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Reflecting on a Year of Impactful Work

The May 2026 Board meeting marks a significant milestone: **one year of the current Board and me, as your Executive Director, working together.** With four of our seven Board members having been sworn in at the May meeting last year – the same day I began my tenure – this anniversary feels especially meaningful.

I have the privilege of serving the Board as a direct report, and this gives me a unique vantage point: I am part of this team's work in many ways, but I am also an observer and a supporter. I know it can be hard to track accomplishments while you are in the thick of the day-to-day, so I wanted to take this opportunity to celebrate the complex, challenging, impactful work that you have done over the past twelve months.

Leadership & Governance Structure

Over the last year, the Board has successfully integrated four new Trustees and developed a new committee structure. By establishing the **Governance, Finance, and Advocacy Committees**, the Board created dedicated spaces for deep-dive discussions, guaranteeing that the components of Board responsibility receive intentional oversight and that decision-making at full Board meetings is conducted efficiently.

Collaborative ED Evaluation Process

The Governance Committee led the effort to adopt a new, more collaborative evaluation process for the Executive Director, which the full Board actively facilitated to strengthen our leadership partnership.

Financial Stewardship

The Board has maintained significant focus on the library's fiscal health and long-term sustainability. This work has included:

- **Balanced Budget Approval** – Successfully approved a balanced budget that reflects our community's priorities and ensures responsible use of taxpayer funds.
- **Solutions-Focused Approach to Property Tax Disbursement Delay** – Navigated a significant delay in property tax disbursement by closely monitoring available cash and identifying the most effective borrowing option, if needed (a loan through the Village of Oak Park).

Advocacy & Community Safety

Another highlight of this year's work was the Board's proactive commitment to making the library a safe, welcoming space for all. **Working through the Advocacy Committee, the Board crafted and, in November 2025, formally approved A Resolution Regarding the Use of Library Property**

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Reflecting on a Year of Impactful Work (cont.)

for **Civil Immigration Enforcement Purposes**, which specifically prohibits the use of the library parking garage as a staging area or operations base for civil immigration enforcement.

Belonging Without Othering Framework

Additionally, **the Advocacy Committee led a shared learning experience on the "belonging without othering" framework as a meaningful way to make certain that all community members feel a true sense of belonging at the library.** The full Board is currently exploring this framework.

Systematic Policy Review

A significant undertaking this year has been the systematic review of our library policies to confirm they remain reflective of the library's values and current laws. **We began the year with 77 policies to review. To date, we have successfully completed 16 of them**, leaving 61 policies remaining in our cycle. **Over the last year, the Board has reviewed and approved (or eliminated) the following:**

- Exterior Signs Policy
- Duplicating, Displaying or Publishing Materials Owned by the Oak Park Public Library
- Non-Sufficient Funds Check Policy
- Surplus Property Policy
- Collection Strategy Statement
- Library Facilities–Staff Access, Use, and Restrictions
- Confidentiality of Circulation Records
- Volunteer Policy
- Workplace Violence Policy
- Scheduled Building Closings
- Communications Policy
- Library Board Member Goal Sheet
- Library Board Member Job Description
- Fund Balance Policy Revision
- Exhibiting Art in the Library
- Leaves of Absence Policy

As we look toward our second year together, the progress made in these first twelve months has established a strong and stable platform for everything to come. Thank you for your hard work and your dedication to the Oak Park Public Library.

Respectfully submitted,
Elsworth Carman, Executive Director



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