

THE FERGUSON LIBRARY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
December 7, 2021

Present:

Board Members: S. O'Shea (Chair); E. Bromley; S. Fredrick; S. Kim; T. Lucero;
R. Mercede; P. O'Brien Morrow; S. Vidan

Citizen Advisers: T. Bartley; J. Block; T. Cassone; S. Duarte; S. Fitzgerald;
J. Freeman; D. Golden; A. Livingston; S. Perry; M. Sommer

Foundation Member: A. Zucker

Staff: A. Knapp; L. Avellar; C. Harper; C. Hubbard; E. Joseph; S. LaPerla

Stephanie O'Shea called the meeting to order. This meeting was held in person and via zoom.

Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes of the October 19, 2021 meeting. Motion was approved.

Treasurer's Report

Cheryl Harper reported on the year-to-date financials for the month ending October 31, 2021 noting a 5.8% increase in revenue and a decrease of 3% in expenses. The pension liability actuaries met the prior week and the Board will review the financials in more detail at the February meeting. The balance sheet reflects a cash and cash equivalent of \$1.2 million due in part to the recent Ann Sexton donation and with accounts payable being low. Our YTD actuals is \$89,838 and the budget is in a good position.

CEO's Report

Alice Knapp discussed the CEO's October report and the NEA Big Read grant that we received to purchase Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as well as host numerous programs. The Library purchased over 250 copies of *Beloved*. There were several special events around *Beloved*, including weekly book discussions at our branches and at Mill River Park. Our keynote speaker was Dr. Valerie Smith, President of Swarthmore College and former Dean of the College at Princeton University and was Toni Morrison's colleague and friend. We offered weekly lectures on the various themes Morrison explored in *Beloved*, given by scholars who came to us through the Toni Morrison

Society. Susan LaPerla (Director of Public Services) showed off the community quilt project that several children and adults participated in that depicts scenes from *Beloved*. When the quilt is completed later this month, it will be on display at the Main Library and the branches in rotation.

From her November CEO's report, Ms. Knapp spoke about CT State Library's new Public Library Task Force formed to help new refugees. Ferguson Library staff members, Maisam Nouh and Yelena Klompus, have been working to help refugees and immigrants get settled into living in the U.S. for quite some time. For five years, Maisam has been working with SIRS as an interpreter for the first Syrian family settled in Stamford. She has also helped families get library cards, enroll them in our new Digital Navigator project and is a member of the SIRS core leadership group, and co-chairs their interpreting team.

Yelena Klompus primarily works with immigrants and English language learners, who come to the U.S. to work or study, and the refugees often take advantage of the library's employment and technology training, and ESL and citizenship services and resources.

From both reports, Ms. Knapp spoke about the improvements in the Building Services Department with the new No-Touch cleaning that is saving costs from our past use of professional cleaners to two custodians who helped rebuild a fence at the Bennett Branch, to the new LED lighting recently installed to help with electrical cost.

Ferguson Library staff participated in a food and diaper drive with donations given to Person-to-Person prior to Thanksgiving holiday. Ms. O'Shea was at the November staff meeting to hand out Employee Service Awards with acknowledgements given to two 35-year staff members.

Friends of Ferguson

Deborah Golden spoke on the Used Book Shop's October 23rd Bag Sale where they brought in \$1,000. The Friends Book Shop October sales totaled \$10,000. Twenty-nine people attended the Friends Against Racism 3-hour event held on November 15th that was presented by the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ). On December 16th, The Friends Author Series Committee will be presenting David Michaelis (zoom only), author of *Eleanor*. The Friends Board passed a 2½% raise for both the Book Shop Manager and the Volunteer Manager. The Friends Membership Drive is in full swing; Ms. Golden is encouraging the Library Board and Citizen Advisers to join.

Executive Committee

Ms. O'Shea reported on the Executive Committee from the morning's meeting.

Development Committee

Ellen Bromley reported on the success of the Benefactors Circle reception held on November 9th. The reception was followed by the Howard Kaplan Memorial Lecture

featuring Supreme Court Justice Andrew McDonald. Linda Avellar spoke of the \$40,000 received so far for the Annual Appeal and \$8,400 was donated for Giving Tuesday. Annual Appeal is aiming for \$100,000 in donations by December 31st. We are seeing a down trend in giving this year but a holiday giving email will be sent out around December 15th. The Novel Affair Committee met in early December and are working on recruiting restaurants and auction items. At the moment, A Novel Affair will be an in-person event on April 7th.

Long Range Planning Committee

Susan LaPerla and Elizabeth Joseph presented a PowerPoint on the Community Deep Needs Assessment and the recent community conversations and survey. They spoke of the demographic of the participated groups, and are hoping to add two more conversations one for teens and one for the Hispanic community. For the community survey, almost 500 have participated so far and it will remain open to the end of December.

Pension Committee

The Pension Committee met on December 2nd and discussed reports from Wells Fargo as well as from Hooker & Holcombe. As of November 6, 2021, the total portfolio was at \$13.6 million with 61% invested in equities, 29% in fixed income and 9% in alternative investments. Investments have performed well despite a 6% increase in inflation. The Skybridge sale has been completed. The July 1, 2021 Actuarial Valuation showed a net gain from 2020 to 2021 of \$2.4 million as a result the employer's contribution will decrease from \$388,851 to \$257,453 for FY2023.

Operating Budget

Alice Knapp and Cheryl Harper presented the proposed operating budget for 2022-2023 that will be submitted to the City in January, 2022. The funding request is for \$10,447,100, a 3.88% (4%) increase over the current year. A motion to adopt the budget for submission was made and approved. All in favor, the budget was approved. The capital budget, which was already approved and submitted to the planning board in October, included roof repairs at the Main Library and Weed Branch along with a feasibility study all of the branches to understand future capital needs.

Old Business

Alice Knapp said the Eversource Lighting Project at the Main Library is underway and the library has 5 years to pay back the loan for this installation. A date for the Financial Health Taskforce has not been finalized yet. The dedication of the Dudley N. Williams, Jr. Auditorium will be held on Sunday, December 12, 2021 with Ernie Abate to speak at the dedication. The library will be putting out a RFQ for a new auditing firm as Dino Reda of Van Brunt DuBiago & Company will be going in a new direction and we were told that this year will be their last audit for the library.

The following resolution was presented and passed by the Board to comply with a Connecticut State Bond Grant for the Weed Branch Roof Repair, in which the library will assume project costs beyond the grant funded amount of \$100,000 up to \$75,000.

Resolved:

That the Library CEO be authorized to expend up to \$75,000.00 on the Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch Roof Project.

New Business

Alice Knapp spoke about the new library branch at the Chester Addison Community Center and the planning involved with an anticipated opening this spring. The following Memorandum of Understanding was made and approved by the Board:

Resolved:

That the Library CEO be authorized to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Stamford Police Activities League (PAL) to open a Ferguson Library Branch Library at the Chester Addison Community Center, located at 245 Selleck Street, Stamford, Connecticut.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m. A Board Holiday dinner was held at Blackstone's Steakhouse following this meeting.

Cheryl B. Harper
Secretary pro tem