

Alexandria Library Board Minutes

Date

February 22, 2024

Location

Duncan Branch Library, Meeting Room

Present

Trudi B. Hahn, Robert Ray IV, Patsy Rogers, Dianne Fox, Oscar Fitzgerald, Canek Aguirre, Albert Moseley II, Director Dawson, Deputy Director Labra, Division Chief Gates

The meeting was called to order at 4:00pm.

Public Comment

Libby Bawcombe, Vice President/Membership for the Friends of Duncan Library, presented the attached report which was added into the official meeting record.

Jean McCain, President of the Burke Branch Friends, presented the attached report which was added into the official meeting record.

Bobbi Fisher, Library patron, stated that she is still very upset with Ms. Dawson and the Alexandria government for not repairing her car after tree limbs fell onto it during a storm. Ms. Fisher stated that she was parked on the street while visiting the Barrett branch library when this occurred and that she has gone to court twice, but that both judges discriminated against her. Ms. Fisher passed out images of her damaged car for the Board to view.

Kay Brown, President of the Beatley Friends group, stated that they are very pleased to see the construction progress at the Beatley branch and provided the attached written report which was added into the official meeting record.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Fox to approve the December 18, 2023 meeting minutes, was seconded by Mr. Fitzgerald and was passed unanimously with one abstention from Councilmember Aguirre.

Chair's Report

Chair Hahn thanked the City Manager for providing funding to implement the Library staff compensation study during the current fiscal year and for the construction progress at the Beatley branch library. She advised the Board of the upcoming schedule for budget hearings, including the City Manager's public session to be presented on February 29 at the Beatley library. Chair Hahn requested that Director Dawson provide the Board with budget talking points. She reported attending a meeting with Director Dawson and the project architects to discuss the design of the first floor renovations at the Burke branch library. She also reported that she attended a parade with the Friends of the Duncan Library and that she and Director Dawson attended a training for City Board Chairs to review meeting rules and requirements of the Freedom of Information Act.

Director's Report

Director Dawson reported that the patron count was up 12.6% over the previous year with a slight decline in overall circulation (-1.2%) and an increase in e-material circulation of 5.2%. She reported an increase in registered borrowers of 9.8% and an increase in e-borrowers of 13.2%. Wi-Fi usage was up 7.98% while desktop computer usage held steady. 296 passports were processed versus 167 passports during the same period last year and 13 exams were proctored. 51 hotspots were checked out with 10 renewals and 36 Chromebooks were checked out with 51 renewals.

Director Dawson reported that she was the keynote speaker at the City Staff Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration event in January. She will attend the South by Southwest education conference next month in Austin, Texas as a panelist in a session dedicated to the 85th Anniversary of the Alexandria Library Sit-In. She also reported that the job advertisement for the Library Human Resources Manager had been posted and that she was working with the City to schedule interviews for March.

Director Dawson provided the following updates on Library facilities:

- Beatley: one of the new windows installed as part of the building envelope project failed a water pressure test and a retest was scheduled for the first week of March. Contractors would proceed with installation of the windows in the story room since the failure was related to caulking and not the windows themselves.
- Burke: Director Dawson, staff, and representatives from the Board and Burke Friends met with the architect/contractor regarding the first floor renovation project as part of the design phase which was scheduled to conclude in March.
- Duncan: recent strong rains caused leaks that require another roof patch. General Services planned to issue an RFP in the near future to complete that work.

Director Dawson reported that the migration to Microsoft Office 365 is underway and is scheduled to roll out on February 27. Director Dawson commended staff for their programming efforts, including their George Washington displays, Winter Reading Challenge and Black History Month programs. She stated that staff are currently developing programming plans for All Alexandria Reads, Summer Reading, and the 85th Anniversary of the Library Sit-In.

Director Dawson reported that the City Manager would release his proposed budget to the City Council on February 27. Once that occurred, she could share with the Board the status of the Library budget and would develop talking points as they had requested. Director Dawson stated that a copy of the City Council calendar was included in each board member packet, providing the dates on which there will be budget work sessions, public hearings, and final approval of the FY25 budget.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Moseley reported that as of January 31, 2024, the Library was 58% of the way through the fiscal year and had expended 52% of its operating budget. The Library received 74% of budgeted State Aid funds and expensed 63% of the original annual budgeted amount. The Library collected \$113,125 or 54% of its requirement of \$210,000 in fees revenue. The Law Library received \$24,080 or 60% of the budgeted \$40,000 in filing fees.

Investment Committee Report

Mr. Ray reported that as of January 31, 2024, the market value of the Library's investment account was \$3,734,018. The quarter to date portfolio performance was 0.33% as compared to the benchmark of 0.24%. Portfolio performance over the last twelve months was 9.59%, as compared to the benchmark of 9.59%.

Old Business – Compensation Update

Director Dawson reported that staff compensation increases ranged from 5-15% and that the City Manager implemented those changes on an aggressive timeline. She provided kudos to the City Human Resources staff for being able to meet the aggressive timeline so that employees could receive their pay increases in early January. The Library HR Manager sent individual letters to all staff impacted by the compensation changes regarding their new grade/step and new salary. Director Dawson reported that staff were very pleased with the outcome of the compensation changes.

New Business – Staff Day Closure

Director Dawson proposed that the Library be closed on May 17, 2024 so that the Library could facilitate a full staff training and development day. She reported that the theme this year would be “Courage” in honor of the theme of the 85th Anniversary of the Library Sit-In and due to the bravery it takes to work in a Library these days. Virginia Library Association Executive Director and Library Journal Librarian of the Year, Lisa Varga, will be the keynote speaker and will address the topics of intellectual freedom and book banning. Mr. Ray asked if a small presentation could be included regarding collective bargaining for staff on that day. Director Dawson stated that she would need to reach out to the City’s new labor relations chief to first ensure that the Library and its actions are aligned with their processes. Mr. Moseley made a motion to close Library facilities on May 17 for Staff Day and Ms. Rogers seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Councilmember Aguirre made a motion to adjourn the meeting. That motion was seconded by Mr. Moseley and approved unanimously.