

Kent County Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of the January 9, 2023 Meeting

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

Ms. O'Brien called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

The agenda of the meeting was reviewed, no items were added.

Ms. Sine introduced Ms. Baker to the trustees. Ms. Baker introduced herself to the trustees and library staff present, noting that she worked in the Washington College library as the Director of Public Services and STEM librarian.

Ms. Sine introduced herself, noting that she had served on the Finance Committee and was in the second year of a three year term.

Ms. O'Brien introduced herself, noting that she was previously the Vice President and was in the third year of a three year term.

Mr. Silcox introduced himself, noting that he had served as the Treasurer the previous two years, and was in the fourth year of a five year term.

Ms. Counihan introduced herself, noting that she was the current Secretary as the appointment was a two-year term, and she had been nominated and elected the previous year.

Mr. Walmsley introduced himself, and noted that he was currently serving as the executive secretary for the Board of Trustees.

Ms. Dowell introduced herself and noted that she had been the Executive Director for the library for two years.

Ms. Sine noted that there were two absent trustees, Mr. John Murphy, and Ms. Peggy McKee.

Election of Officers

Ms. O'Brien noted that the secretary was a two-year term, so Ms. Counihan would continue in the role of secretary.

Ms. O'Brien called for nominations for the office of President. Ms. Counihan nominated Mr. Silcox for President. No other candidates were nominated. Mr. Silcox was elected President by a unanimous vote among those present.

Ms. O'Brien gave Mr. Silcox chair for the meeting in recognition of the office of President.

Mr. Silcox called for nominations for the office of Vice President. Ms. Counihan nominated Ms. O'Brien for the role of Vice President. No other candidates were nominated and Ms. O'Brien was unanimously approved for the office of Vice President.

Mr. Silcox called for nominations for the office of Treasurer. Ms. O'Brien nominated Ms. Sine for the office of Treasurer. No other candidates were nominated and Ms. Sine was approved unanimously for the office of Treasurer.

Meeting Calendar

Mr. Silcox noted that the meeting calendar for the previous year had been the last Monday of the month at 4:30 pm, and asked if there was a reason to change the meeting schedule. Ms. Sine seconded the proposal to maintain the schedule from the previous year.

Ms. Mckee joined the meeting.

The trustees reviewed the meeting dates for the upcoming year, and set the meeting dates as January 30, February 27, March 27, April 24, May 30, June 26, July 31, September 18, October 30, and November 27, with the March meeting to be in the Rock Hall branch, and the May meeting in the North County branch of the library.

Public Comment

Mr. Silcox called for public comment, and there was none.

New Business

Mr. Silcox called for additional business

Ms. Counihan questioned if committees would be appointed at the January meeting, and if an overview might be given for the new trustee.

Mr. Silcox reviewed standing committees and appointed positions, including the Finance Committee, Executive Committee, representative to the Friends of the Library, representative to the Foundation, and Eastern Shore Regional Library Board representative. Ms. Counihan noted that she was currently the ESRL representative, and was comfortable continuing in that position.

Mr. Silcox reported that the trustees had met briefly on January 7 and made the decision to rescind approval of the application for ARPA funding from the Town of Chestertown. Mr. Silcox noted that the plan for the meeting room could be revisited later when looking at the budget and potentially pursuing other funding sources.

Ms. Dowell questioned if the plans for the Chestertown Library, Inc. building were being placed on hold as well. Mr. Silcox noted that the renovation was fairly minor, but that the process needed to be revisited between contractors and project managers as to the scope of work, and that the memorandum of understanding needed to be finalized to establish ownership.

Ms. McKee asked if there was any progress related to the Rock Hall location search. Ms. Dowell stated that there was no progress, but that she had been looking, and that the process would need to go through the finance committee. Ms. McKee noted that there was an interested buyer in the building that the library is currently in, and the lease would not likely be renewed for the existing space, and there was major concern with the town residents related to the library.

The trustees discussed options for a location in Rock Hall, and reached a consensus to make an official inquiry with the Board of Education in Kent County related to the possibility of having the library located within their facility in Rock Hall.

Ms. Dowell noted that Mr. Walmsley had forwarded incident reports from the last quarter of 2022 to the trustees. Ms. Dowell reviewed the reports, noting that they were stemming from two different groups: people with substance abuse challenges, and from teens. Ms. Dowell reviewed an incident which had immediately preceded the meeting. Ms. Dowell requested that the library be closed on February 3 for staff training related to handling incidents with the identified groups. Ms. Dowell reviewed previous training for library staff in how to respond to events such as administering Narcan or CPR, but noted that there was no support following events. The trustees discussed how to support staff following potentially traumatic events, and if language should be added to the staff handbook or a policy created to identify ways staff could get support.

The trustees questioned if other county facilities were seeing similar issues, and Ms. Dowell said that she was unsure, and had not heard reports of issues at other county facilities. The trustees proposed options which may help with behavior issues such as working with the leaders of the groups to identify solutions, and more visible community rules. Ms. Dowell noted that signs related to community rules had been updated and posted recently to better communicate expectations to patrons.

Ms. Counihan asked for clarification related to the February 3 date and if Ms. Dowell was asking for the library to be closed on February 3. Ms. Dowell confirmed that she was. Ms. O'Brien asked if programming would be impacted if the library was closed on February 3. Ms. Dowell said that it would not. Ms. O'Brien moved to approve a closure of the library on February 3 to conduct incident training for staff. Ms. Counihan seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously by those present.

No further business was brought before the trustees.

Ms. Counihan moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Baker seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:34 pm.

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be on January 30, 2023 at 4:30 pm in the main meeting room of the Kent County Public Library.