

Kent County Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of the January 30, 2023 Meeting

Present: Jay Silcox, President; Judi O'Brien, Vice President; Amy Sine, Treasurer; Erin Counihan, Secretary; Alex Baker, Trustee; Peggy McKee, Trustee; Arnessa Dowell, Executive Director; Annie Woodall, Staff Member; Chris Walmsley, Executive Secretary

Mr. Silcox called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. Ms. Sine moved to approve the minutes as presented. Ms. Counihan seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Ms. Dowell reviewed the agenda for the meeting. Ms. Dowell noted that there would be several items reviewed within the grant updates, including a letter of intent. Ms. Dowell also added a personnel update under new business.

Officer Reports

Mr. Silcox noted that Ms. Sine had assumed the duties of treasurer and would be meeting later in the week to get the banking situated.

Ms. Sine reviewed the bank balances, noting that there was \$49,530.76 in the PNC Checking account, \$31,238.95 in the PNC Money Market account, and \$218,801.66 in the Peoples Bank account as of December 30, 2022.

Ms. Sine noted that Ms. Julie Gill had agreed to continue as a citizen representative on the Finance Committee.

Committee and Representative Appointments

Mr. Silcox appointed Ms. Sine as the chair of the Finance Committee, and appointed Ms. O'Brien to the committee.

Mr. Silcox appointed Ms. O'Brien to continue as the representative to the Friends of the Kent County Public Library.

Mr. Silcox appointed Mr. Murphy to continue as the representative to the Foundation for the Kent County Public Library.

Mr. Silcox appointed Ms. Counihan to continue as the representative to the Eastern Shore Regional Library.

Mr. Silcox appointed himself as the open meetings compliance officer.

Mr. Silcox appointed Ms. Baker as the whistleblower compliance officer.

Mr. Silcox appointed Ms. McKee as the chair of the Policy Committee, and Ms. Baker as a member of the committee.

Librarian's Report

LSTA Grant Update

Ms. Dowell informed the trustees that the Cubicall units had been ordered and that the library was waiting to be informed of the delivery date. Ms. Dowell noted that a location had been selected in North County, and that a location was being identified in Chestertown.

Union Legislation

Ms. Dowell noted that legislative day was February 15 for Maryland, and that collective bargaining legislation for library employees was being presented. Ms. Dowell reviewed some of the requirements and procedures related to forming a union for library employees.

Letters of Intent

Ms. Dowell informed the trustees that the letter of intent for Maryland State Library capital funding was due at the end of February, and that capital funds provided by the state required a 50% match. The trustees discussed capital projects and available funding. Ms. Dowell noted that it would be a competitive cycle with proposals being submitted from all over the state. Mr. Silcox asked when the funds would be awarded. Ms. Dowell said that projects would be selected in July with approval by the legislature in January.

The trustees discussed the Fiscal Year 2024 budget cycle. Ms. Dowell noted that she would receive the budget request packet from the county commissioners office soon.

Ms. Dowell informed the trustees that a letter of intent was submitted to the Maryland Historical Society related to a grant for the Chestertown Library Inc., building. Ms. Dowell noted that this grant would also require matching funds. The trustees discussed the approach to the application and what local resources could be utilized.

Administrative Leave Addendum

Ms. Dowell informed the trustees that an addendum to the staff handbook related to administrative leave was being discussed with a human resources specialist who had provided services to the library previously.

Chestertown Library Inc., building Memorandum of Understanding

Ms. Dowell presented a revised Memorandum of Understanding for the Chestertown Library Inc., building, which had been reviewed with the county administrator. Ms. Dowell noted that the revisions included adding a term of five years to the memorandum, and specifying that this memorandum replaced the previous agreement.

Ms. McKee moved to approve the memorandum as revised. Ms. Sine seconded the motion. Mr. Silcox called for discussion. The trustees discussed feedback from partner organizations related to the memorandum. Mr. Silcox called for a vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Dowell reviewed revised construction costs for the renovation of the Chestertown Library Inc., building. Mr. Silcox questioned if the project manager had discussed or identified local contractors to use in the work as previous projects had identified companies and contractors outside of the immediate area. Ms. Dowell said she would inquire with the project manager.

Ms. O'Brien noted that the quoted cost exceeded the \$25,000 threshold for a competitive bidding process, and questioned if this was pursuable as presented without violating the county procurement policy. The trustees discussed the procurement policy and efforts to be in compliance with the policy.

Mr. Silcox questioned if the project manager had visited the site to view the structure. Ms. Dowell said that they had not, but had coordinated visits by contractors and other individuals who could provide information related to the soundness of the structure. Mr. Silcox noted that there would likely be structural issues related to the observed issues with the floor.

Trustee Education Topics

Ms. Dowell asked the trustees what trustee education topics they would like to see covered in the upcoming meetings. Ms. Dowell reviewed previous topics including trustee and director responsibilities, open meetings act compliance, and presentations from supporting groups like the Maryland State Library and the Eastern Shore Regional Library. The trustees discussed if this should be an element of the regular meeting or outside of the regular schedule. The trustees reached a consensus that the trainings would be a part of the regular meetings. Ms. Counihan said that she would be interested in staff takeaways from the Maryland Library Association Conference.

The trustees set the following schedule for education topics: February education related to trustee and director responsibilities, April education related to the Maryland State Library depending on the availability of the state librarian, June education related to Maryland Library Association Conference takeaways, and July education related to the Eastern Shore Regional Library.

Old Business

Rules of Conduct Policy

Ms. Dowell reviewed the Rules of Conduct as previously presented to the trustees. Ms. Dowell asked if there was feedback from the trustees related to the Rules of Conduct. Mr. Silcox asked if the senior team had reviewed the policies. Ms. Woodall noted that there was not much change to the content, but that language had been added related to banning of patrons which had been informed by the policies of other libraries across Maryland. Ms. Sine questioned if this policy would need to be approved by a legal counsel. Ms. Woodall noted that she was not a legal expert, but that libraries have always had a process for banning patrons, and that the policy as presented clarified the language around banning patrons. The trustees discussed the need for legal counsel related to banning patrons, and if banning a patron meant that they were barred from entering the building, the property or using any library services.

Ms. Baker questioned how banning was maintained across all the staff. Ms. Woodall noted that the procedure would need to be developed after the policy was approved. The trustees discussed how banning could identify a specific individual instead of utilizing general terms. Ms. O'Brien questioned if it would be appropriate to include language stating that minors cannot be banned for life, noting that legal standard specified that minors are not subject to life long punishments. Ms. Woodall suggested that this could be a part of the procedure. The trustees discussed lifetime bans and if they were appropriate for the library.

Ms. Counihan asked if it would be appropriate to establish a liaison with the Chestertown Police Department or the Kent County Sheriff's Office due to the severity of some of the recent issues. The trustees discussed police presence in and around the library. The trustees discussed security at the library, how security could be improved at the library, and potential impacts of increased security in the space.

Ms. Counihan stated that she would draft a letter to the Chestertown Police Department and the Kent County Sheriff's Office related to partnerships with the library. Mr. Silcox said that he would reach out to the County Public Works department related to improvements to security which were not directly on the library property.

The trustees discussed the wide variety of patrons which utilized the library and its services. Ms. Dowell emphasized that it was important for everyone to feel welcome and safe in the library, and that staff worked to find different ways to interact with patrons. Ms. Sine asked if there were ways that the library could facilitate interaction between individuals from different backgrounds or groups. Ms. Baker emphasized that the library could help build social structures and through that create expectations for individuals.

Ms. McKee moved to approve the Rules of Conduct Policy as presented. Ms. Counihan seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Training Dates

Ms. Dowell reviewed the training dates, noting that the library would be closed on March 3 for a back to basics and procedure review, May 11 for the Maryland Library Conference, for half the day on September 22 for AED and first aid training, and half the day on November 17 for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion training.

Internet Use Policy

Mr. Silcox noted that the Internet Use Policy had been presented at the previous meeting, and asked if there had been any changes or additions since that meeting. Ms. Woodall said that there had not been, and that the policy included some legal requirements, and had been informed from policies from other libraries.

Mr. Silcox moved to approve the policy as presented. Ms. McKee seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

New Business

Telework Policy

Ms. Woodall reviewed the drafted Telework Policy, noting that it had been requested by the trustees, who had provided some parameters. Ms. Woodall continued that while policies from other organizations had been consulted, this policy was largely written by staff incorporating the parameters identified by the trustees.

Ms. Dowell noted that the policy contradicted the staff handbook in stating that telework would not be approved during administrative closures. The trustees discussed teleworking during sick leave, and dependent care or if an employee needed to be home for different causes.

Mr. Silcox moved to approve the policy as written. Ms. O'Brien seconded the motion. Mr. Silcox called for discussion of the policy. Ms. O'Brien suggested that the final paragraph be revised to include that telework may be approved on an ad hoc basis in the case of administrative closure or sick leave. Ms. Sine added that this should be at the request of the employee and not as a requirement. The trustees discussed which positions are able to telework, equitability among staff, and how a long-term administrative closure may be handled.

The trustees discussed how day to day operations were impacted by telework of employees.

Ms. Baker questioned if staff were issued equipment. Ms. Sine clarified that this was a benefit to the employee, and Mr. Silcox clarified that it was not a requirement. The trustees discussed the use of personal equipment and what should or should not be provided by the organization.

Ms. O'Brien questioned if the policy should be renamed as a continuity of operations policy instead of a telework policy, as this may better align with the intent of the policy.

Mr. Silcox tabled the motion to approve the policy pending significant revisions and changes to the policy as presented.

Materials Selection Policy

Ms. Woodall reviewed the policy as presented, noting that there were no major content changes from the current policy, but that the policy had been requested due to activity related to the challenging and removal of books from schools. Ms. Woodall noted that the request for reconsideration form had undergone significant changes from the previous version.

Ms. O'Brien moved to approve the Materials Selection Policy as presented. Ms. McKee seconded the motion. Mr. Silcox called for discussion of the policy. Ms. Baker asked about the general content of the collection and how gaps in the collection were identified and addressed. Ms. Dowell identified CollectionHQ as one tool which provided help in identifying gaps in the collection and worked to address them. Mr. Silcox called for a vote on the policy, which was approved unanimously.

Laptop Policy

Ms. Woodall informed the trustees that the Core Services Committee was recommending that this policy be rescinded. Ms. Woodall stated that the laptops should be treated as other computers or electronic equipment was treated. Mr. Silcox moved to rescind the existing Laptop Policy. Ms. McKee seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Meeting Room Policy

Ms. Woodall reviewed the policy as presented, noting that language specific to the COVID-19 pandemic had been removed from the policy, and some language had been edited for clarity. Ms. Woodall asked if the trustees would like the Meeting Room Policy to also apply to the Cubicall meeting pods, or if these would be governed by a separate policy. The trustees discussed the policy and the intent behind the use of the Cubicall meeting pods. Ms. Counihan stated that there should be a separate, but similar policy for the Cubicall meeting pods.

Mr. Silcox moved to approve the policy as presented. Ms. O'Brien seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Ms. Woodall noted that a revised Fines and Fees, Reference and Whistleblower policies would be presented at upcoming meetings.

Personnel Announcement

Ms. Dowell informed the trustees that Ms. Jeanne Geibel had submitted her notice that she would be retiring effective April 13, 2023 after 45 years of service to the library. Ms. Baker and Ms. McKee volunteered to help with the retirement celebration.

Rock Hall Branch Update

Ms. McKee reviewed a discussion from the previous meeting related to the Rock Hall Branch location, and asked if Ms. Dowell had communicated with the Board of Education related to a partnership potential. Ms. Dowell said that she had not yet, and wanted more clarification related to what the trustees would like to see. The trustees discussed potential location options for the Rock Hall Branch. Ms. O'Brien noted that the next meeting of the Board of Education was on February 13, and that if there was a path forward, there could be a presentation at that meeting.

Finance Committee Schedule

The committee members discussed the timing of the Finance Committee meetings, and settled on the Tuesday two weeks prior to the Board of Trustees meeting, with the first meeting occurring on February 14, 2023 at 2:00 pm.

Ms. Counihan noted that the African American Read-In was scheduled for February 13 at Sumner Hall in Chestertown.

No further business was brought before the trustees.

Ms. O'Brien moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Baker seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:44 pm.