

DULUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD

Minutes April 27, 2021

Sue Henke called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Members present: Betty Ramsland, Sue Henke, Lizzy Luoma, Stephen Welsh, Matt Rosendahl, Alex Strelow, David Sperl

Also present: Carla Powers

Absent: Neil Glazman, Michelle Foshay

Review and approve agenda

Ramsland moved to approve, Welsh seconded. Approved by unanimous show of hands.

Approve minutes of March 23, 2021 meeting

Rosendahl moved to approve, Luoma seconded. Approved by unanimous show of hands.

Reports

Library Manager's Report – Powers

Conducting interviews this week to fill 7 library technician positions from a very large pool of candidates. After these positions are filled, the library will work to fill the Librarian 1 open positions.

ECRD Report – Carmella Hatch

Board members are excited about the arrival of the van.

Foundation Report – Rosendahl

Rosendahl and Powers added that the Sklaris Fund donation will be used to acquire virtual reality equipment and content. In the future, library staff hope this can be shared at programs and via the van.

Friends Report – Ramsland

Powers added to the report that yesterday some Friends board members are looking at an option for providing outside, “mini-booksales” in the next few months.

Old Business

Update on restoring services and staffing

Powers reported that Library Express began at the branches April 12, where there was a press event during National Library Week. It's been going well operating without appointments. The natural flow of people has been manageable. On average 40/day at West and 100/day at Mt Royal. There have not been waiting lines, and people have been following guidelines to move in and out of the building quickly without lingering. It is a little more staff intensive to provide service in this way because there is a host position where a staff member explains what library

express is and explains COVID precautions. It helps people understand and be successful at using the service. Curbside use has reduced since the branches have been open for Library Express. Computer use is strong with 22 people per day. Approximately half of those users place a reservation; turnaways for drop-in use are rare. One longer time slot has been offered for users who need more time. Research assistance has been approximately one appointment per day, which was expected because it requires background work to pull materials and prepare for the researcher.

Board members reported great experiences, all at Mt Royal. There were people there, but people were naturally distanced and staff did a great job screening at the door and were mindful.

Powers said that if the traffic at the branches remains at this manageable level, staff will look into making computers available. Home library service remains the service that has not returned in any format. It is dependent on volunteers. There is some in-person, outdoor programming planned for summer.

New Business

Main Library recabling project

The contract for this project will go to the City Council soon. The Property and Facilities Management Division is managing this. The main library will receive new internet cable. City IT staff have been worried about a failure for years. 60% of the cost will be reimbursed by federal e-rate funding. The rest is funded through the city's capital improvement plan, not library budget. In order to do this project, the library needs to have two small rooms for networking equipment; this will displace Sue Schumacher and some of the ECRD staff who will have new offices constructed within a couple of weeks. Then the recabling will start in July due to e-rate stipulations for timing. It is unknown how disruptive this will be. Powers expects to have more details, including what the work will entail, and how long the project will last. The library will not be without internet for the duration of the project. The cabling will need to be in place for 5 years, or the city will need to reimburse e-rate funds.

Ongoing Business

Advocacy

The advocacy group representing the Friends, Foundation, and Board met with Mayor Larson, CAO Shuchman, Powers, and Jim Filby-Williams. The tone of the meeting was positive and productive. The group tried to use the three principles of equity, sustainability, and community building outlined in the mayor's state of the city address in our presentation, in the hope that the library will be viewed as a trusted, valuable partner in her vision of the future of the city.

Welsh moved, Ramsland seconded to adjourn the meeting at 5:27 p.m.