

Memo

To: Commissioner Jan Callison
From: Judy Regenscheid
Date: September 18, 2017
Re: Library Staffing Plan Union Concerns

On August 11, 2017, the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners and the Hennepin County Library Board received emails from AFSCME 2822 with the subject Library Service Staffing Strategy Survey Report. The email discussed several concerns the union has with the staffing strategy plan implemented in 2016.

Since receipt of the email I have gathered considerable data related to the implementation process and union concerns. I have met with the Library Director, Chief Human Resources Officer and Chief Labor Relations Officer to discuss the validity of issues raised by the union and any gaps and next steps. After reviewing the data I have found that many of the issues raised by the union have been addressed during on-going meeting with Labor Relations and Library management over the course of the last year. Other concerns seemed to be based on perceptions in the facts do not support some of the concerns raised in the email.

I combined the multiple concerns listed into themes and addressed each of them below.

Job Classification and Staffing

A total of 333 staff had their position reallocated (per HR Rules 4.3) after the implementation of the staffing strategy. No staff failed to pass the Library staffing strategy special review nor did any receive a performance improvement plan related to the special review. All staff received a full step salary increase at special review. No staff cuts were made during this process and in fact, the library has added 15.5 FTEs since 2015.

Professional Library Degree

The union has perceived the staffing strategy as devaluing the librarian degree. A key outcome to the plan included reviewing all positions to determine when a library degree best supports the work functions required by the position. As a result, lower level functions, not requiring professional librarian knowledge,

skills, and abilities were moved to lower positions in the organization. This freed librarians to focus on those higher level professional duties. Elimination of the librarian degree at the lower level positions has allowed the library to attract a broader pool of applicants and build diversity into its staffing ratio. This approach is being used in several other areas of the county, where educational degrees are being replaced with job experience.

Job Duties, Skills, and Training

The union expressed concern that the affected groups are doing 'librarian work' without librarian pay and are required to respond to patron questions. As mentioned above, the work transferred from the librarians was lower level tasks that typically would not be part of the librarian duties. Indeed all staff of the library are expected to respond to patron questions. The job descriptions for each job class include this in the job functions, however, varying degrees of response expectations have been defined for different job classes. It would be expected that a librarian would respond to the most complex patron questions and an Associate Librarian to those more general in nature.

The union also raised concern that the staffing plan was not implemented consistently between library buildings. In essence this is true. Each library is designed to meet the needs of its community, a fact library staff are proud of. These differing needs result in different space arrangements and services which would require slight changes in staffing requirements. However, the core basics of the staffing strategy plan remained the same for each building.

Significant training opportunities have been offered to library staff since the staffing plan was implemented. Between March 2016 and August 2017, 270 training courses were available to staff covering a variety of skills and offered to various job classes. Over 4500 individuals participated in these courses (one individual may have attended more than one training session).

When reviewing the 2017 county employee survey, library staff responded that they are being encouraged to develop in their career and have had opportunities to learn and grow. The 2017 survey was completed by 72% of library staff and the library's response rate is in line with that of the Operations business line and overall county results.

	Library				Operations	County
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2017	2017
There is someone at work who encourages my development	76	82	83	83	84	78
In the past year I have had opportunities to learn and grow	88	88	90	91	90	84

Staff Inclusion in Strategy Planning

Throughout the planning of the staffing strategy plan, library staff have had the opportunity to participate and provide input. In 2015, two staff led teams, with more than 200 library staff participating, worked on the development of job expectations. In 2016 a cross-divisional team worked with all staff to identify development themes, the Patron Experience Team was formed, and the Logistics staff team worked on staff tools and communications channels to support staff in doing their work.

When looking at the 2017 county employee survey results, library staff indicated their opinions are heard and respected. Library staff responded in a higher rate than the overall county.

	Library				Operations	County
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2017	2017
When voicing my opinion, I know it is heard and respected			68	77	78	73

Communication

The library provided communication to staff throughout the staff strategy plan implementation. Various communication methods were used including emails to staff, building, team and 1:1 meetings, the creation of a Library Services Strategy SharePoint site, and periodic SharePoint director's messages. These director messages typically saw 3000 hits, indicating not only were staff reading the messages but were doing so multiple times.

The staffing strategy survey indicated staff do not prefer SharePoint as a communication method, preferring face to face meetings. The library is a 'SharePoint' culture where staff routinely monitor and have 2 way conversations via SharePoint, both with management and fellow staff. This communication method assists with the difficulties of getting timely communication to 42 sites. Most messages posted on SharePoint also were notified via email with the link and building managers followed up with face to face discussions with staff.

In addition to the above communication methods, the library director conducted visits to every library building and work area, holding open question-answer sessions with staff. Lastly, at the request of the union, a staff hot line was established to answer questions and provide further information.

When looking at the 2017 county employee survey results, library staff indicated they felt their supervisor does a good job of sharing information.

	Library				Operations	County
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2017	2017
My supervisor does a good job of sharing information	76	77	77	80	82	79

Library Mission

The reframed Library Strategic Plan 2011-2025, incorporated the county's core values and furthered the library's accountability with promises to patrons, communities, and staff. All of these are rooted in the changing and evolving role of the public library. The director messages to staff regularly included the library's commitment to these values as a public library. Nothing in the staffing plan changed the mission of the library.

Morale

Morale is always a concern, especially in time of great change. During the implementation period, the library utilized change management resources to assist staff in working through the changes. Though each individual accepts change in their own manner and time, many staff did so successfully as noted by the multiple positive comments that were made in the staffing strategy survey by staff who felt the

direction was positive and said they were comfortable both with the communication and clarity of the plan.

When looking at the 2017 county employee survey results, library staff indicated they would recommend Hennepin County as a great place to work. The number of staff supporting this sentiment increased from 2016 to 2017, during the time of the staffing strategy implementation.

	Library				Operations	County
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2017	2017
My supervisor or someone at work seems to care about me as a person	91	91	92	92	92	90
I would recommend Hennepin County as a great place to work	78	79	73	77	86	83

As I reviewed the different aspects of the staffing strategy plan and the union concerns, I found that overall the plan and implementation was well conducted. The plan was vetted by County Administration and the County Board prior to final adoption. Once the decision was made to move forward with the staffing strategy, the impact of that decision was negotiated with union leadership. Many of the issues raised in the August 11, 2017 AFSCME 2822 email were addressed and changes were ratified by union membership in the spring of 2016. Ongoing meet and confer sessions continue with the union on a regular schedule. Although there has been more than adequate opportunity for training and obtaining clarity on roles and expectations, role clarity sessions continue to be offered.

The staffing strategy plan was developed to address the future role of libraries in our communities and to keep the Hennepin County Library system a vibrant resource to all. It also addressed the county's strategic direction of having a workforce that is more reflective of the diverse population we serve. Large changes, such as the ones in the staffing strategy plan, change the culture of the current environment. Culture change typically takes 3 years before full adoption. We have just completed year one of the staffing strategy so I would expect that at this point in the implementation we would be hearing mixed feelings working out implementation issues.

No large-scale implementation is done to perfection and there were many learnings by the library as they implemented the staffing plan. Though much training has been offered, the library continues to focus on ensuring staff have the skills to do their jobs. A new training coordinator is being hired to focus on this and work with staff. The library also continues to learn and develop its focus on change management and helping staff through the challenges of strategic change.

In an effort to prepare for the library of the future, align professional librarian skills for higher level duties, and attract a broader more diverse workforce, I continue to support the work of the library and its staffing strategy plan. This is the plan that is needed to meet the needs of our patrons into the future. I will continue to monitor its efforts to ensure the outcomes desired are being met and corrections are made as appropriate.

Please feel free to contact me, Lois Langer Thompson, Kathy Megarry or Michael Rossman with any questions or concerns.

Cc: David Hough
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