

Alexandria Library Board Minutes

Date

February 24, 2022

Location

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

Present

Trudi Hahn, Kathleen Schloeder, Canek Aguirre, Robert Ray IV, Patsy Rogers, Oscar Fitzgerald, Director Dawson, Deputy Director Knight, Division Chief Gates, HR Manager Farley.

Excused

Karen Marshall

The meeting was called to order at 4:02pm.

Public Comment

Ms. Realista Rodriguez, the new Director of Advocacy, Friends of the Beatley Central Library, submitted and read a short statement. Ms. Rodriguez reported on membership, officers, revenues, budget and other activities as of January 31, 2022. A copy of that report and its attachments are submitted into the record.

Chair Hahn thanked Ms. Rodriguez and stated that she had invited the Barrett Friends to speak at the meeting as well, although no representative was present. Chair Hahn stated that she would like to hear from all of the Friends groups.

Chair Hahn closed the public comment period as no other speakers were present.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Schloeder to approve the October 18, 2021 meeting minutes. Mr. Fitzgerald seconded the motion. Mr. Aguirre abstained as he was not present at the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The December 20, 2021 meeting minutes were subsequently approved unanimously.

Chair's Report

Chair Hahn welcomed Councilmember Canek Aguirre to the Library Board and welcomed the 12 viewers watching the webcast.

Director's Report

Director Dawson reported that while the State of Virginia has removed its mask mandate, the City of Alexandria still has a mask requirement in place. The Library requires that masks be worn inside its facilities. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) case tracker shows Alexandria to be in a high transmission category. As of February 17, Alexandria COVID-19 data is as follows: transmission rate of 214.7 per 100,000 of population; 353 new cases over a seven day period; 7-day moving average positivity rate of 9.8%. Approximately 75% of residents over age 5 are fully vaccinated and approximately 83% are partially vaccinated.

Director Dawson reported that the Library began circulating mobile hotspots on December 13 as a "holiday gift" to the community. Approximately 30-35 of the 50 hotspots are currently circulating. The hotspots were funded via City's ARPA grant. Once the new Communications Director is onboard, the Library will work to increase promotion of that program.

In honor of Love My Library month, the Library will begin circulating 50 Chromebooks provided by a grant from the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF). The Library is partnering with non-profit community organizations such as ACT for Alexandria and Alexandria Council of Human Service Organizations (ACHSO) to reach the right populations. Ms. Schloeder asked if the Chromebooks would be available at each branch and Director Dawson responded that they will be circulated at each branch and will be eligible for auto-renewal if no waiting list exists. The Library applied for a second ECF grant to expand the Chromebook program. That application was approved and the Library will now have 150 total Chromebooks. Once the equipment and related materials have been fully received and processed, they will be made available for circulation.

Director Dawson reported that a new Communications Officer, Nathan Carrick, has been hired. Mr. Carrick previously worked for the City in both the Communications office and in the Finance office. Director Dawson welcomed him and Chair Hahn stated that she would hope to meet him at the next Board meeting.

Director Dawson reported that Deputy Director Knight would be leaving the Library as she has accepted a position as the Director of the Virginia Beach Public Library. A farewell party will be held in the Dickman Boardroom on March 3 and a Zoom link will be made available to the Board as well. Mr. Farley will be posting an advertisement to fill that position and is also posting an advertisement for the vacant Fiscal Analyst position. It is expected that both position selections will be complete in April with the new staff members in place in May. Ms. Hahn asked if the Deputy Director position would be posted nationally and Mr. Farley responded affirmatively.

Director Dawson thanked the Alexandria Library Company for voting to fund the intern position for Special Collections again this summer. Mr. Fitzgerald asked about what qualifications the intern would possess and Director Dawson clarified that the internship is intended for students currently pursuing a master's degree in library science.

Ms. Schloeder requested an update on the percentage of Library staff who are vaccinated. Mr. Farley responded that approximately 96-97% of staff are fully vaccinated. He reported that only two or three staff members are not fully vaccinated, although they are complying with the testing policy. Volunteer staff have been reporting their vaccination status as well, although no figures are available at the moment on the precise percentage of vaccinated volunteers.

Ms. Hahn asked for a status update on the COVID test kit distribution program. Director Dawson responded that no further kits had arrived and that staff now direct patrons to other federal, state and local resources. She reported that the City used ARPA funding to make kits available directly to local nonprofits.

Ms. Schloeder asked for an update on the Beatley building envelope project. Director Dawson explained that it will address water infiltration, including replacement of the windows. The General Services project manager is Don Manthey, who updated the Library on challenges pertaining to brick replacement. The quarry where the original bricks were made is no longer in existence. As a result, any replacement bricks will be matched as closely as possible. The project may begin in March, but an update is expected next week.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked if the Library had any issues with book banning and Director Dawson reported that there had been no recent issues. The Library has a policy in place which requires an application be filled out to request book removal. Director Dawson stated that a famous librarian once said, "a good public library has something in it to offend everyone." For example, Director Dawson shared that in the case of the Dr. Seuss books that were removed from circulation as directed by the publisher, the Library has maintained copies in its reference collection.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Ray reported on behalf of Ms. Marshall that as of January 31, 2022, the Library was 58.3% of the way through the fiscal year and had expended 56.8% of the budget. Approximately 71.7% of State Aid funds were expended in that period. The Library has raised \$80,011 or 63.6% of its requirement of \$126,000 in fees revenue. The Law Library has received \$15,973 in filing fees.

Investment Committee Report

Mr. Ray reported that as of January 31, 2022, the market value of the Library's investment account was \$3,871,122.50. Portfolio performance over the last twelve months was -3.15% as compared to the benchmark of -3.00%. Portfolio performance for the last twelve months was 7.76%, as compared to the benchmark of 6.23%.

Old Business – Budget Update

Director Dawson reported that there is a new City Manager, Jim Parajon. She reported that of the FY2023 budget reductions that the Library was required to submit, none were accepted. Three supplemental requests were included in the City Manager's recommended FY2023 budget: continuation of the mobile hotspot lending program and continuation of the Chromebook lending program. Both programs would be funded using the second tranche of ARPA grant funds received by the City. Director Dawson reported that the City Manager's budget also included a 4% general pay scale adjustment to better align staff salaries with the regional market.

Director Dawson reported that a budget work session on CIP funding was held. At that meeting, the City Manager reviewed the City facility report card and that the average "grade" for Library buildings is now a "C" and that they may soon deteriorate to a grade "F." Library facilities had carried an average grade of "B." Mr. Aguirre clarified that the F grade would occur in 10 years only if the City did not invest in the appropriate repairs. Ms. Hahn asked what percentage of City buildings are in the same "C" category. Director Dawson responded that facilities such as City Hall, the Chinquapin recreation center, and the Health Department facilities are also graded at the C level.

Director Dawson confirmed that approximately \$800,000 in capital funding is still in place for renovation of the Burke branch library. Director Dawson reported that the requested Library facilities master plan project is included in the City Manager's recommended budget, although funding would not occur until FY2025.

Ms. Hahn asked about the process for approval of the operating budget and Director Dawson provided a general outline of the schedule and stated that staff would provide the Board with a schedule of budget work sessions and hearings.

Ms. Hahn thanked Deputy Director Knight for her contributions and wished her well in her new position.

Ms. Schloeder made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Rogers and approved unanimously at 5:17 pm.