needs Assessment (2018)

In February 2017 the Town embarked on a Community-Wide Needs Assessment to identify and prioritize the concerns of Winchester residents, particularly around social services, well-being, and civic engagement. The firm of Health Resources in Action, Boston, MA was hired. Typical agencies such as Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census data, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health provided data. A total of 1,035 residents completed the survey. In October 2018 the results were published. The following results are of value to this strategic planning process.

First the Winchester population is growing in size and is becoming more racially diverse with the largest increase in the Asian population. Overall, the population is highly skilled with high levels of educational attainment.

Despite overall high household incomes, some segments of the population are economically vulnerable (younger adults, older adults, Asian and Hispanic residents.)

A population of grandparents have come here with their adult children and they don't speak English... How can we get those grandparents to be more involved in Town?

Housing costs in Winchester are high with about 20% of households meeting the definition of 'cost-burdened' – housing costs exceeding 35% of income.

Over one-third of residents age 75 or older have some type of disability.

Support services for older adults and support for independent living were specific issues of high concern among survey respondent age 65 and older.

Over a quarter of survey respondents age 65 and older indicated that mental health and social isolation for older adults was of "high concern."

Nearly half of survey respondents indicated that drug use among youth was a high concern. To a lesser degree but remaining quite high is use of alcohol, tobacco and vaping.

English is not the first language for approximately 16% of students enrolled in Winchester Public Schools and about 4% identified as 'English Language Learners' [2017-2018 school year].

PLANNING METHODOLOGY

Initial planning began in the summer of 2019 with the hiring of Chuck Flaherty, Library Consultant to assist us with this project. Chuck's forty years of public library experience is invaluable and particularly suited to assisting us with our Strategic Plan.

Two committees were formed: the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the Community Strategic Planning Committee. The Steering Committee was composed of the four library department heads, the assistant director, the library director, one member of the Board of Trustees, and three members of the public all having children of various ages.

The Community Strategic Planning Committee consisted of thirteen people with the following associations:

1. Long-time library patron and donor
2. Past President of the Friends of the Library and long-time patron
3. A representative of Winchester's Wright-Locke Farm
4. A member of the Coalition for a Safer Winchester, highly involved with students and the schools
5. Director of the Council on Aging

6. Winchester High School Librarian
7. Newsletter Editor from the Friends of the Winchester Public Library
8. Member of the Board of Trustees (same person served on the Steering Committee)
9. Select Board Member
10. Representative from the Winchester School of Chinese Culture (attended only one meeting)
11. Parent of young children
12. Library user with young children and a background in user assessment
13. Member of Community Outreach for the Winchester School of Chinese Culture (attended only one meeting)

September 6, 2019

Steering Committee, Session 1: Library Administration introduced the process. Identified focus groups, dates and facilitators.

September 27, 2019

Steering Committee, Session 2: Survey questions and publicity were discussed.

September/October

Focus Groups scheduled.

November 2019

Survey available to the public for the entire month both online and with hardcopies at the library.

November 8, 2019

Community Committee Session 1, facilitated by consultant. Orientation to the process, report on the community, public library trends. Facilitator led the **SOAR** exercise.

December 13, 2019

Community Committee Session 2, facilitated by consultant. Results of focus groups and survey results shared and discussed

January 8, 2020

Steering Committee, Session 3: Consultant facilitated **SOAR** exercise. SOAR results compared to Community Planning Committee results (from published document), mission and vision statements reviewed.

January 16, 2020

Library staff attended one of two sessions facilitated by the consultant which brought together results from the Steering Committee and the Community Committee. Service responses were formed.

January 30, 2020

Library Department Heads identified Goals for Service Responses.

February 7, 2020

Steering Committee and Community Committee join together with interested staff members to share results and goals from the process. Lunch was served in gratitude for their service.

February-May 2020

Administration prepares final document and submits the plan to the Board of Trustees for approval and adoption.

USER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Focus Groups – Total of Six Focus Groups were held September/ October 2019

1. Instructors of English Learners with English at Large
 - This was a small group of instructors that hold conversation groups at the Library plus a representative of English at Large.
 - Asked for audio books packaged with the book geared for high interest, low vocabulary learners.
 - Would like to see special events where ESL students can attend with their families and make it about the event topic and not about learning English. Special American holidays would be well attended. Maybe a Valentine's Day event where the children could make valentines.
 - English learners are all not from Winchester, they come from many communities so events should be advertised widely.
 - They would appreciate a visit from a technology librarian who could introduce online resources and demonstrate the new digital flat screen in the small meeting room.

2. Interview with Philip Beltz, Director of the COA at the Jenks
 - Funding through the Cummings Foundation opens up many possibilities. Especially co-sponsoring events and utilizing the Jenks new 15 passenger van.
 - The Jenks is looking to extend programming for ESL learners. They are quite familiar with the marked increase in the Chinese speaking population.
 - He mentioned the availability of the kitchen at the Jenks for co-sponsored events.
 - They value the computer classes Ran Cronin, Head of Technology and Information Services, holds at the Jenks.

3. Exploring Barriers to Access – beyond ADA
 - Small group with attendance staged allowing for individual interviews.
 - All attendees enjoyed the library, were comfortable using the catalog, getting a library card, asking for help, had no problems with current signage, and saw no issue with overdue fines.
 - They only used the web site to get to the catalog and reserve museum passes.
 - They thought more comfortable seating would be appreciated as well as a place to get coffee.
 - They objected to the noise the kids make when they come in after school.

4. Early Teens – High School

- Don't come to the library because the school has everything they need.
- They would come if we had a nice, comfortable teen area.
- They don't borrow books because they have to be returned and they forget.
- They don't feel welcome. In the children's room they felt welcome, but not in the adult area. They would be more likely to visit if there was a dedicated area for teens.
- The only events they would consider would have to have food.
- They don't use OverDrive for eBooks, Hoopla or databases – one participant thought his Mom did.
- They would be interested in speakers if they were good and they received extra credit for attending.

5. Children's Services

Group was small but consisted of parents of children spanning ages 3 to 13.

- Generally people like the windows and the view but they don't like the floor plan with picture books in the back of the room and chapter books and non-fiction up front.
- Lexington has better site lines with low shelving.
- Middle school students wish they had space upstairs as they don't feel welcome upstairs.
- Most people visit once or twice per week, after school or on weekends.
- They really like the displays.
- Surprisingly, people hear about special events from a flyer on the door and the web site – not social media.
- People love the cooking club. They want more intergenerational programs like cooking club and crafts they can make as a family.
- Want collaboration from Winchester School of Music, Kidstock Theater and Author Fest. (Which we already do so the publicity must be lacking.)
- More discussion of the need for a well-defined teen area.

6. Middle School Students

- Want a space to hang out and relax. They don't feel welcome in the adult area and they have aged out of the children's room.
- They liked the Harry Potter events and don't know about the other events. Suggest using the school email system to reach the students.
- They use Hoopla but other online sources through our web site were a surprise.
- None of the students in the group knew we had a teen librarian on staff.
- Other suggestions include a greenhouse and outside swing.

Community Survey Results

An eleven question community survey was available for the entire month of November 2019. The link to SurveyMonkey was on our home page as well as the Town's home page. Paper copies were available at all service desks. Approximately 200 library users completed the survey. Nearly all respondents indicated they visit the library weekly or monthly. Most respondents were between the ages of 35 and 54. The survey was not distributed to all town residents via a town-wide mailing and hence was limited to only current library users.

Noteworthy Survey Results

- Although our collections are generally valued, many library users want larger print collections, more children's chapter books, a larger collection of large print titles, shorter waiting times for new books, more space to work quietly and comfortably, and a teen space.
- There was a desire expressed for more special events, for children and adults, especially on the weekends. They also want less age limitations on children's events, they find the rules very limiting.
- Parking clearly needs to be addressed. Spaces with a short time limit located near the front entrance or in the parking lot would help. Also, eliminating staff parking in the lot would free up many parking spaces – this pertains to both town hall employees as well as library employees.
- Many complaints about noise and the lack of quiet study space. The noise is from the staff as well as the students and adults.
- The general response regarding the possibility of eliminating overdue fines was that it would make no change to their use of the library. Some suggested no fines for children's materials, or amnesty days, but generally respondents showed no desire for eliminating overdue fines.
- The top three things the public most values about the library is the ability to borrow items from the Minuteman Network, browsing the collections, and borrowing museum passes.
- Special events that most interested adults were author talks, lectures on historical topics, and musical concerts or events.
- Special events that most interested children were STEAM programs, Lego and robotics, and hands-on craft programs.
- Lack of available copies was the most popular response as to why someone was unable to locate a specific item at the library. The respondents did comment on how very helpful the staff is when trying to locate an item.
- Museum passes continue to be the most popular non-traditional item to borrow. Hot-spots are also very popular.

From Vision to Service

Both the Steering Committee and the Community Committee reviewed the Community Vision and the Winchester Public Library's Vision Statement from the Strategic Plan 2014-2018. Both committees found the statements currently appropriate, offering no updates.

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

Community Vision

Winchester will be a community fostering civic engagement, educational excellence, and environmental stewardship, while preserving the natural beauty, architectural heritage, and historic character of the town. Winchester will embrace a diverse population, civic discourse and respect for each resident. Winchester's vibrant business, cultural and recreational offerings will be engaging to residents and visitors alike.

Winchester Public Library's Vision Statement

The Winchester Public Library will provide information leadership supporting educational, recreational, and cultural development for all in a safe, collaborative, respectful, and technologically fluid environment.

Winchester Public Library's Mission Statement

The Winchester Public Library is a dynamic community resource that endeavors to improve the quality of life for its library patrons by providing

- The resources, services and support they need to make informed decisions, resolve issues and answer questions
- Children and teens with the programs, services and materials they need to succeed in school and satisfy their educational and recreational interests as they grow from infants to young adults
- The resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and to support intellectual growth throughout their lives
- A safe and welcoming physical space to meet and interact with others or to sit quietly and read and have access to the ever-growing resources and services available through the library's web site.

LIBRARY SERVICE GOALS

Discussions led to the identification of six areas of service to be addressed in the coming five years: Collections, Communication/Public Relations, Programs, Building/Space Utilization, Staff, and Technology. The Library Staff met in January to review the first draft of Service Responses then Library Department Heads molded the first draft into a clearly defined set of Goals.

Goal: Library collections will be responsive to the needs and interests of the community.

Action Item: Collections will be improved to better serve the needs of ESL instructors and learners.

Action Item: Chinese materials will be considered for addition to the collection.

Action Item: The allocation of the entire materials budget will be evaluated in terms of usage and overall importance to the collection.

Action Item: Weeding procedures will be re-evaluated to ensure the collection remains as strong as possible.

Action Item: Evaluate signage throughout the building and make recommendations for improvement.

Action Item: Investigate the use of end panel displays in the adult collections.

Goal: Improve awareness of library services among all residents and staff through improved communication and public relations.

Action Item: Improve intra-staff communications by use of email and other methods.

Action Item: Communication with the general public will be improved through an increased, coordinated use of social media.

Action Item: Partnerships with existing town organizations will be used to better promote special events.

Goal: Enhance library programming through special events for all age groups.

Action Item: Staff schedules will be changed to allow for offering more special events on weekends.

Action Item: Work with English at Large to develop and promote family programs that have an emphasis on American culture.

Action Item: Consider increasing the number of intergenerational programs being offered.

Goal: The use of the existing building will be maximized to address the interests and needs of the community.

Action Item: With a data driven examination of circulation and weeding, consider the shifting of collections for better space utilization.

Action Item: Create a timeline for the planning and incorporation of a teen space within the building.

Action Item: Create a “finding aid” to assist the public in locating the numerous segments to the children’s collection.

Action Item: Short-term parking near the entrances, the reduction of staff parking, improved signage, and enforcement will be introduced to address the lack of sufficient available parking.

Action Item: Consider the feasibility of shelving all adult fiction on one floor.

Goal: Ongoing staff development opportunities for all staff members will enhance and maintain skills.

Action Item: Hold more frequent in-service training sessions for staff members addressing OverDrive, Hoopla, and other essential skills needed by staff members throughout the building.

Action Item: Establish core competencies for all positions that engage with the public, and create specific in-service training opportunities.

Goal: Library patrons and staff will have access to the latest information technology.

Action Item: Evaluate all operating systems and software on computers for both the public and the staff with the goal of consistency throughout the building.

Action Item: Evaluate current state of patron technology on an annual basis to ensure an appropriate level of performance.

Action Item: Upgrade the time and print management system in adult services.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVAL

This Strategic Plan for the years 2022-2026 was approved by the Winchester Public Library's Board of Trustees on October 20, 2020.

Ingrid Geis, Chair

Jane Murray

Wendy Karle, Vice-Chair

Angela Murdough

Mary Ann O'Callaghan