

# Alexandria Library Board Minutes

## Date

September 16, 2024

## Location

Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library, Board Room

## Present

Trudi Hahn, Robert Ray IV, Albert Moseley II, Libby Bawcombe, Dianne Fox, Oscar Fitzgerald, Canek Aguirre, Director Rose Dawson, Deputy Director Luis Labra, Communications Officer Nathan Carrick

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 pm.

## Public Comment and Attendees

Ashley Wood, the owner of Soulo Studios, a member of the Del Ray Business Association and is also starting Lily's Corner for creative kids learning.

Patti Reilly, Duncan Friends President report:

- Advocacy Chair vacancy on their Friends board.
- Book sale begins November 13.
- 2025 planning in late Sept. – Oct., commence plan in Jan. 2025.
- National Friends of Library week is Oct. 20-26: On Oct. 19, they want to testify at a City Council public hearing about how much Friends love their libraries.
- Spending down donation from Del Ray Citizen's Association: Picnic table on grounds; purchasing high-hold best sellers.
- Haunted Library Tour at Duncan, "Tales of Terror," following Del Ray Halloween parade. Volunteers will dress up as spooky literary characters.
- Duncan annual statistics indicate they had 25,000 children visitors.

Sarah Hill, Barrett Friends Communications Chair report:

- Book sale was May 4: Most successful of past ten years, made \$6800, bag sale for first time, \$10 per bag. Used Venmo and credit cards for the first time.
- They elected officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Communications and Outreach.
- Trying to divorce Burke and Barrett in bank finances, which were both originally part of FOAL (Friends of Alexandria's Libraries), resulting in the same EIN number and bank account. Both parties are working hard to untangle. Looks now that they are separated, incorporated as Friends of Barrett Library, and will have own EIN/bank account.
- Getting more library carts. Buying file cabinets and getting organized.

- Improving Friends website and Facebook account. Might need help removing old Facebook account if anyone can lend expertise.

Kay Brown, Beatley Friends President report:

- Friends logged 900 volunteer hours in last three months.
- Gave \$33,000 to Beatley for children's and adult programs, conferences, SummerQuest and 10 chairs.
- They have two candidates for Vice President of book sales. Two people will work as directors at large, replacing Secretary.
- Business and community engagement: Burke and Beatley attended Best of the West event by West End Business Association, and also attended their breakfast.
- Along with Burke and Duncan Friends, they went to a recent volunteer fair at Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which was a good source for volunteers.
- Getting a new website up, probably by next month.
- Book sale starts Sept. 17 for members, runs through Sept 23.
- Thanks to Michele Stork, Robert Ray and Libby Bawcombe for meeting about the Foundation's strategic plan draft.
- Beatley Friends: Everyone is on board with proposed Giving Tuesday project with the Foundation.
- Big concern: getting through book sale, big accumulation of books they can't get rid of (the pickup service went out of business).
- Deciding on insurance — directors and officers or liability. Will meet with Rose Dawson to discuss.

Dar Davis, Beatley Friend and former President — no comment.

Brack Stovall, Duncan Friend and former Duncan branch manager — no comment.

Jackie Rufus — Burke Friends report:

- Burke Friends President Jean McKean is out of town and could not attend.
- Biggest concern: growing membership and recruiting board members.
- Added two members who will track volunteer hours and assist the outgoing treasurer.
- Branch has a new youth services manager, already making great changes. She started baby story time for babies 0-14 months, which promotes bonding with caregiver. Helps caregivers get to know one another.
- Friends purchased for staff a coffeemaker, tea kettle and snacks for their breakroom. Staff is so grateful; helps keep morale up.
- 2025 budget work will start soon.
- Voted to participate with Foundation's proposed Giving Tuesday campaign.
- October 24-27 is next book sale.
- Also participated in the aforementioned community volunteer fair.
- Next board meeting is Oct. 9 at 5pm in Burke meeting room. Jherusha will give a tour.
- Jackie and her daughter have been to events at all the branches over the summer.

Attendees: Michele Stork, Foundation Director; Pat Smith; Liz Achuff, new Administrative Division Chief.

#### Approval of Minutes

Mr. Moseley made a motion to approve, which was seconded, Councilmember Aguirre abstained. Minutes were approved.

#### Chair's Report

Chair Hahn mentioned the commemoration of the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1939 library sit-in at Barrett Library.

- Many events, and long-term planning for the committee.
- At the Sept. 10 City Council meeting, Mayor Wilson wrote a proclamation and Councilman Aguirre read it. Robert Ray and Libby Bawcombe attended.
- Samuel Tucker Elementary School event: 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders attended and provided entertainment. Al Moseley, Libby Bawcombe, Rose Dawson and Trudi Hahn attended. Jimmy Lewis was there and spoke.
- On the same day, there was an author event with Dr. Brenda Mitchell-Powell at Barrett Library. Mitchell-Powell expanded on many sit-in details in her talk about her book.
- *The Alexandria Times* "Out of the Attic" published a nice piece on the sit-in.

#### Director's Report

New Administrative Division Chief, Liz Achuff, coming into Laura Gates's position, starting the week of Sept. 30. Bachelor's degree in psychology, three masters degrees, including business administration, ten years in program management. Works in budgeting, finance, grants, compliance, HR and stakeholder engagement, certified project manager. Created tools for planning and communicating complex projects. Came from U.S. Vets Initiative, where she secured grants and increased compliance.

#### Monthly activity report:

- Covid: distributed ~900 tests in June, ~2151 in July, ~2409 in August, and anticipates the numbers will increase again.
- Patron count up 10%.
- Circulation count flat.
- Borrowers up 11%.
- E-borrowers up 7%.
- Increase in collections 2%.
- Wireless usage up 4%.
- 338 passports, a value of \$11,830.
- The libraries' desktop computers are in use 26% of the time. People are bringing their devices.
- 40 hotspots checked out, 23 Chromebooks checked out.

Audit: This is the time of year that the City conducts an audit. We can expect a draft by end of Sept., and City wants it back by Oct 1.

Programs:

- Summer reading ended in Aug. Rose thanked Friends, Library Foundation, Duncan Foundation.
- Sit-in commemoration events were positively received, including traveling exhibit at Samuel Tucker Elementary School, where two proclamations were read (from the City and General Assembly). 90 5<sup>th</sup> graders attended.
- Dr. Brenda Mitchell-Powell, researcher and author who wrote the story about the sit-in, gave a talk.
- Rose asked the board to mark their calendars for art performances organized by Jason Ellis who is producing a 45-minute piece, including a reenactment, kids' participation, spoken word and music. The performances will be Oct. 18 (geared toward kids) and Oct. 19 (geared toward adults) at Charles Houston Recreation Center at 4:00 pm. Alexandria Library Communications Officer Nathan Carrick is working with the artist.

The Black Family reunion was a success, and Rose is pleased with media attention and community documents:

- Artifacts included: Three 1960s yearbooks from Parker-Gray High School, which are hard to come by. Parker-Gray was the only Black high school in Alexandria. Library got to scan the yearbooks, which took all day. Funeral programs of prominent African Americans. Church records, newspaper articles from 1964 about schools in the city being fully integrated.
- Rose will offer a more thorough and complete report next month for the Foundation, so that sponsors are aware.
- Lots of media coverage: WUSA Channel 9 aired four times, New America, Urban Libraries Council, Zebra Press. 1900 X (Twitter) posts, 2100 Facebook posts, 2300 Instagram posts.
- Organizers reshaped the event from last year to distribute people around the event, knew there was some competition with simultaneous events.
- 310 food tickets were given out, which gives an idea of attendance.
- Attendees filled out surveys, data to come.
- Business folks came to Rose to say they want to help.
- Did "mini orals" to collect oral histories with some prompts to collect stories. There was a line of participants. There were 18 from that day.
- There will be a 3<sup>rd</sup> Black Family Reunion event.

Constitution Week is this week: all branches have displays.

Programs: Hispanic Heritage month overlaps in Sept. and Oct., and a majority of City-promoted programs are coming from the branch libraries.

Facilities updates:

- Beatley: Work in progress with the Envelope Project. During Nov. 11-22, crews will replace the large meeting room exterior door and front doors. At some point, the public will need to enter through the meeting room. During the week of Dec. 2-6, they will need to close Beatley Branch because it will be unsafe due to crews' interior work. Beatley Branch manager Diana Price has coordinated through General Services. Staff are signing up to work at other branches across the city or use leave. The City allowing up to two days of telework. Some can work remotely. Rose is hopeful to get the project done so they can reopen as promised, which is very important for the community.
- Burke: General Service update, Little Diversified is the company with contract for renovating the first floor of Burke. Project is based from meeting in July. They need to reduce the scope of construction, a little less than \$1 mil would not be enough. The project was delayed and construction was delayed, so money is not going as far. General Services is working with contractors to get it back to the expected amount of money. May need to scale back plans. General Services requested a meeting with Rose Dawson and Luis Labra to have a meeting (forthcoming).
  - Oscar Fitzgerald asked what the plan was.
  - Rose replied that Burke used to be a school space, and the first floor renovation work is informed by community and staff feedback. Mentioned a podcast area, library hoping to fill that gap (especially for students at Hammond across the street). Cited MLK Branch library in D.C., they used to have maker spaces. Maker spaces can be crafts, sewing, etc. Aiming for spaces that can be flexible that can accommodate different needs. They want tutoring spaces, so spaces need walls. Challenge in updating the building: restrooms (big proportion of money) and HVAC, so some areas may be left untouched. They could go back and do them later. Could possibly work with Foundations or other grants.

Rose will attend Virginia Public Library Directors annual public meeting next week in Richmond.

Open jobs: The library is utilizing social media for recruitment. There are four full-time vacancies, three Sunday positions (part-time subs), eight library aides and pages (lowest level staff). Two new positions for Outreach Services, and Law Library assistant position. Advertising in lots of places, including LinkedIn. How it is determined which branch gets what positions: Combination of factors, e.g., Barrett is two floors, so more staff are needed than Duncan, which is one floor. Patrons, circulation and size, staff needed to open a facility, all factor into to allotments of positions at branches. Canek Aguirre recommended the Board follow Alexandria Library on LinkedIn to cross-promote open positions.

### Treasurer's Report

As of June 30, 2024, which is the conclusion of the fiscal year, we are 100% through the year and spent 98% of the operating budget. Have received and expensed 100% of state aid funds. See attached report.

Library collections and fees:

- The data incident, money for a server, reimbursements from insurance.

- All library fee collections above City-required amount, ~245%.
- ~\$47,000 budget for library for electronic materials, which was a special supplemental from the City. ~\$48,000 for expenditures for audio books, e-books, etc.

### Investment Committee Report

July 31, 2024, ytd 8.96% compared to benchmark.

12-month 13.28%, compared to 12.71% benchmark. Councilmember Aguirre noted a previous concern, but now we're overperforming.

Stocks and bonds 60/40 split. Oscar Fitzgerald expressed concern over rebalancing split.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked if we've switched banks. Mr. Ray said we're with Truist.

### Old Business

Chair Hahn thanked Oscar Fitzgerald for drafting The Library Board's Annual Report.

- Any corrections? Mr. Aguirre: thanks for City board appointees, the term limits may be different, and will check.
- Motion to approve: Mr. Aguirre made a motion provided the amendment to be made, Ms. Fox seconded, all in favor, approved.
- The Annual Report will need to be sent to the City Clerk.

Director's Evaluation: Chair Hahn and Mr. Ray reviewed Rose's self-assessment, great evaluation, City Manager has accepted it

### New Business

Collective bargaining update from Mr. Ray:

- The Library Board is grateful for recent staff increases, yet wishes not to repeat underpaid periods. An ad hoc committee (Robert Ray, Dianne Fox, Al Mosely, Libby Bawcombe) on collective bargaining was formed to help prevent this.
- Alexandria has granted City employees to engage in collective bargaining through city ordinance, but this excludes librarians.
- Independent legal consultant believes:
  - We would need to amend the city's collective bargaining ordinance to allow librarians. Needs a City Council vote. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the library and City Manager. A path to such an amendment would be outside of the board's control.
  - Librarians who would be ineligible for collective bargaining would be managers and supervisors. There is also a large percentage of part-time librarians below Librarian I; unsure they would be offered collective bargaining rights. Contractors like security guards would also be excluded.
  - Ordinance needs a petition of 30% of eligible employees of the bargain unit. The board would need to see who would be interested in pursuing it.

- MOU might require renegotiating relationship between library and City, which could impinge on library freedoms if then beholden to the City.
- Committee recommends we study the matter further and postpone a board vote.
- Councilmember Aguirre has set up meeting with the City Attorney to discuss this again, since she is new in the role — wants to see if she agrees with past assessments.
- Director Dawson and Mr. Ray had a good conversation about library staff:
  - Temporary, seasonal, personnel and supervisors would be excluded from collective bargaining.
  - Fewer than 30 employees would qualify for collective bargaining agreement.
- Mr. Fitzgerald worried that changing the library's relationship with the City would mean the City runs the library.

### Adjournment

Chair Hahn moved to adjourn, Councilmember Aguirre seconded. Meeting adjourned at 5:08 pm.