



Annual President’s Report for FY 2020  
May 2019 to April 2020

Library Board of Trustees

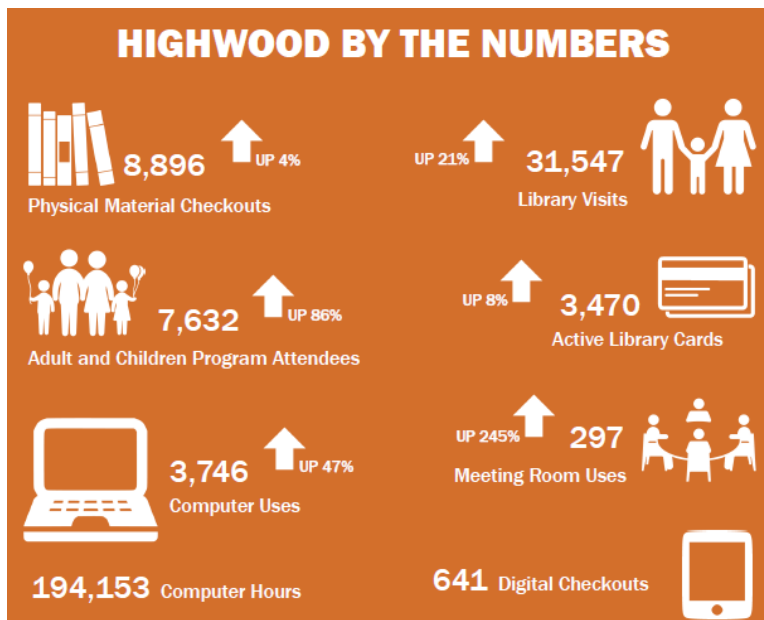
The Standing Committees that met most actively this year were Technology, Policy, and Finance. Committee Chairs prepare annual reports which outline their specific activities for the year.

A new Trustee, Janell Cleland, was appointed by Mayor Pecaro in May 2019. With her appointment, we continued to operate with a full board of nine Trustees during FY20. Laurie Lenzini, having served 9 years as a trustee, is moving out of Highwood and will not be able to continue as Trustee, while Nora will seek reappointment. We will have a vacancy from Diana’s seat, and as of April, there is one candidate interested in joining the Board of Trustees.

Trustee Name	Email	Term Expiration
Nora Loreda	treasurer@Highwoodlibrary.org	May-20
Laurie Lenzini	vicepresident@highwoodlibrary.org	May-20
Diana Joren	trustee6@highwoodlibrary.org	May-20
Catherine Regalado	secretary@highwoodlibrary.org	May-21
Janell Cleland	trustee2@highwoodlibrary.org	May-21
Pat Lenzini	trustee4@highwoodlibrary.org	May-21
Lucy Hospodarsky	president@highwoodlibrary.org	May-22
Bertha Chavez	trustee1@highwoodlibrary.org	May-22
Barbara Cizek	trustee5@highwoodlibrary.org	May-22

Accomplishments – A Vibrant and Relevant Library for Highwood Residents

A glimpse of the impressive statistics from the Executive Director’s Annual report shows the outcomes of the initiatives undertaken in FY20. The team met their goal of improving the library’s relevance in the community.





### Financial Summary and Fundraising

Executive Director Carmen Patlan spent the year focusing on applying for grants and seeking private donations. She successfully raised close to \$135,000 in grants/donations for both programming and building renovations.

On the revenue side, we continue to receive 100% of our tax levy, our share of the Personal Property Replacement Tax, and the Per Capita Grant from the Illinois State Library. The IMET liquidating fund realized a recovery of funds and we received \$3,646. A new source of revenue is the fee we charge for the use of our meeting room during non-library hours.

There were a few expenses that were not originally budgeted related to building repairs (see the Building and Grounds Annual report) and the installation of an 8-camera video surveillance system. The Friends of the Library organization contributed funds to defray the cost of the surveillance system and the building repairs were funded by surplus funds available from FY19. The Reserve Account balance remains at around \$20,000.

#### Tax Levy for FY21

In October, we requested an 18.6% increase over last year's tax levy (an additional \$46,000). Most of the increase is in the Wages and Benefits expense category; the Executive Director salary was increased during the recruiting process to attract a highly qualified candidate, we increased hours for a highly qualified staff person to support Carmen's many initiatives, and we increased our per hour wage for hourly employees to move toward the state mandated minimum wage levels by 2025. This unprecedented increase was supported by the City Council because of the success Carmen demonstrated through statistics of the revitalization of the library and the impact new programming is having on the residents of Highwood. As library usage has increased dramatically, the Council agreed that, in order to sustain this trajectory, we must retain the Director and staff, as they are responsible for the impressive turnaround of the library and the increased value of the library as an asset to the community.

### Supporting the City's Census Effort

Carmen was one of forty nationally selected participants to attend a national conference in Maryland (Washington D.C.) to learn about how cities can organize a successful Census educational program.

Carmen secured a \$32,000 grant from RAILS for a Census outreach program that greatly supported the city's main Census 2020 effort. The grant paid for marketing/educational materials (handouts and full-scale banners), a video in Spanish and English, and enumerators to target the Hard to Count Community here in Highwood.

### Programming

A few months after her arrival in February 2019, Carmen began implementing our strategic plan to create a library that would better serve the needs of our community and be a place for gathering and learning.

To this end, she has created new programming for adults, teens, and children that has increased the foot traffic to the library by an impressive percentage. Most of the new programming has been financially supported by grants.

We continue to offer and support all of the Children's and Adult programming from last year (e.g. children's movie nights, K9-Reading Buddies, crafts, story time, adult book club, Current Events, Sherlock Holmes club, seasonal children's events, English conversation club and many more).

The Director's Annual report contains detailed information about new programming that focuses on personal growth and literacy.

### Personnel Items and Outside Contractors

The Board adopted a new evaluation form for the director.



We supported the Director hiring a Marketing/Communications consultant to help with all the new communication materials, the development of a new website, and branding in order to better highlight the resources the library is offering.

### Operations

The Executive Director and the Marketing/Communications consultant created a new look for the Library's Annual Report.

Library operations have improved as Carmen has set higher expectations for her staff, and she leads by example. Staff is more efficient and more productive. Carmen has sought out volunteers in order to complement her current team. Volunteers include a retired architect who has been helping to provide guidance regarding library future renovations. Volunteer pro-bono architects donated over \$20,000 worth of renderings that Carmen has been able to utilize as she continues to seek out donations and funding for future renovations of the library. Carmen and her staff continue to enlist the support of volunteers to better execute literacy focused programs such as Learning Partners, homework help and more.

### COVID-19 and the Library Shut-Down

Following Governor Pritzker's shut-down order, the library closed its doors in March. Carmen swiftly adapted her staff to this new situation by establishing new work responsibilities to create a new "virtual library" to support patrons during the shut-down. She met weekly with other directors and professionals to stay abreast of issues, new guidelines, and how libraries can best adapt to this new situation.

Carmen and her staff prepared a phase-based re-opening plan to align with the state re-opening timelines.

### Building and Grounds

Major repairs were completed: roof, tuckpointing, plumbing (replacement of the T line with a Y line to resolve the plumbing issue in the bathrooms), sealing of the roof façade to resolve picture window leakage. An 8-camera surveillance system was purchased. Details can be found in the Technology annual report.

### Community and City Outreach

Carmen continued to create and strengthen the partnerships with community organizations, the two school districts, and potential private donors. Her networking and outreach helped secure new free programming (the monthly yoga class), pro bono work for architectural plans, painting, and director office flooring. Through her network, she also obtained free gently used furniture for the fireplace area and the front corner of the adult room.

Carmen created a library newsletter with periodic updates and posted to the library's website. Print materials were also created and updated and some translated into Spanish.

She actively engaged with the Latino community, especially the middle school population, to successfully increase their use of the library.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a certain group of library patrons were in great need of support. Recognizing this, and with the help of the Friends organization, Carmen created opportunities for bringing support to those in need. A fundraising effort was initiated by a Friends' board member, weekly food distribution in partnership with Lake County nonprofits the Roberti Community House and Curt's Café was organized, and Carmen was also able to secure art supplies from two local donors, allowing the library to provide crafts for low



income families to do while in quarantine. The library became a place not only supporting literacy but also the essential needs of daily living.

On several occasions, Carmen presented the state of the library to the City Council, and shared the impressive statistics of new library use, new programming, and the real value that the library represented to the residents of Highwood.

#### Friends of the Highwood Public Library

The group started by Carmen in FY19 continues to support the library through their fundraising efforts.

#### Strategic Plan and the Municipal Building Concept

Carmen continued to use the Strategic Plan to guide her focus of increasing programming to make the library more relevant to the community. She has created a culture amongst the staff that makes customer service the number one priority, set the bar high for performance and communicated expectations. Staff have risen to the level expected and have become more independent and solid contributors to the library's mission.

The municipal building concept explored with the city in 2016 was revisited. At that time, there were many sound reasons supporting the Board's passage of the resolution to further explore the municipal building concept; the stagnant state of the library, a lack of vision to expand services and increase the relevancy to the community, a small budget that could not attract/support a leader who could transform the library into a what it is today, needed building repairs that a budget and reserve funds could not support, and staff lacking fundraising skills. The initial draft plans prepared by FGM Architects for a municipal building housing the library, city administrative offices, the police station, and three jail holding cells greatly reduced the footprint of the library.

Fast forwarding to FY20, after a 9-month transformation of the library into a vital asset of the city, the library is maximizing its current space, and is on a trajectory to quickly outgrow it. With impressive statistics to back up residents' use of the library, Carmen tested the appetite with a few donors for a large-scale building renovation by using a draft architectural plan for a building renovation that was obtained pro-bono from an architectural firm. Her inquiries met with great interest and potential for substantial dollar amounts. Upon learning that a capital campaign to raise enough funds to renovate the interior was a very real possibility, the Board approached the city to explain the need to maintain the entire space for library purposes and that we could independently fund the renovation (note: there is no current plan for an expansion).

The news that the Board wished to suspend the concept of the shared municipal building was met with disappointment by most of the City Council. Their reaction was understandable given the effort and money spent over the last few years by the city to lay the groundwork for selling the city hall property (i.e. boundary agreement with Highland Park, draft drawings by FGM Architects, TIF extension, pursuit of adjacent properties). Several meetings took place with the Mayor, President, City Administrator, and Library Director to brainstorm several concepts that would not shrink the library space so dramatically as the 2017 draft layout. After news came that the TIF extension support by one of the legislators was uncertain (even though both school districts supported the TIF), the city told us the future sale of the city hall property without a TIF is too uncertain so we should go ahead and pursue the renovation of the library space on our own.

Although the current space needs of the library will not allow for a shared municipal building as originally envisioned on the library site, the City Council continues to fully support library operations and will continue to fund the library. The mayor has expressed praise for the new direction the library has taken and its impact on the community.