



Bigelow Free Public Library  
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## Five-Year Strategic Plan



### Introduction

It's an exciting time to live in Clinton. The town is investing in infrastructure, like roads, and renovating town properties, like Savage Field and the Senior Center. It's also an exciting time to be part of the library planning process. The trustees of the library are thrilled to be part of the innovation and improvements happening in town as well as changes at the library. The library board is thinking ahead for the library of the future and how it can change your life.

The Bigelow Free Public Library is situated across from the Town Hall in the heart of Clinton, MA, a municipality of approximately 13,800 people. The physical library was built in 1902, but the town has had a library as far back as 1846, first as a private enterprise, then as a library association and, finally, as a free public library in 1873. Prior to the construction of its current building, the library was housed in the Town Hall.

The current building (built in 1902) originally housed an art gallery on the second floor, which is currently the youth services area. The first floor was a lending library and reading area, complete with the traditional closed stacks of books for the librarians to retrieve at the behest of patrons.

Unfortunately, from a practical, modern library standpoint, the closed stacks of books still exist, taking up about twenty percent of the physical space. The brick structure (very solid) obscures sight lines and limits wi-fi availability, depending where in the building you are. The stone ceiling mirrors that of the Gaustivino room in the Boston Public Library, but much smaller.

The lower level, currently used as a community room, was a men's smoking lounge in the 1950s. Older Clintonians still remember this room from when they were children.



*First floor reading area (1903)*



*First floor reading and browsing area (2018)*

In 1991 the current building had its one renovation with the addition of an elevator. This part of the building is crumbling. Until recently, it was also leaking, both on the second floor roof (where it was added to the original building) and in the lower level.

The Town of Clinton has a walkable downtown with a cluster of small shops on High St. (a block away from the library) and bigger stores farther away. Many of these stores are of the traditional "Mom & Pop" variety and several have been in town for generations. A few major manufacturers are located in Clinton, bringing tax dollars and jobs. Clinton also boasts the Museum of Russian Icons, believed to be the largest single collection of religious Russian icons in the United States.

The Bigelow Library and its staff have been collaborating with other organizations, businesses, and town departments on events, sponsorships, and programming. This has helped increase the visibility of the library.

## **Planning Process**

The Bigelow Library began its strategic planning process in May 2018, involving representatives from the Friends, Trustees, Staff, Clinton Public Schools, and Town Hall, as well as Clinton residents and patrons of the library. Members of the Strategic Planning Committee were volunteers who answered the request posted in the local newspaper (*The Item*) and sent out with the monthly Constant Contact upcoming events email. With two meetings (as outlined and recommended by the Massachusetts Library System), the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee brainstormed the following aspects:

1. SOAR: Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and measurable Results for the Bigelow Library

2. Visioning Exercise: Personal visions and aspirations for the Town of Clinton and how the Bigelow Library might fit into those visions. (facilitated by Kristi Chadwick, consultant from the Massachusetts Library System or MLS)

Following the first meeting, the Bigelow Library staff created a community survey using the brainstorming ideas. An electronic survey was linked from the website, sent in a Constant Contact email, and linked from Facebook; a paper-based survey was distributed outside of Town Meeting and left on the front desk for walk-in participation. From the results of this survey (200+ people responded), we determined in what direction the residents of Clinton would like the Bigelow Library to evolve.

Goals listed in the plan are based on input from the Advisory Committee, Trustees, and Community Survey, as well as some goals that have been reviewed and updated from the previous five-year plan. We will plan for the next five years using these goals.

## **Mission Statement**

The Bigelow Free Public Library supports the community of Clinton and its residents by offering materials and programs to entertain, educate, and enlighten the population. The staff fulfills the needs of patrons through research assistance, interlibrary loans, readers advisory services, and actual purchases, as well as offering programs related to this mission.

## **Vision Statements**

- Bigelow Library will be a community resource for Clinton residents.
- Bigelow Library will be a formal & informal gathering site for all ages to collaborate, meet, study, learn, play, and read.
- Bigelow Library will support the information needs of the Clinton schools, municipality, and other organizations.
- Bigelow Library will be a welcoming and safe place for all people.

## **Assessment of User Needs**

Based on the community survey and input from the Strategic Planning Committee, users want to see a better facility to accommodate the growing collection and ongoing programming. As stated earlier, the building is essentially the same as in 1902, but with a larger demand on the electrical system and available space. In planning for the next five years, respondents consistently identified four areas they felt that we should concentrate on for future planning: facilities, community, materials, and programs. These were open response questions. Other topics were mentioned, but not with the frequency or fervor that these four subjects were discussed--both positive and negative.

## Facilities

Some of the comments concerned a lack of private study rooms, lack of programming space in the children's area, and not enough room for books. The general consensus is that the building desperately needs updating to fulfill its purpose for the residents of Clinton.

Several people mentioned a general overhaul or the suggestion that the library start from scratch in a modern facility. Any of these larger projects will require major commitment and capital on the part of the Town of Clinton and its residents, but the current facility may be able to accommodate minor changes to make it more comfortable.

"Improve space in children's area. Need to find means to expand."

"It is in need of MANY repairs. Especially the basement! ... The whole building feels old, musty and outdated"



<--Community room



Teen area-->

## Community

Respondents and committee members agreed that collaboration on projects and being present in the community were important for Clinton and for the library. Some of the ideas mentioned were offering multi-lingual programs or materials, working with the schools to help students access databases, and identifying credible online resources.

The library staff and trustees agree that reaching out to the non-English speaking population is certainly desirable and also challenging. Our current Spanish-language collection is small and little-used, but that could be a product of not reaching out. Finding ways to collaborate with all segments of the population would benefit everyone in Clinton.

"Being space that welcomes multi-cultures and develops opportunities for conversations, dialogue and appreciation of one another"

"Collaborating with the school district to integrate more services for the youth of the town"

## Materials

There is definitely a desire for more--more books, more DVDs, more resources in general, including electronic books. Also, some respondents expressed a desire for non-English materials. Several comments merged the desire for more updated materials with the need for more space to hold all the stuff they wanted the library to own.

According to state regulations, sixteen percent of the library's appropriated budget must be spent on materials for patrons. Currently the library is limited by space in addition to budget. Belonging to a network as big as CWMARS does allow patrons access to over a million items without having to store them here.



*Author fair 2018*

"Keep access to popular/new selections available. Keep authors coming to talk."

"Increasing book inventory and stack space."

## Programming

The last focus identified by survey respondents was programs of all sorts, including computer coding classes, more summer reading programs, multi-lingual, educational, movies, guest lecturers, and how-tos, just to name a few of the suggestions. Some respondents want us to do programming at the schools. On the other hand, many respondents also remarked that we have great programming, just do more of it. Programming was sometimes mentioned with comments on the current state of the lower level Community Room.

"Add more group activities for 23-55 age people. Possibly some How To type activities for adults."

"Offer to help teach new technologies. Offer relevant programs and activities."

The Board of Trustees also participated in a separate brainstorming session to identify the areas the library should be focused on in the long term. Working with the same consultant from the MLS, the trustees identified communication, in the form of storytelling and promotional literature, as an additional priority of the Trustees.

The Bigelow Free Public Library staff and trustees reviewed the 2014 Long Range Plan to find that many of the goals were achieved or started. Facilities goals were more long term and less of a priority in the previous plan, but outreach, collection development and technology goals had been reached. Goals not achieved, but still relevant, are included in the 2019 Five-Year Strategic Plan.

The goals for the next five years are strongly based on this community input.

## **Goals & Objectives**

### **Multi-year goals and objectives**

#### **1) Facilities**

##### **a) Create more usable space for collections and programs**

- i) Finish the renovation of the lower level Community Room
- ii) Clear out the "Director's Room" to make it a usable space, either for the director or for meetings
- iii) Research the feasibility of creating a quiet study area/room
- iv) Improve the climate control for patrons' comfort
- v) Work with the Friends of the Bigelow Library to create space for them

##### **b) Create and maintain a capital improvement plan for the library**

- i) Collaborate with facilities director to develop a maintenance schedule
- ii) Research the cost to replace or renovate single-pane windows throughout the building with energy efficient windows
- iii) Work with MBLC, MLS and other library-focused organizations to conduct a feasibility study for renovation of the building.
- iv) Conduct a solar energy feasibility & assessment study

##### **c) Assess the furniture and accoutrements**

- i) Replace bulky, 19th century boardroom tables with smaller, user-friendly ones
- ii) Research procedures to remove and/or sell furniture vis a vis procurement laws
- iii) Update shelving to accommodate more materials without taking up more space
- iv) Improve available storage space for seasonal materials

#### **2) Materials**

##### **a) Focus on Collection Development**

- i) Practice patron-initiated acquisition for new titles
- ii) Keep up with bestsellers and current trends

- iii) Consistent review of collections, following industry recommendations
  - iv) Continued development of non-print collection
  - b) Research non-traditional items for the collection**
    - i) Ongoing evaluation of possible non-traditional items
    - ii) Encourage patron input
- 3) Community Outreach and Collaboration**
- a) Collaborate with local organizations and town departments**
    - i) Work with local organizations to develop cross-cultural programming
    - ii) Continue to participate in local community organizations boards or committees to benefit Clinton
    - iii) Embrace opportunities to host programs for/by local organizations
    - iv) Actively recruit sponsors for programs
  - b) Increase usage of the library**
    - i) Offer more programming wanted/needed
    - ii) Use social media to coordinate with other organizations for cross-promotional opportunities
  - c) Use mobile technology to introduce electronic materials**
    - i) Facilitate library card sign up wherever
    - ii) Enable pop-up training/intro sessions for electronic resources
- 4) Programming**
- a) Collaborate with outside entities**
    - i) Co-sponsor programs with the schools
    - ii) Work with business owners to sponsor programs
    - iii) Coordinate with the Friends for more outreach and publicity
  - b) Offer training workshops**
    - i) Teach computer software and applications training
    - ii) Facilitate how-to workshops
  - c) Multi-lingual programs**
    - i) Schedule story times with non-English components
    - ii) Research the possibility of offering immigration and citizenship classes/training
    - iii) Cultivate relationships with non-English speaking population

## **Outcomes**

The goal of this plan is to keep the Board of Trustees and Library Director focused on what the residents of Clinton and library users claim they want from their library. This is a rough outline of how the trustees and director should proceed in the next five years' planning.

## **Planning Methodology**

After realizing that the bulk of the non-facilities goals and objectives from the previous five-year plan had been met, the director and trustees proceeded with forming a new strategic planning committee to create the library's next five-year plan.

The director solicited for members via Facebook, the Boards of Selectmen and Trustees, library email, newspaper article, and general word of mouth. Fourteen people volunteered and one was asked to join. These people met in May for the SOAR exercise, which led to the survey, which was made available online and in print. The print version was distributed at the Town meeting in June. The survey closed in July.

The second meeting of the committee was a visioning exercise so that people could brainstorm how they view Clinton and how they view their ideal town. The Bigelow Free Public Library wants to fit into that idealistic view of Clinton.

A draft of the plan will be reviewed by a subcommittee of the strategic planning committee and the trustees before being finalized and submitted to the MBLC.

The Bigelow Library staff and trustees would like to thank the following people who served on the committee: Gloria Parkinson, Angela DeVivo, Deborah Marini, Robert Ebstein, Phyllis Staffier, Phil Duffy, Donna Jones, Ian Murray, Jaynelle Bellemore, Jenna Tolan, Jennifer Dakai, Sandi Nichols, and Tony Carchedi.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on

Gloria Parkinson, Chair

Wendy Neil, Vice-Chair

Karen Nugent, Secretary

Tracy Colangione

Angela DeVivo

Alex Zapantis