

Committee Report on VPL Mission Statement
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According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition, a **library** is:

- a. A place in which reading materials, such as books, periodicals, and newspapers, and often other materials such as musical and video recordings, are kept for use or lending.
- b. A collection of such materials, especially when systematically arranged.
- c. A room in a private home for such a collection.
- d. An institution or foundation maintaining such a collection.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the definition of a **mission statement** is: something that states the purpose or goal of a business or organization.

It’s also used by an entity to explain, in **simple and concise** terms, its purpose for being.

Overview of concerns with the new VPL mission statement:

- Very broad. There is nothing about the statement that one would logically connect with a library outside of actually being told that this is our library’s mission statement.

Previous Mission Statement: VPL encourages a love of reading and commitment to literacy, provides materials and services that satisfy curiosity and stimulate imagination, develops programs that encourages the expression of creativity, and utilizes technology to support collaboration.

New Mission Statement: Our mission is to enhance our community’s wellbeing by providing a welcoming space that prioritizes improving access and technology, fostering strong community support, inspiring personal development, and serving as a reliable anchor for our diverse community.

- Does not appear to reflect the Victoria, TX community.
- What lens is the Victoria Public library seeing through to create this Mission Statement? What resources were used?

- Where is reading/literacy?

1

Breakdown of concerns with the new VPL mission statement:

Our mission is to...

enhance our community's well-being

- Why does a library need to enhance a community's well-being? Well-being seems more like an all-encompassing health term. How, and why, would a library seek this?
- Who decides, and how will the library measure, what "well-being" looks like in our community?

by providing a welcoming space

- Our library does have the appearance of being welcoming.

that prioritize improving access and technology,

- Improving access to what? Need to be more specific.
- Define Technology?
- What does this look like (especially considering the absence of reading and literacy in the mission)?
- Are we providing computers for patrons? What types? What area of the library budget does this come from?
- US Census 2018-2022 states that 92.3% of city residents and 92.2% of county residents have computers and 77.3% of city residents and 76.3% have broadband internet usage.

fostering strong community support,

- For the Library? For the City?

- A library supports the community by providing materials and programs. What about developing programs that support our community by developing strong readers? This would foster strong community support!

inspiring personal development,

- Is it the library's job to inspire the community *or* to help support the community with resources, materials, and programs so the community can be an inspiration to others?

2

And serving as a reliable anchor

- What does this mean? How would our library accomplish this? How would this be measured? And why would it seek to be a reliable anchor considering:
- A library is a resource and support for a community, not an anchor.
- The family is the basic unit of society, and therefore the biggest anchor of the community.
- A majority of Victoria's population are people of faith. People of faith ultimately see God as their source of stability, and if any institution would get designated as a "reliable anchor," by our community, it would most likely be a church...not a library.

for our diverse community

- The term "diversity" is such a divisive and charged word, especially in our society today. Every person in this room has something that makes them different from the next person, and that's okay, however, we are actually more alike than different, especially considering that a large majority of Victoria is conservative.
- 2024 primary voting numbers show that Victoria is by majority (approximately 90%) a conservative community.
- Why would a library take on the responsibility of highlighting our differences, without it being at the direction of the community it serves to the extent of including it in its mission statement?

Questions for consideration and further exploration:

The omission of reading and literacy is literally the “elephant in the room” here. With this mission statement, is the identity of the library being changed from a resource to grow and learn, to a cultural center?

Why does there appear to be such a disconnect between the new mission statement and the previous mission statement?

Is the library seeking to influence, direct, and change the community it serves rather than support it? If so, then what direction are we going in? Why not be specific? Again, what lens is VPL looking through to guide them?

Is our library knowingly or unknowingly transitioning into an organization that promotes a worldview that the majority of our community would not want?

3

Ideas/Suggestions

Suggested Mission Statement: The mission of the VPL is to encourage a love of reading and life-long continual growth by providing materials and programs that patrons can use to improve their academic performance, career skills, citizenship, moral character, and recreational interests.

Return the primary focus of our library’s mission back to books, reading, literacy.

Seek to do our part within the library’s scope of responsibility for a community rather than stepping outside of that.

Develop a mission statement that seeks to not only serve the community but also gain a greater understanding of the community.

