**The Strategic Planning Process**

“Something which we think is impossible now is not impossible in another decade.”

 - Constance Baker Motley

The Board of Trustees and the Library Director started the strategic planning process in March 2024. Throughout the Spring and Summer months, we gathered data and met as a committee. With the announced retirement of our Library Director shortly into the process, we adjusted the timeline to accommodate the hiring of a new director as well as providing for his participation in the overall plan.

5 years. 10 years. 15 years.

We looked back at all we have accomplished through our long-range planning efforts. After acknowledging many of the great strides and improvements, as well as some of those goals not yet realized, we set out to gather information about library/town/patron wants and needs, as we move ahead to the next 5 years and beyond.

A comprehensive online survey was marketed to the community via the library website, social media, posters, flyers, postcards, town newsletters, area businesses, and through the schools. The survey was also distributed in paper format at the library, Senior Center, Town Hall, and at the Annual Town Meeting. Responses were added to the online results. There were a total of 245 responses.

Careful attention was given when crafting the community survey. The committee selected thoughtful questions that were both evaluative and open-ended, with responses providing us information on where we are currently, and where stakeholders would like to see us headed.

We engaged with Michelle Eberle from Massachusetts Library Services (MLS) to assist us with the process. Michelle facilitated Focus Group opportunities with staff and stakeholders in separate sessions where they participated in the SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) and Community Vision exercises. Our invited stakeholder’s session brought representation from a varied demographic to discuss the library. Invitees represented active patrons, teens, parents of young children, inactive patrons/library non-users, senior citizens, schoolteachers, administrators, community members, and members of Town government.

To specifically reach two of the library’s larger populations, senior citizens, and parents of children, we conducted Community Conversations with these affinity groups. Flyers, posters, and postcards advertised these Community Conversations which were facilitated by Library Trustees.

Using other means to capture information from patrons, we set up micro feedback stations on all three levels of the library. Glinda the Good Witch, famous painter Bob Ross, and Will Smith as Aladdin all invited patrons to complete the prompt, “If I could wave my magic wand, I would \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at the library.” Post-it notes were collected and categorized and provided us with program and collection ideas, further data supporting the need for meeting/study room small spaces, a teen space, and strong validation of the good things FML is currently doing.

During the library’s Summer Reading program, the Children’s Room staff encouraged children to draw a picture of what they might like the library to look like or something they would like to see there. Young artists showed their creativity in works of art displayed on the Children’s Room walls.

Community Assessment is at the core of strategic planning. Our objective through this process was to gather and analyze data to help uncover the priority areas that the library should address over the next few years in the strategic plan.

Based on these results, five overarching strategic priorities were identified along with a multitude of ideas to pursue in the next five years. Each priority and goal represents a component of the community’s vision for the future of Forbush Memorial Library.