

Library Board Minutes

December 2, 2020 - Special Board Meeting

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Present: Kathleen Schloeder, Oscar Fitzgerald, Trudi Hahn, Helen Desfosses, Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, Robert Ray, Director Dawson, Deputy Director Kimberly Knight, Division Chief/Administrative Services Wesson

Excused: Patricia Rogers

The meeting was called to order at 4:10pm.

Director Dawson provided background information for the purpose of the special library meeting. She noted that on March 17, March 30, and May 28 the Library Board conducted Special Board Meetings to discuss the Library's services during the Pandemic. The Library has used certain criteria to help make decisions concerning hours of operation. Those criteria included:

1. Guidance and data from the CDC and the City's Department of Health
2. Recommendations and advice from the City and Library staff
3. Benchmarking information from the library systems in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) and the Library of Virginia-Region V
4. Best Practices from the American Library Association and the Urban Libraries Council

The Director noted that on November 13, Governor Northam announced new actions to mitigate the spread of the virus in Virginia, and he stated "COVID-19 is surging across the country, and while cases are not rising in Virginia as rapidly as in some other states, I do not intend to wait until they are. We are acting now to prevent this health crisis from getting worse."

Director Dawson added that based on the projections for Northern Virginia, Alexandria, and the DC/Maryland/Virginia region, Alexandria Library was also interested in taking a proactive approach to ensure the safety of the staff and its patrons. She stated that MWCOCG estimated that in the short term, Alexandria is projected to have **a steep increase in number of new cases through early-December**. Given the projections, the challenges in trying to enforce the mask mandate (5 years and up must wear a mask in a building), staffing challenges during the holidays, and benchmarking information from the libraries in the surrounding jurisdictions, Director Dawson recommended that Library services roll back to Phase 2 with curbside-only and digital and virtual services until further notice. She recommended that this go into effect Monday, December 7.

Ms. Hahn made the following motion: “In keeping with Governor Northam’s goal, of being proactive rather than reactive to the upward trend of positive COVID cases and increasing risk of transmission in Alexandria and its surrounding jurisdictions, I move that Alexandria Library resume its Phase 2 curbside-only and virtual services until further notice. I further move that transitions between various phases in the Library’s reopening plan be contingent upon the guidance provided by the Alexandria Health Department, the City of Alexandria, and the Commonwealth of Virginia. Ms. Desfosses seconded the motion. The motion carried.

A motion to adjourn at 4:29pm was made by Ms. Desfosses and seconded by Mr. Fitzgerald. The motion carried.