

August 6, 2020

To our Madison library community, Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway, and Members, Madison Common Council:

On July 9, 2020, the Madison Public Library Board approved its proposed 2021 Operating Budget on a five to four vote, meeting the five percent reduction directive given by the mayor to all city departments. The proposed budget includes the elimination of about one million dollars in expenditures, resulting in major reductions in library staff, programming, services, as well as reduced operating hours, and the temporary closure of a neighborhood branch, the Monroe Street Library, during 2021.

The Madison Public Library Board is committed to the statement on racial equity it released in June 2020, stating, “as a board, we are committed to examining policies, procedures, and projects through a racial equity lens and we make budget decisions through a racial equity lens.” The Madison Public Library Board made the 2021 budget decision with input from the community, information from library staff, and through a racial equity lens.

The Madison Public Library Board would like to reassure the community that if our proposed budget becomes final without any increases in funding, we will continue to seek opportunities within the 2021 budget to restore services to the Monroe Street Library as well as regain staff, services, and programming as soon as conditions permit. It is our intent to revisit these issues at regularly scheduled or special board meetings no later than May 2021.

While we are cognizant of the economic uncertainties that the current global public health crisis has wrought on our community, we urge Mayor Rhodes-Conway and the Madison Common Council to please consider the restoration of reductions to the library’s operating budget, allowing continued community access to the library’s award-winning services at a level worthy of all residents of Madison.

Madison Public Library Board

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