

Alexandria Library Board Minutes

Date

April 18, 2022

Location

Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch Library, Meeting Room.

Present

Trudi Hahn, Kathleen Schloeder (phone), Karen Marshall, Canek Aguirre, Robert Ray IV, Patsy Rogers, Oscar Fitzgerald, Director Dawson, Division Chief Gates, Branch Manager Schuler, Communications Officer Carrick.

The meeting was called to order at 4:06pm.

Public Comment

No speakers were present.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Aguirre to approve the February 24, 2022 meeting minutes. Ms. Marshall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously among those present (Ms. Schloeder had not yet joined by phone).

Chair's Report

Chair Hahn welcomed the Library's new Communications Officer, Nathan Carrick. Chair Hahn reported that Mayor Justin Wilson recently joined her and staff members at Beatley Central Library to read a proclamation in honor of National Library Workers Day.

Director's Report

Director Dawson reported that COVID-19 numbers are declining and that the CDC Case tracker has Alexandria in the low transmission category. In areas of low community transmission, CDC recommends wearing a mask based on personal preference. The current data on COVID-19 was reported as follows:

- 188.6 cases per 100,000
- 310 new cases in the past 7 days
- 7-day moving average of cases is 44 (up 14%)
- 7-day moving average positivity rate increased to 6.54%
- 76% of Alexandria residents (5+) are fully vaccinated; 84% are partially vaccinated

Director Dawson reported the following monthly statistics, noting that they are based on limited building capacity and reduced hours due to the pandemic:

- Patron count is up (108%), and circulation is up (13%)
- E-borrowing has dropped (-19%) as traditional users are able to come into the building and as other library systems have increased their hours
- While website visits are down (-8%) and website pages used continues to be down (-21%) due to patrons efficiently "bookmarking" their favorite sites, Wi-Fi usage is up (78%)
- While monthly passport appointments have increased from 140 to 200, the Library had been providing over 400 per month prior to the pandemic

- 7 exams were proctored last month compared to 2 in the previous month
- In March, 27 of the 50 hotspots were checked out and renewed 19 times
- The Chromebook lending program rolled out at the very end of February and we are attending outreach events like the Police Department Community Fairs to boost circulation

Director Dawson reported that recruitment is underway for a number of vacant positions in order to support expanded hours. Recruitment is also underway for the Deputy Director and Fiscal Analyst positions. Using a standard human resources rubric, the first round of candidates will be asked to participate in a video interview which is then reviewed by a panel of three staff members. Select candidates will then advance to the next round where they will participate in a formal interview process. Ms. Marshall requested a copy of the rubric.

Director Dawson reported that Phases 2 and 3 of the Beatley Central Library parking lot project are complete. Next year, Phase 1 will resume which will focus on the front of the parking lot, including installation of a concrete pad near the dumpsters. Regarding the Burke Library first floor renovation, Director Dawson reported that General Services received permission to use the City's architect of record that had already been selected through a competitive bid process. Project Manager Don Manthey plans to schedule a meeting with Library leadership next week to discuss the scope of work so that a cost proposal can be received. Library staff is also trying to schedule a meeting with Diane Ruggiero to discuss the status of a new sign and lighting at Burke related to the public art installation.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked if the artwork installation destroyed the old sign. Director Dawson stated that the sign was not damaged, but that it was determined that the old sign does not "fit" with the new art installation.

Director Dawson stated that the Beatley Library was selected as a drop-off point for donations of gently used or new coats, blankets, socks, and hats for the people of Ukraine.

Director Dawson reported that all branches have resumed offering free COVID-19 home test kits through a partnership with the Alexandria Health Department. The Library will distribute two kits per person and no proof of residency is required. Information about the test kits is provided on our website and shared via social media as well. These test kits are especially important for people who do not have health insurance as free testing is no longer available.

Director Dawson provided information on the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project (ACRP). On April 23, the City will host a program recognizing the lynching of Joseph McCoy, a 16-year-old African American boy who was lynched in 1897. The Special Collections branch has provided a lot of assistance in documenting this project and the Beatley and Burke libraries are distribution centers for ACRP yard signs. This year's program begins at 3:00pm with the Mayor, Police Chief, and Commonwealth Attorney apologizing for the role their predecessors played in this crime. Director Dawson stated that the City is planning a pilgrimage to Montgomery, Alabama to collect their two pillars from the Bryan Stevenson Equal Justice Initiative.

Lastly, Director Dawson reported that the Library is sponsoring a program on Monday, May 9 at Pat Miller Park where former ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, will speak about her new book. Mayor Wilson will provide an introduction and the author will sign books before the program.

Councilmember Aguirre asked about the timeline for the start of the Beatley envelope construction project and Ms. Gates responded that supply chain disruptions on materials had delayed the project which is now estimated to begin in late summer or early fall.

Chair Hahn encouraged Board members to read the recent Washington Post article regarding book banning and book censorship in Texas.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Marshall reported that as of March 31, 2022, the Library is 75% of the way through the fiscal year and has expended 73.4% of the budget. Approximately 75.5% of State Aid funds were expended in that period. The Library has raised \$109,666 or 87% of its requirement of \$126,000 in fees revenue. The Law Library has received \$17,888 in filing fees.

Investment Committee Report

Mr. Ray reported that as of March 31, 2022, the market value of the Library's investment account was \$3,764,078.99. Portfolio performance over the last three months was -6.83% as compared to the benchmark of -4.98%. Portfolio performance over the last twelve months was 1.75%, as compared to the benchmark of 2.73%.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked if these were the investments of the Library Foundation and Director Dawson responded that these are the investments of the Alexandria Library, not the Alexandria Library Foundation. Ms. Schloeder stated that the Foundation recently liquidated a certificate of deposit in the amount of approximately \$125,000.

Chair Hahn asked how the Alexandria Library investment performance compared to the benchmark. Vice Chair Ray stated that while they had recently performed under the benchmark, the investments had previously performed ahead of the benchmark when the market was up.

Old Business – Budget Update

Director Dawson reported that a public budget hearing is scheduled for Saturday at 9:00am and that it is an opportunity for organizations to appeal to the City Council. Director Dawson stated that she is content with the new City Manager's recommended budget for the Library. While staff salaries are approximately 15-25% below market, the new budget includes a 4% general pay scale increase and we will watch where Human Resources lands with the existing compensation studies and requests. Council member Aguirre stated that he was unaware that the Library was not included in the periodic job grade updates. Director Dawson stated that, next year, compensation adjustments will be the Library's budget priority. Ms. Marshall asked if the below market salaries would impact recruitment efforts and Director Dawson stated that they may be impacted by that as well as area retirements.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked if there were any budget cuts for the Library and Director Dawson stated that no cuts were received and that the Library also received supplemental funding.

Director Dawson reported on the remaining important dates pertaining to the budget adoption. Chair Hahn asked if a Board representative should speak at the hearing on Saturday to ensure that funding is not removed from the Library and given to others. Council member Aguirre said that it would not work like that and that the remaining discussion would pertain to only 2% of the budget.

New Business - Electronic Disclosure Policy

Director Dawson reported that the former Digital Librarian recommended the Library strengthen its online technology protection. She attended a conference where she learned that the Library should develop an electronic disclosure policy. The former Digital Librarian researched and drafted a new policy which is presented currently for review and approval by the Board.

Chair Hahn stated that the policy language which refers to a specific United States Attorney General be removed and replaced with the more general officer name. Chair Hahn asked where the policy would be displayed and Director Dawson stated that it would be posted on the Library's website. Chair Hahn asked if the Library can stop patrons from accessing inappropriate content on the public computers. Director Dawson stated that staff talk to patrons if they notice inappropriate computer use. If necessary, reference staff can turn off the computer remotely, although that is done rarely and only used as a last resort.

Ms. Rogers moved to approve the electronic disclosure policy, Mr. Ray seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

Council member Aguirre made a motion to adjourn that was seconded by Mr. Fitzgerald and approved unanimously at 5:15 pm.