

## Library Board Minutes

November 6, 2019

Location: Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library, Dickman Board Room

Present: Kathleen Schloeder, Oscar Fitzgerald, Trudi Hahn, Patricia Rogers, Robert Ray IV, Director Dawson, Division Chief/Administrative Services Wesson

Absent: Helen Desfosses, Elizabeth Bennett-Parker

Guest: Lynda Rudd, Technical Services Manager

The meeting was called to order at 9:03am.

### New Business

Director Dawson reported that the Office of Management and Budget expected a \$7 million shortfall for FY2021. OMB had asked that departments once again prepare a budget that reflects a 2.5% cut, or \$177,892. We were asked to consider the priority based budgeting, in which the Law Library is identified in the lowest tier. The Director's recommended cuts in order to meet the requested amount were to eliminate two page positions (\$16,969), reduce the materials increases we had built in to the current services budget (10,131), eliminate Sunday service at all four branches (\$78,159) and eliminate all security guards (\$72,633).

The Library was allowed to submit supplementals which included a \$100,000 materials supplement. The Director noted that the Library's core business is providing materials to residents, for their recreational, educational, or informational needs. She added that the board had agreed last year not to request a supplemental, and wait until this year. The \$100,000 request ties in well with the ebook discussion in which vendors continue to limit how they sell to public libraries, creating an equity issue and making it difficult to afford to purchase what residents want. The board members discussed that they feel strongly that since they accepted a match to supplemental requests for materials previously, they will not accept one this time. Ms. Hahn commented that a "great city needs a great library." A second supplemental being requested is for \$5,200 for annual operating costs to run a digital asset management system (DAMS), which had been requested in the Capital Improvement Budget requests. A third supplemental request was for a camera in the stairwell at Beatley; the price was unknown at the time of the meeting.

Ms. Schloeder stated that the Library Board does not want to see any of the budget reductions. Mr. Fitzgerald agreed and after additional board discussion, he motioned that the Library Board write a memo to the Office of Management and Budget stating that the Library Board is extremely concerned about the repeated budget cuts and that the Board does not support the reductions which the Library Director submitted as they will negatively impact library services and strongly urge the City to consider the Library's supplemental requests. The motion was seconded by Ms. Desfosses. The motion carried.

Director Dawson reported on the situation with Macmillan Publishing, who had decided to change its purchasing model of ebooks to libraries. Like most jurisdictions, Alexandria's circulation of ebooks has increased. Macmillan's new policies would allow a library system to purchase only one copy, and then

have to wait eight weeks to purchase additional copies. For larger urban libraries that tend to need multiple copies of an ebook, this is a major issue. Hold lists will grow, resulting in customer complaints. Mr. Fitzgerald asked why they would limit the number of ebooks – as an author, he would be very happy to sell more copies. Director Dawson stated that the publisher believes that it cuts in to their sales. Libraries spend an average of \$40 per ebook versus an individual purchaser who pays about \$10. She said that Macmillan's CEO claimed that they had data to support the decision, but when asked for the data, he had not shared it. The American Library Association is looking at filing something in the courts to battle the problem. The Urban Library Council was interacting with Attorneys General, and had asked mayors to sign a letter of support.

Technical Services Manager Lynda Rudd stated that when Macmillan made an initial announcement in April or May about forthcoming changes, their average book was already running approximately \$40 per title, with 52 checkouts or 2 years, a policy known as "metered access." Then, several publishers made announcements that they would be making changes such as billing structure and how long libraries could keep a title, followed by China's 20% embargo on paper, affecting the Library's bottom line costs. Ms. Rudd began to purchase what she knew we would need to fill gaps, complete series runs, and pre-ordered anything that was expected to come out in July. When Macmillan's final announcement was made, it was a lot broader than what was expected. A number of Virginia libraries are signing a letter to Macmillan. Director Dawson stated that if Alexandria was going to sign it then we need Macmillan to feel the consequences. She added that if the other publishers decide to follow suit, that would hurt libraries in the future. While she did not consider the dollar amount to be that bad, she was concerned about customer service based on some of the affected titles. Ms. Hahn agreed, stating that Macmillan could say "OK, our ebook purchases went down but our hardcopies went up, so we're OK."

Director Dawson stated that we had a choice to either boycott only the purchase of ebooks, or boycott both ebook and print purchases. No one else in Virginia is boycotting print, so even if Alexandria did it, it wouldn't have an impact anyway. The Director stated that customers would be notified via the website and email.

Ms. Hahn motioned that Alexandria Library will boycott the Macmillan ebooks in line with the recommendations of ALA and ULC until such time that Macmillan changes their policy or until ALA or ULC recommend otherwise and this subject will be reviewed at future board meetings. Ms. Rogers seconded the motion. The motion carried.

A motion to adjourn at 10:33am was made by Mr. Fitzgerald and seconded by Ms. Hahn. The motion carried.