

This statement responds to an event held at the Library on December 14, 2019 and a misunderstanding about MPL policy and how MPL executes its policies; and is written on behalf of myself as the Director of the Library with the approval our Board of Trustees.

We take our mission to serve our broad community seriously. Like other public libraries, we are a civic space, accessible to our entire community in all of its diversity – regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic level. While MPL is funded by taxpayers residing in the Manhasset Union Free School District, we follow NYS Law and ALA policy guidelines for meeting room space: that is, as a “public library” we are open to the public. Borrowing rights require a valid library card, but accessing library resources or participating in community room programs requires no proof of residency.

We open our Community Room to community groups on this same basis “for events of an educational, informational, cultural, philanthropic, or civic nature.” Over a year ago, after having to replace the community room carpet, where exercise and meditation programs encourage children and adults to sit, lie, and move on the floor, the MPL Board of Trustees voted to amend the policy to allow only “light refreshments” (which we informally describe as finger foods such as cookies or crudité) and to require an advance deposit against damage for all groups serving liquids and/or food in the Community Room. Our first-floor café remains available for our patrons to serve and consume a greater variety of foods. Our Library Policies help promote an atmosphere of safety, tolerance and respect. We do not discriminate on any basis, but we will enforce library policy to protect our users, our staff, and our building. The Director and all Staff are responsible for communicating, upholding, and executing Board approved policies and procedures.

On Saturday afternoon, December 14th, I responded to an urgent request to come to the lower lobby during a scheduled music recital rehearsal. Prior to that request, I had not spoken with anyone associated with the recital or anyone making arrangements for the recital to use library space. Earlier that afternoon, I had spoken briefly with MPL Staff regarding their specific activities and responsibilities. I still do not know what triggered the request, which became heated as soon as I introduced myself, with Ms. Huang and her male associate (who wouldn’t stop to give his name) shouting accusations at me in an unhinged manner for most of ten minutes.

Different versions of the exchange have appeared in the media and online. Horrendous, deeply hurtful, and completely unfounded charges have been leveled against me. These charges were brought to the attention of the Trustees on 12/18/2019.

A full investigation, conducted by legal counsel, was initiated immediately.

This investigation is currently on-going. Legal counsel is requesting meetings with all those involved to determine if the facts in this matter have merit or are meritless.

Members of the Board of Trustees have cautioned community members to avoid a rush to judgment. As Vice President of the Board, Gloria Su has said, “I would like to remind friends and neighbors that, under Maggie’s directorship over the past 8 years, the Library has initiated the multi-generational Chinese New Year Program, Chinese Calligraphy programs for adults and children, Chinese Art exhibitions, Multi-Generational Story Telling in Chinese, and more. Under her, the Library first bought subscriptions to Chinese-language newspapers and put Chinese books on our Library shelves. She has even had her librarians curate an Asian-inclusive reading curriculum and provide specific book talks for Manhasset School District Faculty.”

“All of these happened because of Maggie. She has undertaken similar initiatives for many other segments of our community. She verbally encourages respect for cultural diversity, but her actions demonstrate a full embrace of what makes our community so culturally rich and our Library so welcoming — to everyone. She deserves all of us waiting for a fair investigation.”

The Library Trustees, Staff and I are justifiably proud of the reputation we have built — for bringing people together, for our expertise, and for serving as the heart of our Manhasset Community for so many. We welcome anyone with questions or concerns about any of our policies to come by in person to discuss them. My door is always open, and our Trustees make themselves available to those who ask. We will appreciate our community being patient until the investigation is complete

Maggie Gough, Director, Manhasset Public Library