



106 Washington Avenue, Oshkosh, Wisconsin 54901-4985

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** July 17, 2020  
**TO:** Oshkosh Public Library Board of Trustees  
**FROM:** Jeff Gilderson-Duwe, Library Director  
**RE:** Proposal to Implement COVID-19 Phase One Re-Opening Plan, and to Establish Gating Criteria for Moving to Phase Two

### Key Proposals for Library Board Consideration:

1. I propose that the library board authorize me to begin implementing the Library's Phase One Re-Opening Plan (approved at the May 28, 2020 regular meeting), beginning Monday, August 3, 2020; and
2. I propose that the library board approve the following gating criteria for moving to Phase Two of Re-Opening Oshkosh Public Library:
  - *If two consecutive weekly reports by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services on "COVID-19: Activity Level by Region and County" indicate an activity level of Medium or Low for both Winnebago County and the Fox Valley Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition (HERC) region, the Library MAY "open" further with a Phase Two menu of services.*
  - *No plan is yet in place for a Phase Two menu of services. Date of further "opening" of services may be contingent upon other factors in addition to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services assessments of county and regional COVID-19 activity.*

### The Case for Implementing Phase One Services on August 3, 2020:

- As of this writing, Oshkosh City Hall plans to open to the public on Monday, July 20; and Oshkosh Public Museum plans to open on Tuesday, July 21. The Oshkosh Seniors Center remains closed and has not yet announced a plan to re-open. Public pressure for the Library to open will increase as other city service facilities open. The City Manager and the Museum Director have both articulated the belief that they will be able to offer their services in a safe manner.
- All other public libraries in Winnebago County are open, albeit to varying degrees and each with its own service menu and limitations. Anecdotally, most of the other larger city libraries in Wisconsin are "open" to some degree. Oshkosh Public Library is appearing increasingly out of step.

*"A Library in Every Life"*

- Like the City Manager and the Museum Director, I also believe that our plan of service for Phase One is very controlled and can be implemented safely for the public and our employees. We have altered physical layout of service points, adding physical barriers between employees and patrons; shifting equipment to enhance physical distancing, and increasing flow of outside air into the building via the rooftop HVAC units.

#### The Case for Revising the Gating Criteria:

- Subsequent to the library board approving the Phase One Re-Opening Plan and its gating criteria on May 28, 2020, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services offered decision support indicators for Wisconsin counties and regions. According to the department's web site (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/local.htm>): "The COVID-19 activity level is a summary indicator based on whether the burden (case rate) status is low, moderate, moderately high, or high and whether the trajectory (case change) status is significantly shrinking, growing, or have no statistically significant change."
- The activity level indicators for Wisconsin counties and regions are updated once per week on Wednesday. The indicators summarize case rate data (persons testing positive for COVID-19 per 100,000 population) for the previous two weeks and trajectory data (change in the case rate) taken at one week intervals. The weekly updating will make it much easier for us to track and evaluate for decision purposes.
- The summary nature of the activity level indicator makes it easier to use for decision making. We need only decide at what level of activity we feel we may safely move forward (I am recommending "Medium" at county and regional level) and over what period of time that indicator ought to persist (I am recommending two weeks for moving from Phase One to Phase Two).

In deciding whether to move forward in opening the library, we must balance service and safety. Our Phase One Re-Opening Plan emphasizes safety and targeted restoration of service. I believe we ought to make this first step even though the state's indicators are not yet moving in the right direction. Because Phase Two services will likely involve greater freedom to visit the library building and restoration of browsing (and, thus, less library control of the safety of the environment), I also believe that we need to see the activity level indicators improve significantly before taking the next step.