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**A Strategic Plan for the Board of Trustees of the**

**Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library, Gloucester, MA**

**Introduction**

Creating a strategic plan for the volunteer Board of Trustees of the Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library is a complex task. Most boards are comprised of volunteers with little or no experience of serving, yet with a passion for the organization of which they serve. Also, for the most part, the governance that a board provides is often rote in nature, moving the organization along incrementally. There are seldom large issues to manage.

That is not the case with this Library board. The board is comprised of members with significant board level experience, an extraordinary passion for the Library, deep roots in the community and a large building project on their doorstep. Also, the board members have the time and interest to become quite involved in the intricacies of the Library and its future. Many have been board members for quite some time.

I was asked to create a strategic plan for the Board of Trustees. I began the process with several meetings with the library director and the president of the board. I then facilitated a half day retreat with the Trustees to discuss values and strategy. A follow up meeting with the Trustees focused on board attributes and their personal connection to the board. We also looked at the attributes of what constitutes a Trustees for the Library.

Using the information collected from those meetings, I have attempted to provide a “strategic structure” moving forward, focusing on crafting the Trustees’ statements on vision, mission, values, and strategy. This plan is offered as a draft. It includes three parts: Part A provides the context that I used. It describes the fundamentals of a governing board and changes in libraries that trustees need to be aware. Part B is the vision and mission statements of the Library. It is provided for reference and as a bridge between the theory and practice. Part C focuses on the vision, mission, values, attributes and strategy of the Board of Trustees of the Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library.

**Part A: The Theory**

**Board of Trustees**

Each governing board is, in essence, an organization within an organization—with its own responsibilities, mandates, culture, goals, members and practices. It should be intention when defining its own boundaries, obligations, and aspiration. Board mission and strategy statements should present concise language and be built on the following principals:

* Be consistent with, not repetitive of, the organizations mission, vision, and values statements.
* Be compatible with the organization’s bylaws that reflect the responsibilities of the board.
* Be straightforward about the boards function, culture, goals, and expected trustee behaviors and teamwork.

*(March 2018 Trustee*)

**The Library as People**

As the library’s roles change and expand, library staff have refined and broadened their skills to meet new needs and define the library’s continuing value to the community. They serve many roles, as coaches, mentors, facilitators, and teachers---more than simply as sources of information. Measuring outcomes is more important than measuring outputs. An intelligent community, not large circulation numbers is the primary library goal. The public library comes alive when it is teaming with people from all walks of life: families, teens, students, job seekers, entrepreneurs, immigrants, retirees, authors, and artists.

*(The Aspen Institute | Action Guide for Re-Envision Your Public Library Version 2.0)*

**Part B: Vision, Mission and Goals of the Library**

**Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library Vision Statement**

To foster the values of place, belonging, and connection in the Gloucester community.

**Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library Mission Statement**

To be a place of learning, innovation, and creativity, to nurture and strengthen the community.

**Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library Goals**

* Align library assets to inspire learning, drive development, grow social capital, and create opportunities.
* Provide access to content.
* Ensure the long-term sustainability of the public library.
* Cultivate leadership.

**Part C: The Trustees**

**Board of Trustees Vision Statement**

Ensure the effective delivery of free public library services to the people of Gloucester while honoring the past and enabling the future.

**Board of Trustees Mission Statement**

The mission of the Board of Trustees of the Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library is to work as a collaborative, cooperative, and consultative body to:

* Set the long term goals and priorities of the Library, adapting as necessary to address evolving internal and external needs and priorities;
* Ensure the maintenance and sustenance of the corporation’s physical assets necessary to sustain Library functions
* Safeguard, grow and wisely use the financial resources of the Corporation;
* Support functional plans and ongoing Library operations; and
* Advocate on behalf of the Library and its mission in the greater Gloucester community.

**Board of Trustees Values Statement**

The Board of Trustees of the Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library is an inclusive, empathetic and diverse body committed to the success of the Library through personal and professional integrity, fiduciary stewardship, organizational accountability, and an appreciation of the strengths, challenges, and opportunities in the community in which it serves.

**Board of Trustees Strategy Statement**

This is an important and challenging time for the Library and therefore the Board of Trustees. The ongoing planning of a new library building is compelling the Trustees to make long term and complex decisions and consider actions relative to financing, fundraising, design, planning, and public relations. This additional complex project is in addition to the regular responsibilities of the Trustees. It is critical that this does not create division within the Trustees or impact regular library management and operations. It is important that the ongoing work on both routine business and the building project is kept in perspective.

There is an identified need to increase the size of the Board of Trustees. When queried about the skills that would be required to be an effective member of the Board, the following attributes were identified. These skills can be found throughout the current Board.

1. Advocate for community support and goodwill
2. Able to work in a collaborative environment
3. Socially adept and with the good interpersonal skills
4. Gregarious, empathetic, and with a positive personality
5. Dedicated to the community
6. Diverse; multilingual; reflective of the community
7. Comfortable and knowledgeable in working on large projects
8. Fundraising experience and financial expertise preferred
9. Exhibit leadership skills
10. Be a strategic thinker

The Board of Trustees has fiduciary responsibility for the governance of the Library, serving to oversee and shape its broad strategies and policies. Boards are, as indicated, are an organization within an organization. By directly supporting the Executive Director of the library, library staff, essential programming, and community engagement, the Trustees of the Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library fill an important and strategic role in the growth and success of the institution.

**Respectively submitted,**

**Richard G. Weissman**

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