

Alexandria Library Board Minutes

Date

June 21, 2021

Location

Virtual meeting conducted via Zoom.

Present

Kathleen Schloeder, Trudi Hahn, Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, Karen Marshall, Robert Ray IV, Patsy Rogers, Director Dawson, Deputy Director Knight, Division Chief Gates, HR Manager Ross Farley.

Excused

Oscar Fitzgerald

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

Public Comment

Mr. Chuck Ziegler submitted and read a short statement:

“LIBRARY BOARD REPORT June 21, 2021 -Annual Memberships as of May 31, 2021 totaled 59; Lifetime Memberships totaled 13. -On-line book sales, conducted by two book dealers, totaled \$246.41. -As of May 31, 2021, total assets were \$163,011.31. -During the month of May the Beatley Friends contributed 123 volunteer hours, valued at \$3087.50. -In terms of advocacy for our public libraries, a request from the American Library Association for Friends members to contact President Biden and our congressional representatives, their congressional representatives urging them to include The American Libraries Act in the upcoming infrastructure bill. Chuck Ziegler Director – Advocacy Friends of the Beatley Central Library”

Chair Schloeder thanked Mr. Ziegler and the Friends organization for their continued support.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Hahn to approve the following 2020 meeting minutes: February 20, March 17, March 30, May 28, September 21, October 19, December 2. Ms. Marshall seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Chair’s Report

None

Director’s Report

Director Dawson thanked staff for their continued efforts to provide great customer service during the pandemic. She also reported with the Board a copy of the frequently asked questions (FAQ) that were provided to staff regarding the Library’s new guidance on face masks and pandemic health measures. The FAQ outlined that masks are no longer required for those who are fully vaccinated and that patrons and staff will not be required to have their temperatures taken prior to entering Library facilities. Director Dawson reported that while unvaccinated patrons and staff are encouraged to wear face masks

and practice physical distancing, the Library system is not in the enforcement business. There was some concern noted from staff as they are not able to ask about the vaccination status of patrons or colleagues. Director Dawson reported that per the City Manager's updated guidance, the onus is on the individual to take the necessary precautions. Similarly, the expectation is that care givers of children will continue to adhere to guidance from the City Manager and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Personal protective equipment (PPE) will be provided to staff who prefer to wear a face mask and plexiglass will remain in Library facilities for now. Recent data from the City showed that COVID-19 positivity rates were down to 1.1% and that 52% of the City population is fully vaccinated and that 57% is partially vaccinated. While the national and state vaccination goal is 70%, the City has set a target of 80%.

Director Dawson then reported the Monthly Activity Report.

The FY2022 Library budget is approximately \$7.5 million, including a \$142,000 supplement related to the City Council decision to elimination revenue from overdue fines from the Library budget. The FY2022 budget also included a one-time, 1% bonus for employees.

The Library submitted two proposals for use of American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds to the City. One proposal would allow the Library to procure and lend mobile hotspots to patrons in need. The second would provide additional funding for outdoor programming. The City ranked both of these proposals highly for consideration.

Ms. Hahn, Ms. Rogers and Ms. Marshall asked for additional details on the proposed hotspot program, including how long the checkout period would be for these devices. Director Dawson responded that the Library is continuing to evaluate those elements and benchmark against other jurisdictions in the region. Ms. Bennett-Parker asked how many devices would be funded via ARP. Deputy Director Knight reported that, initially, 50 hotspot units would be procured. Director Dawson reported that the funds would be used as seed money for a continued program now that mobile hotspots are eligible for 80% reimbursement via e-Rate. Ms. Marshall requested a copy of the proposal details.

Director Dawson reported that outdoor programming funds, if approved, would be used to partner with outside vendors and partners on programming. Director Dawson reported that at Beatley, some parking spaces might be used to offer job skill programs with organizations focused on various trades such as the Seaport Foundation, welders, carpenter unions, and Rebuilding Together Alexandria (to construct Little Free Libraries). Chair Schloeder asked if the summer reading programs would be virtual and Director Dawson reported that while most would be virtual, there were a few programs in partnership with the Recreation Department which will be in person.

Director Dawson reported that ARP funding will also be received through the State via the Library of Virginia (LVA). Funds will be allocated via a formula to each jurisdiction and some portion will be made available for sub-granting. These grant funds may be where the Library may secure funds to increase the number of lending hotspots. These funds could also help support creation of a program to lend laptops or iPads and tablets to the community. LVA will also be purchasing some database subscriptions to share with all jurisdictions.

Director Dawson reported an update on the emerging issues and legislation regarding e-books, explaining that both Maryland and New York had passed laws and that Fairfax is taking the lead on this issue in Virginia.

Director Dawson reported on the internship program, thanking the Alexandria Library Company for funding a 5-week internship in support of Special Collections. The Library received a good number of qualified applicants and the selected intern was a graduate student at the University of Maryland, pursuing a Master's Degree in history and library information science. The Library also hired a seasonal position to assist with the Local History and Special Collections digitization project. The successful applicant is a recent library science graduate with a background in history and archival sciences with experience in digitization and metadata.

Finally, Director Dawson reported that the annual American Library Association (ALA) conference will be held virtually from June 23 – June 29. She also reported that Amazon Prime Day is today and will be promoted on Library social media for supporters of the Library and the Library Foundation.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Ray reported that as of May 31, 2021, the Library was 91.67% of the way through the fiscal year and had expended 88.54% of the budget. Approximately 90.74% of State Aid funds were expended in that period. As of May 31, 2021, the Library had collected only \$40,213.40 or 8.89% of its fines and fees budget requirement of \$452,411. The Law Library received \$24,967.60 in filing fees as of May 31, 2021. Mr. Ray made a motion to carry over special fund balances into the new fiscal year. That motion was seconded by Ms. Marshall and was approved unanimously.

Investment Committee Report

Mr. Ray reported that as of May 31, 2021, the market value of the Library's investment account was \$3,901,138. Portfolio performance over the last twelve months was 24.82% as compared to the benchmark of 25.06%. Portfolio performance for the calendar year to date was 6.58%, slightly higher than the benchmark of 6.28%.

Chair Schloeder suggested that the Board have its investment advisor provide an annual briefing just prior to the next Board meeting session and the Board concurred.

Old Business - Reopening

Director Dawson walked through a brief outline of the Phase 4 reopening plan, highlighting those elements which had already been rolled out, such as passport services. She explained that Library hiring is somewhat behind due to delays in its ability to advertise positions and to regional competitors. The Library is not able to match the salaries paid by the District of Columbia Library or Arlington County.

Director Dawson reported that Sunday hours will begin on July 11 at Beatley and possibly at Duncan as well. Sunday hours will be added at the other locations as soon as hiring and training of new staff is complete. All Libraries will open on Fridays, beginning on July 9. In addition, existing volunteers may return to libraries on limited basis at the discretion of building managers. Director Dawson reported that the Library volunteer coordinator position is still vacant which hampers the ability of the Library to accommodate additional volunteers. Donations will resume on August 1, reflecting a one-month delay requested by Friends groups to organize existing materials prior to accepting new donations.

Old Business - Library Fines

Chair Schloeder thanked Vice Mayor Bennet-Parker for introducing and supporting the measure which allowed the Library to become fine-free. Director Dawson reported that staff have been working behind the scenes to implement the change. Ms. Hahn asked about the process for determining when an item is considered lost. Director Dawson explained that while elements of the process are still under review, the general procedure is to send reminders and notices along with auto renewals. In the event that materials are not returned once a reasonable time has elapsed, the Library will continue to assess lost and/or damaged fees for such materials. If materials remain outstanding, the Library will block further borrowing on the patron's account.

Ms. Hahn entered a motion to remove overdue fines for materials in order to improve social equity for library users. The motion was seconded by Ms. Marshall and was approved unanimously.

New Business – Committee Assignments

Chair Schloeder and Ms. Hahn will serve on the annual committee to evaluate the performance of the Library Director. Director Dawson reported that she will provide that committee with a self-evaluation in support of their effort. Ms. Rogers will serve as the member of the committee to nominate Board officers and will appoint other members to assist. Chair Schloeder reported that Mr. Fitzgerald will serve on the annual report committee for the purpose of continuity.

The Board member list was reviewed and Chair Schloeder and Vice Mayor Bennett-Parker provided corrections and updates. Chair Schloeder reported with the Board that a long serving and former member, Dick Hobson, had passed away and reviewed with the Board a condolence letter that she planned to send to his family.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Ray, seconded by Ms. Hahn and was approved unanimous at 5:10pm.