

THE FERGUSON LIBRARY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
February 25, 2025

Present:

Board Members: E. Bromley (Chair); M. Mays (Vice Chair); S. Vidan (Treasurer);
R. Mercede (Secretary); A. George; A. Livingston; T. Lucero;
S. O'Shea; C. Paris

Citizen Advisors: A. Better-Wirz; S. Conley; S. Fitzgerald; J. Freeman; W. Hill;
A. LiVolsi; R. McManus, M. Metwally; M. Moore; J. Orlikoff; S. Perry;
A. Riehl; B. Spaulding; D. Stein

Staff: A. Knapp; C. Harper; C. Hubbard; S. LaPerla; L. Avellar; D. Lyles; A. Marrocolla;

Guest: Chris Eck of Eck Tax & Accounting

Board Chair Ellen Bromley called the meeting to order at 4:32 pm.

Ms. Bromley introduced Chris Eck of Eck Tax & Accounting, who discussed the library's audit for FY ending June 30, 2024. Mr. Eck said the library is in a good position, with a healthy cash reserve. This will be the last audit Mr. Eck will conduct for the library as he is transitioning his business to tax preparation. We are researching other auditing firms. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the 2023-2024 audit.

Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2024 board meeting. The motion carried.

Treasurer's Report

Board Treasurer Susanna Vidan shared highlights of the treasurer's report, noting revenue is trending up from passport services and pay-to-print. Maintenance expenses are down, with a lot of in-house repairs being done by staff. Expenses are up for staff attending library conferences and software upgrades. The report shows a healthy balance sheet.

CEO Reports

The January 2025 CEO report centered on efforts at the state level to protect intellectual freedom. Senator Maher has introduced Senate Bill 1271, which would mandate that school and public libraries have collection development policies that would also legally protect librarians.

Susan LaPerla, Director of Public Services, reported on the dashboard for FY2024-25, Q1 and Q2. Circulation per capita has increased, with attendance at the Harry Bennett and West Side branches up. We offered 68% more programs, including technical learning and cultural programs, which drew more people. The December CEO report centered on the diversity of library programming and how we compare to other library systems.

Connie Hubbard, Director of Human Resources, reported on the staff read of *Subtle Acts of Exclusion: How to Understand, Identify, and Stop Microaggressions* by Tiffany Jana and Michael Baran. All staff participated in small group discussion sessions lead by members of the Leadership Team and EDI Council. Kenya Rutland will be at the library March 20, 2025, to lead the whole staff on a discussion of the book.

Executive Committee

Ms. Bromley reported that the Executive Committee met the day before, on Monday, February 24, and reviewed today's board agenda.

Long Range Planning Committee

Stephanie O'Shea spoke about the January 14, 2025 Long Range Planning Committee meeting. The dashboard and customer satisfaction survey were discussed, and comments were favorable. A committee member suggested that UConn grad students be invited to help design the next survey, with a release date in late spring.

Pension Committee

On February 20, 2025, the Pension Committee met with USI representatives to discuss the latest trends. The library's pension attorney, David Zeid, will retire after 40 years of service and efforts will be underway to interview a replacement.

Foundation Development Committee Meeting

The Foundation Board met on February 4, 2025 with updates about the Annual Appeal and Novel Affair. A gift acceptance policy with a naming price schedule is being developed and will be presented to the Foundation and Library boards for approval at a future date.

Foundation Finance Committee Meeting

At its first meeting on February 18, 2025, the Foundation Finance Committee discussed its function, which is to review the budget, balance sheet, and general policies and guidelines.

Friends of Ferguson

Friends President Margaret Metwally thanked the board for honoring longtime Friends board member Eileen Rosner at this year's Novel Affair. The Friends Mini Golf event at the Bennett Branch was held the weekend before and had over 565 paid golfers for the 2-day event. Book bundle sales raised almost \$500. In total, Mini-golf raised more than \$10,000, mostly from sponsorships.

Old Business

2026-2032 Capital Budget, 2025-2026 Operating Budget, HVAC Update, Eastside Branch

The capital and operating budgets are still at a holding stage. We hope to move forward on the HVAC system. Work on the Eastside Branch project consisted of presenting to the Planning and Finance boards as well as a beginning discussion with the City Parks and Recreation Department.

New Business

2023-2024 Audit Report

The 2023-2024 Audit Report was presented at the beginning of this meeting, where a motion was passed to accept it.

South End Branch Move to 78 Southfield Harbor Landing

With the closure of the Lathon Wider Community Center on January 2, 2025 due to unforeseeable water damage, the South End Branch had to find a new location. With the mayor's office reaching out to Building Land Technology for help, BLT offered Ferguson Library a large office space at 78 Southfield Harbor Landing rent-free for the next six months. With a lovely view of the harbor and ample parking space, the library is anxious to get started on this move. Expectations are to have the move complete in a few weeks and a reception to open the new space. The city is working to relocate the other Lathon Wider tenants, then repairs will begin on the building.

Novel Affair

Linda Avellar, Director of Development & Communication, gave an update on Novel Affair, which is April 10. So far we have received \$193,000 from 73 sponsors, which is up from last year's figures. Ms. Knapp encouraged the board to contribute to the silent auction.

Annual Appeal

Ms. Avellar said the Annual Appeal is up 14% or \$280,000 more so far this fiscal year. We registered 250 new donors to the library.

RFP for AV for Main Library and Bennett Branch

The typical AV system only lasts 10 years and repairs are needed at the Main Library and Harry Bennett Branch. Three AV firms met at the Library earlier today to discuss the RFP application process. This AV repair will be implemented in phases and is an unplanned, but necessary, expense.

Review of Library Policy: Public & Private Spaces in Relation to Immigration and Customs Enforcement

In anticipation of the federal government's possible ICE raids at the Ferguson Library, we are taking precautions by implementing this new policy:

Public and Private Space Policy

Public and Private Spaces in Relation to Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Protecting the privacy of users is a core value of the Ferguson Library. While library staff will comply with legal requirements from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, they are committed to taking all reasonable measures to fully safeguard user information and privacy.

- A) The Ferguson Library distinguishes between private and public and non-public spaces.
 - a. Public space refers to communal areas that are accessible to everyone, regardless of their purpose for visiting. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as well as any other accompanying law enforcement officials may be in this area. You may direct them to wait in this area while you notify Administration of their presence.
 - b. Non-public space refers to areas designated for private interactions, or library programs. This includes staff or work areas, as well as any space used for operational services provided by the Library such as passports. These areas are restricted to the public, and non-library personnel, including immigration agents and other law enforcement officials, are not permitted unless approved by Administration.
- B) Immigration agents and other law enforcement officials are welcome to use public library spaces, just like any other user. However, the Ferguson Library does not permit access to user records or information about a particular user's whereabouts by law enforcement unless required by a valid judicial warrant, signed by a federal judge.
 - a. Immigration agents and other law enforcement officials must observe the same code of conduct as any members of the public.

Procedures When Interacting with Immigration Agents and Other Law Enforcement Officials

- 1) Immediately contact the Administrator/Manager/Person-in-Charge (an "Administrator"). Greet them nicely, ask for identification, escort them to a public space, and contact an Administrator. All request for information and/or documents shall be referred to an Administrator.
- 2) The Administrator shall identify the purpose of the visit. The Library cannot share any information about users without a signed and dated judicial warrant. The

Administrator shall request and record the agent's identification including their name, badge or ID number, telephone number and business card.

- 3) The Administrator ensures that the judicial warrant is dated and signed by a judge. The Administrator may consult with counsel if necessary. The Administrator may record details of the visit including whether the agent gained access to areas, individuals or information.
- 4) Staff will not obstruct or interfere with a law enforcement action or investigation. Staff will maintain a calm and cooperative manner.
- 5) If a library patron has a question about their legal rights, library staff will provide them with a list of legal resources and/or non-profit organizations compiled by the Administration. Library staff may not provide legal guidance to library patrons.

There was a general discussion and it was suggested that the word "Policy" be added to the title. With this added word change to Public and Private Space Policy, a motion was made and seconded to accept, the motion passed.

Update on Burlington Building – 74 Broad Street

Building developer Randy Salvatore, President and CEO of RMS Companies, will be at the February 26, 2025, staff meeting to update library staff on the plans and design of the new apartment complex that will replace the Burlington building at 74 Broad Street.

Date of Next Meeting

The Board of Trustees will meet on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at 4:30 pm.

Ms. Bromley called for the meeting to end. All voted in favor, the meeting adjourned at 5:44 pm.

RJ Mercede
Secretary