

Duluth Public Library Board

Minutes of September 27, 2022, Meeting

Attendees: Bill Arezzo, Michelle Foshay, Sue Henke, Lori Steinbach, Steven Welsh, David Sperl, Betty Ramsland, Lizzy Luoma

Also present: Carla Powers, Jim Filby Williams, Councilor Terese Tomanek (until 5:15 PM); library staff members Lori Crocker, Kaitlyn Tillman; Member of the public Debbi Rasmussen

Absent: Matt Rosendahl

Call to Order: President Michelle Foshay called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM

Welcome and introduction of Library Safety Specialist: The new Library Safety Specialist, Kaitlyn Tillman, was introduced. Kaitlyn has been in her position since September 12. Board members welcomed Kaitlyn and expressed appreciation that the long process of developing the job description and hiring for the safety specialist position was completed.

Review and Approval of Agenda: Motion by Arezzo; seconded by Ramsland, to approve agenda as drafted. Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes August 2022 Meeting: Motion by Arezzo, seconded by Luoma, to approve minutes of the August 23, 2022, meeting as drafted. Unanimously approved.

Reports:

Library Manager's Report: Saturday hours are going well. Staffing: Interviews are in progress for three positions. This will complete hiring except for the open Librarian II position for Technical Services. There have not been appropriate candidates for this position. The current Civil Service list for this position will be allowed to expire. The position will be posted again in hopes of attracting suitable candidates specifically for Technical Services.

The library will be closed September 30 for staff training as described in the board packet.

Foundation Report: Libations at the Library was a success raising \$50,000 overall and \$13,000 in the Fund-a-Need auction. Fund-a-Need proceeds are earmarked for the West Duluth Branch. Lori Crocker reviewed the improvements planned, which include replacing the service desk, moving the computer stations and increasing shelving for holds.

The Foundation board will hold a retreat Saturday, October 1, as part of their Strategic Planning process.

Friends Report: Friends recently donated \$25,000 to the library! Discussions ongoing with Carla and staff regarding location of free book cart. Cash box at current location on Michigan level was vandalized and has not been replaced.

Old Business:

Library security: Topic of staff training on September 30 is Trauma Informed Service – intervening with people experiencing trauma. Powers is continuing to look for a date for Crisis Intervention training by Police Department. Security Assessment work continues. Next step is a survey of staff and patrons about how safe they feel at the Main Library.

Social Worker Pilot Project: HDC is experiencing staffing issues. Consequently, coverage at library is inconsistent. The plan (when HDC position is staffed) is that the Library Safety Specialist will be responsible for circulating throughout the building, providing a level of crisis management, and offering a warm hand-off to HDC staff for referral for services. Without HDC staff available, the Security Specialist has completed some referrals.

Main library facility update: Discussion began with the observation by board members that the elevator is out of service again, creating access issues for patrons.

Filby Williams reported that funding for library facility renovation is major priority for Mayor Larson.

The Mayor was recently in Washington DC, meeting with MN lawmakers about the potential for federal funding for a library facility renovation. She is pitching her concept of a creating a space for community building with additional services such as Workforce Development. The ask is more difficult because it doesn't neatly align with any existing Federal funding source or package.

Henke asked about the potential impact of the Parks and Rec request for a levy increase of 8.6% on the potential for a future levy increase for the library renovation. Filby Williams explained that the Parks and Rec levy increase is a referendum decided by the voters in November election. A levy increase for a library funding package would be from the general fund, decided by the City Council. He predicted the impact to be minimal because of timing, a lower amount to be requested, and the fact that the City Council would make the decision.

A question was raised concerning status of a request for \$8 million for facility renovation to the State of MN Coronavirus Capital Fund (part of American Rescue Plan Act). Carla will check on status. It has been many months since request was made. The State has not yet issued a granting process for distribution of funds.

Ramsland requested to go on record stating her opposition the preliminary study presented by the consulting architect combining library and Workforce Development in the current facility. She understands that the plan was presented as conceptual only, a proof of concept that the two entities could successfully share the space. However, she has too often experienced with other governmental bodies that a conceptual plan somehow becomes "the plan" with little input from public or staff. Henke stated that the planning process will need to ensure that there is space to include both entities and still provide a robust library experience for the community. If space constraints limit the potential of the Main Library as a center for the community and literacy, we have lost that opportunity for another 40 years or more. The renovation needs to give the community more than a larger branch library. Public and staff input are critical to a successful outcome.

Arezzo asked about timeline for planning process. Filby Williams stated that it is not possible to give a timeline until the City develops solid progress in a financing plan.

New Business

Revision to Library programming policy: The Programing Policy approved at the August board meeting has been revised to include *Criteria for selecting programing* section. Motion by Ramsland, seconded by Steinbach, to approve policy as revised. Motion passed unanimously. Foshay expressed appreciation for excellent communications regarding controversy over Ms. Cupcake story time program during Pride Week.

Challenges and censorship in libraries: Powers discussed escalating efforts by groups to remove books from school and public libraries. The majority of titles have been related to LGBTQ issues. Often the bans have had the unintended effect of putting the questioned title on the bestseller lists. The Duluth

Public Library has had no recent requests. The DPL policy on requests for removal of a title names the Library Advisory Board as the final decision-making body.

Ongoing Business

Advocacy: In February 2022 the current advocacy team suggested that a new team be formed to provide input on facility renovation as part of the facility planning process. A formal planning process has not yet begun. Filby Williams said there is nowhere to direct advocacy for funding at the state/federal level at this time. Henke will update the current Advocacy team on the status of funding efforts and inability for determination of a timeline as reported at today's meeting.

Henke asked about library programming to increase digital inclusion and literacy among Minnesota's older adults. Powers and Crocker replied that they offer one-on-one assistance and have found offering digital literacy programs to seniors to be less effective. Tillman stated that the one library staff member assigned to the computer area at the main library is often not able to help everyone who requests assistance. She noted that the computer area is also where behavior issues escalate. Powers stated that it would be difficult to justify two positions in computer area without it resulting in too much staff downtime.

Meeting adjourned at 5:50 PM