

Dear Oak Park Board of Library Trustees,

I am interested in being considered for the two-year appointment as Library Trustee. Whenever people have asked me if I might consider public service my answer has always been, "I've been thinking of the Library Board." As recent events unfolded and I learned about the vacant seat I took a closer look.

My interest in serving on the Board solidified after reviewing the Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan; the Anti-Racism Strategic Plan; the May 25 board meeting recording; and the board bylaws. I concluded that Library Trustee would be a perfect way for me to serve Oak Park and that I would be a good fit for the Board.

Watching the board meeting gave me a sense of the commitment involved and a feel for the culture of the Board. I was pleased to see the nuanced discussions among board members and staff with opportunities for questions and an exchange of ideas. I so appreciate the commitment to transparency and public access while this appointment process was discussed. The OPPL vision "to empower every voice in our community" was alive in the conversations. I was also grateful to hear that the library has worked with Reesheda Graham Washington and will be hiring a Director of Equity and Anti-Racism. It is promising to see that the Anti-Racism Strategic Plan is not tangential, but integral as a fourth strategic priority along with engagement, learning and stewardship. In my work in support of equity I have seen that such ability to re-envision and fully embrace change is essential.

Here are a few details about my background. I am a writer and filmmaker who moved to Chicago from San Francisco to attend grad school at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, wondering if I could make it through two freezing winters and sweltering summers. That was over two decades ago! My partner and I moved to Oak Park sixteen years ago and have become deeply connected with the community and immersed in efforts to make it even better. We got married last April in pandemic wedding masks in a lesbian judge's backyard walking distance from our house. As a lesbian community member I bring a valuable perspective to the Library Board.

I have a breadth of experiences serving various communities. One element these experiences share in common is the collaborative nature that I sensed watching the OPPL board meeting. I have co-founded and co-led a nonprofit film distribution/education organization and served on the Board of Women in The Director's Chair in Chicago. I formed and served on the Diversity Committee for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) Illinois for four years and was the Network Co-Representative for the SCBWI Oak Park Network for eight years. I created/led a Media Team when the Sugar Beet Co-op was forming. I also created an educational video that celebrated solar energy and raised funds for the Irving Schoolyard Project. I served as a judge for the One Earth Film Festival youth division and for the Chicago International Children's Film Festival. I was a member of the Host Committee for the December 2019 Oak Park event Re-envisioning Community Safety and continue to work within the community to ensure that voices of our young people are heard. I currently serve on the Women's Collaborations Committee of The Center on Halsted. I co-facilitate cohorts for Race Conscious Dialogues and provide support for bridge building with other organizations. Serving on the Oak Park Library Board feels like a natural next step in my collaborative community engagement.

I look forward to an opportunity to share my statement with the broader community and to hear their input. I also look forward to further conversations with the Board. Thank you for your time and consideration!

Thank you!
Susanne

Susanne Fairfax