City of Stoughton

Additional Staffing Request Form

General Information

Date:	07/13/2022
Director:	Jim Ramsey
City Department:	Library
Requested Position Title:	Library Assistant II – Adult Services
Status:	☐ 40 Hours ☐ 30 Hours ☐ 24 Hours ☐ 22.5 Hours ☒ Other 22 hours

Directions:

Before adding a new position to our budget, we need to justify the significant additional expense. Increasing headcount is an important and expensive decision that can only be funded with anticipated increased productivity, expense reduction, and/or additional revenues.

The Employee Cost Summary will be completed by the Director of Human Resources & Risk Management once this form is received.

Justification

Give a specific explanation regarding why the proposed position is critical to the operation of your department: Attach proposed or existing position description and organizational chart.

This is a part-time position at 22 hours per week, identical to the two existing Adult Services Library Assistants. Both positions report directly to the Adult Services Librarian. Their primary responsibility is assisting patrons in person, by phone, and via email at our busy 2nd floor Information Desk.

This desk is the only service point on the library's 2nd floor, and as such must be staffed continuously for all of the 68 hours per week the building is open to the public. Remarkably, only three staff members—one full-time and two part-time—must cover this desk, with occasional help from other department supervisors and Library Substitutes.

This new position's primary responsibility will be providing assistance to patrons at the 2nd floor Information Desk, freeing up our other staff for programming and outreach.

Staffing this desk is challenging, even in the best of times. Staff are often forced to leave the desk unattended for a period of time to accommodate mandatory breaks. Because this is the only point of service for the Mezzanine level and 2nd floor, this raises considerable safety concerns, especially when large numbers of young people are present in the after-school hours. (Due to our proximity to River Bluff Middle School, the library is a popular after-school destination.) Recent incidents involving fights between groups of young people further underscore the need for consistent supervision in this space.

The Library Board has identified increased services—programs, events, outreach, etc.—to young people and teens in particular as a key priority in the coming years. (Goal 2, Objective C in the Library's 2020-2022 Strategic Plan, attached). Our talented Library Assistant in charge of Teen Services, Cynthia Schlegel (.6 FTE), has done a phenomenal job expanding services to young people in recent years, but has reached the limit of what can be accomplished at current staffing levels. This is because Cynthia, along with Library Assistant Amy Hynek and Adult Services Librarian Amanda Bosky, are responsible for staffing our 2nd floor Information Desk. Amanda, Amy, and Cynthia spend a significant amount of their time covering this service desk, time that could be spent on programming, collection development, and outreach.

Cynthia currently spends 20 of her 24 hours each week staffing the Information Desk, leaving a scant 4 hours each week for planning and programming. With an additional library assistant position to staff the desk, Cynthia could devote more time to programming and outreach through after-school activities and partnerships with other organizations like the Youth Center and the school district. The last two years have been difficult ones for the young people in our community. Adolescents in particular have suffered from unprecedented social isolation and disruption to their education. The additional hours provided by this position would allow Cynthia to be present during the after-school hours to engage directly with this population by providing positive and constructive library experiences.

Additionally, our Adult Services Librarian and part-time Library Assistant would be available to hold open "office hours" to offer assistance with technology instruction and workforce development. Adults 55+ are one of the most frequent and highest-need user groups we serve at the library. Many of these users lack basic computer skills and require extensive staff assistance in order to apply for jobs, obtain benefits, or avoid eviction. Since the pandemic, staff report a significant increase in patrons in crisis who require intensive help with technology. Providing that level of assistance at current staffing levels is not sustainable.

Impact

If position is not approved, give specific departmental impact as well as impact to City services and other departments:

Our programs and services for teens and adults will continue to be limited by our small staff. Our Teen Services Library Assistant, Cynthia Schlegel, will have less time to engage with young people in our community. She will have to continue to decline offers for collaboration and outreach from the school district and other agencies.

Services and programs for young adults, in particular, will continue to be limited, and in some cases may be scaled back, as Cynthia is increasingly called upon to cover the Information Desk. This will result in fewer opportunities for young people in our community to participate in safe, supervised library activities.

Staff from other departments, and occasionally the Director, will be required to cover the Information Desk, reducing time spent on other essential tasks.

Alternatives

List alternatives to filling this position: Give specific alternatives, i.e., restructure – attach additional documents, if necessary.

One alternative has already been employed as a stop-gap measure for the past several years: The use of Library Substitutes to cover the Information Desk in order to allow full and part time staff to plan and implement programs.

This solution has its own attendant costs, which are significant. Because the Substitute position offers fewer hours and an unpredictable schedule, turnover is high, as candidates often use it as a stepping stone to a more permanent position. High turnover means our permanent staff must devote additional time to training and orientation for new hires, further stretching our limited resources.

Our Substitutes, as knowledgeable and competent as they are, cannot provide the same level of assistance as our permanent full and part time staff because they work only sporadically. If this position were approved we

could likely reduce the number of Substitute hours used, though Substitutes would still be required to cover staff vacations and other absences.

We could continue to rely on our limited-term Teen Services Intern position for additional assistance, though for reasons outlined below, the result will be more work for Cynthia and our other permanent Adult Services staff.

Some background: Recognizing the need for increased services to young adults, the Library Board in 2017 created the position of Teen Services Intern. Funding for the first year was provided by a grant, and the position was included in the operating budget starting in 2018.

Recruiting has been challenging from the outset. In fact, the wage was increased and the number of hours reduced to make the position more attractive after failing to attract a single applicant in 2020. Due to the limited-term nature of an internship, Cynthia must spend a large portion of her time on recruitment, orientation, and training, further reducing time spent on services and programming. In 2021, the board expanded the internship's job description to include providing assistance at the Information Desk and programming for adults—again, to broaden the position's appeal to potential candidates. This reduced the burden on Cynthia somewhat, but at only 8 hours per week for fewer than 6 months of the year, the position's impact remains limited.

Ultimately, the intern position was a stop-gap measure to provide support in the absence of a permanent staff member. If this personnel request is granted, we would likely move the intern to the Children's Services department to assist with summer programming, a task that requires far less up-front training than staffing the Information Desk.

We could leave the 2nd floor information desk unattended for longer periods of time, though due to the above-mentioned safety concerns, this is inadvisable.

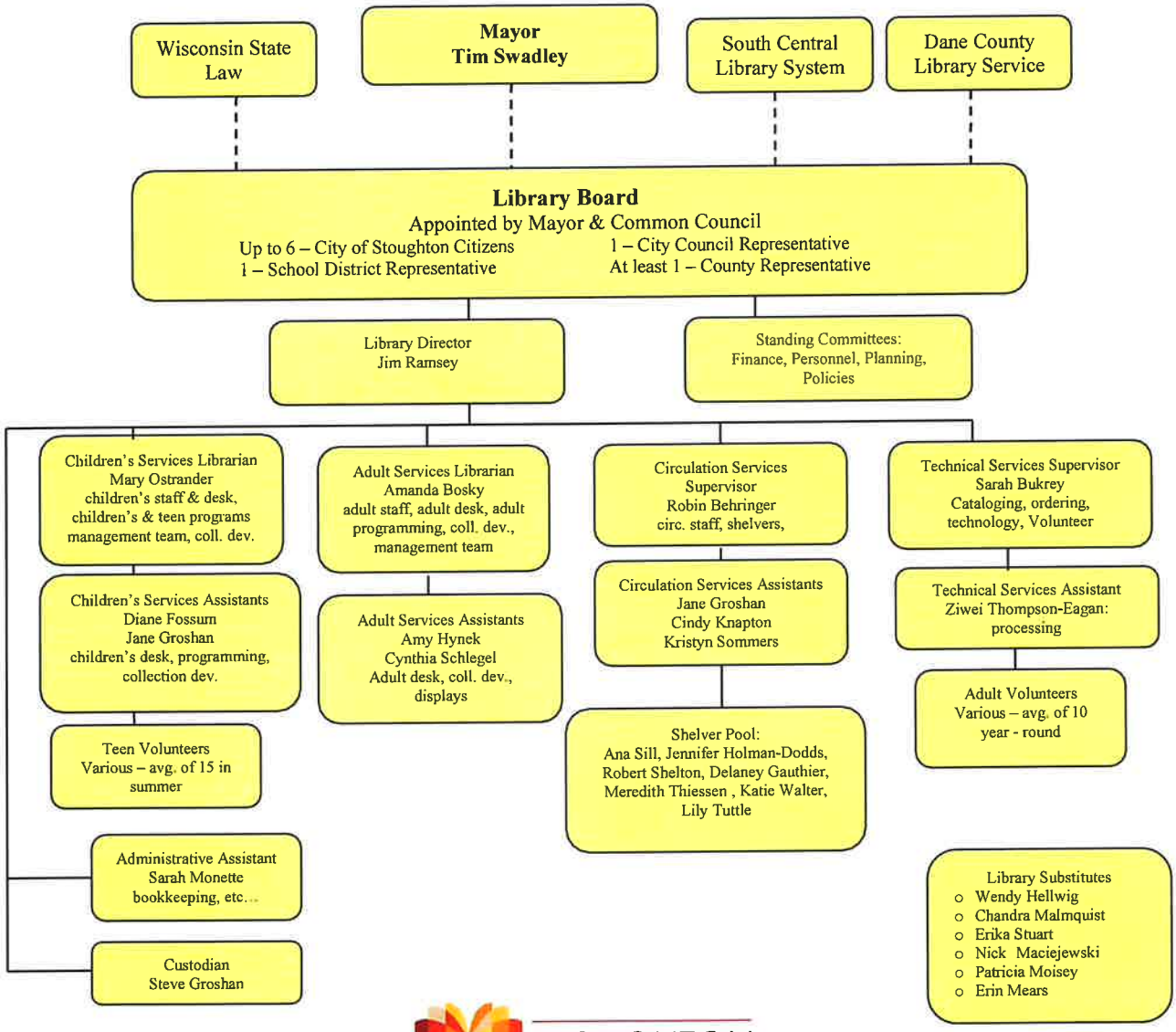
Submitted By

Director:

Click here to enter text.

Signature: **James Ramsey, Director** **Date: 7/13/2022**

Stoughton Public Library Organizational Chart (with duties)



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