



**PrairieCat Finance Committee  
Minutes**

**Thursday, Sept 19, 2024  
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

The committee met in person at Sycamore Public Library,  
103 E. State Street, Sycamore, IL  
And online via Zoom

Register to attend in person or online via Zoom online:

<https://prairiecat-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYqduyoqjsuGNSLqkq83ZAn6oeRcEs3iTHK#/registration>

PUBLIC COMMENT: Members of the public will be able to chat or speak during the meeting or the virtual Zoom meeting during the public comment.

Public comments may be submitted via email to [Carolyn.Coulter@prairiecat.org](mailto:Carolyn.Coulter@prairiecat.org) at least two hours before the meeting.

**We require an in-person quorum for this meeting.**

1. Call to Order, introductions.  
Present at Sycamore PL: Carolyn Coulter (PrairieCat), Chelsey Knippel (PrairieCat), Maria Meachum (WL), Nick Weber (WO), Bryon Lear (MX) Beth Ryan (Chair-JO), Elizabeth Smith (PrairieCat), Megan Gove (TF), Michael Skwara (HC), Lauren Offerman (TC)

Present via Zoom:

Absent: Angela Campbell (RP)

Ryan (JO) called the meeting to order at 10:33 am

2. Introduction of Guests and Public Comment  
There were no guests or public comments.
3. Approve minutes of July 25, 2024, meeting

**Motion #1: Gove (TF) moved and Meachum (WL) seconded to approve the July 25, 2024 meeting minutes as presented. There was no discussion on the motion. Motion carried by vocal affirmation.**

1. Review and discussion, draft budget versions considering proposed changes to reserves structure and hosting fees  
Coulter (PrairieCat) stated that the committee has discussed changing reserves to 2-5% of our budget for the year and putting it into reserves. There are two versions of the budget in the packet, one has reserves that were calculated at 1% of expenditures and shown with no reserves in the other for comparison. This draft budget includes a 3% staff salary increase (COLA) and 1% merit increase, but also reflects the salary re-alignments we discussed last year due to our benchmarking survey outcomes. our benchmarking survey showed that we needed to adjust some staff salaries up. All those that were not at midpoint were adjusted to midpoint in this fiscal year, and one staff member who has significant years of service was placed that the top of the pay scale for their job. The per-library fee for both fully participating and basic online circulating members has been increased. In addition, the hosting charge was combined with the per library charge, and both charges were adjusted up 5% in FY26. This reflects the overall expenditure increase in FY26 of approximately 5%. Reserves costs were calculated at 1% of total expenditures of the FY26 budget in the first scenario. Although we discussed requiring a 2%-5% reserves rate, it was felt that the fee increase would be too high in FY26 to absorb this level of savings with the other increases we are seeing, particularly the staff salary realignments. In the second scenario, the budget reflects no reserves savings for FY26, which would be acceptable given the current requirements of the General Policy Manual, since we currently have over 25% of expenditures covered by Reserves:  
"Net Position - it is the goal of PRAIRIECAT to maintain a fund balance, or reserve, in an amount of no less than 25% of annual General Fund expenditures at all times."  
Union List per library and capital reserve fees have been recalibrated to reflect the rate of 25% of the Fully Participating rates, as detailed in the General Policy Manual. This was calculated on the per-library fee and does not include the hosting fees that are incorporated for circulating members. An in-person PUG Day is reflected, as was instructed by Administrative Council. This decision was based on feedback we have received from members via Strategic Planning surveys that reflect a desire to alternate between in-person and remote events. Gove (TF) asked if we could split the costs of in-person PUG Day between the in-person years and the virtual years. Coulter will look into the suggestion. Increases to health insurance that we experienced in FY25 are reflected, as well as an estimate of a 10% increase in the last six months of FY26. This budget also includes short term disability insurance. Other insurance increases are reflected based on FY25 numbers. This budget reflects our IMRF rate for FY25, which was

11.9%. We have not received our new rate yet for FY26. This budget also reflects the RAILS grant amount staying level with the FY25 award. We have not received our grant amount at this time (generally it is released in November). Both budget scenarios show a Reserves expenditure for replacement laptops and associated hardware and software that will be needed in FY26.

Weber (WO) commented that it looks like the bigger libraries have a higher percentage increase than the smaller libraries. If we increasing rates based on percentages, it would seem that those percentages should be closer in range. Coulter explained that this is due to having fewer flat fees in this budget than the previous. Flat fees benefit the larger libraries because they are an equal, flat fee for each library. Coulter continued stating that in the past, we were using the reserve numbers as revenue. So, we were putting the money into reserves and then pulling from savings to cover the debt. Now, we are not doing that so this has caused a higher percentage increase for the larger libraries. Due to these changes and other increases discussed, Coulter finds it likely this percentages should stabilize for FY27.

The Committee agreed to recommend a 1% contribution to reserves for FY26, however would also like to see a 2% contribution in the next drafts.

2. Review and discussion, Innovative mobile app demonstration and pricing

Coulter (PrairieCat) discussed the potential of moving the mobile app to Innovative, a Vega product, due to the expiration of the current contract with OCLC in October 2025. She expressed concerns about OCLC's support and the app's integration with Vega. Coulter also mentioned a demo with Innovative, which had mixed results, particularly regarding the app's search functionality and integration with e-materials. She suggested contacting Heartland to get a test user for the app. Coulter mentioned Innovative said if we moved to their app before the end of current contract, they would not charge us until our contract expires. We are also getting pricing for all libraries to have the app, not just the ones who can afford it.

3. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:43am.

Next meeting: December 19, 2024, 10:30am – 12:00am, Location DeKalb Public Library, DeKalb, IL and online via Zoom