

Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of the September 18, 2023 Meeting

Present: Jay Silcox, President; Judi O'Brien, Vice President; Amy Sine, Treasurer; Erin Counihan, Secretary; Alex Baker, Trustee; Peggy McKee, Trustee; John Murphy, Trustee; Arnessa Dowell, Executive Director; Chris Walmsley, Staff Member; Ace Lowenstien, Staff Member; Olivia Coleman, Executive Secretary; one member of the public.

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

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. Ms. O'Brien moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

The agenda of the meeting was reviewed. Ms. Dowell introduced Ace Lowenstein to the trustees, noting that he was replacing previous staff member Tobi Brown in their position as Public Services Assistant I. Olivia Coleman was introduced to the trustees as the new Executive Secretary.

Public Comment

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

Officer Reports

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Sine reviewed the current bank balances with the trustees, which were \$218,904 in People's Bank, \$101,978 in PNC Checking, and \$31,241 in PNC Savings. She then stated that new trustee recruitment had begun, and that it would be discussed in the next Board of Trustees meeting to be announced in December so that the new trustee could begin their role in January. Ms. Sine asked the trustees about the five year commitment currently required to be a member of the board, in regards to whether someone was not sure they would be in the area for the next five years. Mr. Silcox stated that it was not unheard of for a trustee to have to vacate their position early. Board members were asked to encourage people to submit applications to join. Ms. Baker stated that she had been in conversation with two people about applying, and that at least one would. Ms. Sine then mentioned that a \$13,000 check had been written for the first payment of the library's new website project, and that the second half of the payment would be due at the completion of the project.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Counihan had not yet arrived at the meeting. She did send out an email stating that she had nothing to report other than that she met with the new Executive Secretary, Ms. Coleman, about her new duties.

Foundation for the Kent County Public Library Representative

Mr. Murphy said that there was a foundation meeting to be held on the coming Friday, September 22, 2023, which was to be attended by Executive Director Arnessa Dowell and Director of Technical Services Natalie Donoso. There were rebuttals to the library's propositions which were addressed in a new proposal turned in earlier in the day on September 18, 2023. This was to be voted on at the upcoming meeting.

Friends of the Kent County Public Library Representative

Ms. O'Brien reported that the Friends of the Kent County Public Library had reconvened for the first time since their summer hiatus. For the month of September, they were continuing their usual Tuesday donation times from noon to 4 pm and adding donation times on Saturdays for all library operating hours. Ms. O'Brien also reported that there was still no chair selected for the Friends' 50th anniversary celebration. She informed the trustees that the Friends' next meeting would be on the next second Saturday of the month at 10 am in the library meeting room and that the Fall book sale would be from October 19th to the 22nd. There was also discussion about a potential partnership between the Friends, trustees, and The Book Plate to support the media center at Kent County High School.

Committee Reports

Rock Hall Facility Update

Ms. McKee reviewed the report submitted as part of the packet. It was decided that there would be a meeting with the community of Rock Hall to determine what they wanted out of the Rock Hall library. The trustees discussed options for the location of the meeting with stakeholders in the Rock Hall facility, and how to inform residents that the meeting would be happening.

Mr. Silcox reported that he had spoken with Mr. Ed Hatcher and Ms. Angie Cannon about what they had accomplished so far, and discussed their progress with the trustees. Date preferences for the meeting with the community were requested of the trustees.

At this point, Mr. Murphy asked whether the trustees should contact the county to see if they wanted to add funding to the project. Ms. Dowell responded that they have a certain budget, but that the trustees could approach the state for a funding match. Ms. Gill asked for clarification regarding the potential dates for the meeting. Ms. McKee responded that Mr. Silcox will send out the potential dates and the board will decide which is most convenient. Ms. O'Brien suggested the trustees look for board membership applications that include a background in applying for funding, as that will be helpful in the future.

At this point, Ms. Counihan arrived.

Librarian's Report

Summer Reading Update

Ms. Dowell reported that there had been 781 people signed up for Kent County Public Library's 2023 Summer Reading Program. All together, those participating read 911,000 minutes which was 60,000 more than the previous year. Ms. Dowell added that next year the library's goal would be one million minutes read. She also reported that the Eastern Shore Regional Library was impressed that a smaller county had read so much. Ms. Dowell additionally noted that participation in the summer reading program had doubled since her arrival two years prior.

Rock Hall Facility Lease - Action Item

The Common Area Maintenance clause of the lease was removed. The price of rent remains at \$1,075 per month. The library has the first right of refusal, and the \$10,000 deposit was removed from the lease. The library has the right to purchase the building at the price of \$750,000. This is a one year lease, with a one year rider at the current price. Ms. Sine made the motion to accept the lease, which Mr. Murphy seconded. The decision to approve was unanimous.

Fiscal Year 2024 Manager's Discussion and Analysis - Action Item

Ms. Dowell reported that she had gone over the manager's discussion and analysis with the finance committee. Ms. Sine asked about the \$25,000 set aside for the Rock Hall branch. Ms. Dowell explained that these funds had been allocated for modular furniture improvements for the Rock Hall branch, and are currently only set to be used to create a children's space in the branch as approved by the board. The rest of the funds are yet unallocated. Mr. Silcox mentioned that this information could be sent to the auditors, and Ms. Dowell confirmed that a draft had been sent to them and additional adjustments would be sent over as well. Ms. Sine moved to approve the Manager's Discussion and Analysis which Ms. Counihan seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Old Business

Memorandum of Understanding

The trustees discussed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Kent County Commissioners, the Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees, the Women's Literary Club, and The Chestertown Library, Inc. Though the trustees have accepted the current language of the revised document, there was discussion of the County Commissioners and the Women's Literary Club disagreeing about the club's term of access to the building. Mr. Silcox reported that he would meet with the County Administrator to discuss a way forward.

Staff Handbook Addenda

Ms. Dowell noted that these addenda had been reviewed but not approved.

Travel

Ms. Baker noted how the language in the addenda could exclude some airports that flights may be redirected to. Mr. Walmsley requested that the language be changed from "8 hour day" to "regularly scheduled day" as most employees work 7.5 hour days and maximum travel pay should be one day per direction of travel. Ms. Sine noted that travel is budgeted for, but education is not. Ms. Dowell clarified that education was covered by a Library Services and Technology grant, and thus budgeted. The library spends what they plan to for conferences, and then the remaining funds are put into education. Ms. Sine clarified that these were not funds that could be expected then, which the trustees affirmed. Ms. Dowell suggested adding the WAS airport code to the addendum to address the concern brought up at the beginning. The addendum now says, "When traveling to and from the local airport (WAS or PHL) for official business the library will reimburse the employee for parking, mileage, and other related fees." Mr. Murphy moved to approve both travel and education addenda, which Ms. O'Brien seconded, to unanimous approval.

Education

Education was approved in conjunction with travel.

Exempt Employees

Ms. Sine posed the question of whether or not there is a limit to leave carried over. Ms. Dowell confirmed that the limit was 50% of one's vacation allotment per year, while Mr. Walmsley

added that there was no cap for sick time. Ms. O'Brien, Ms. Sine and Mr. Silcox began discussing whether there should be a leave ceiling, which Mr. Silcox pointed out was included in the addenda at 160 hours. The trustees discussed time keeping, leave tracking, and scheduling processes. Mr. Walmsley provided information on current library practices. Ms. Counihan noted that, according to the document, it is not necessary for exempt employees to work exactly 40 hours, it is just important that leave tracking is maintained so that the trustees are aware of when such employees are off work. Mr. Silcox brought up page 37 and an asterisk there, and, as no one remembered the link to the asterisk, it was removed. Ms. Dowell said that her time had been prorated because she had started in her position in January, and Mr. Silcox suggested that this be removed from the addenda. He also suggested adopting all strikeouts in the document unless there was a discussion regarding them. Mr. Murphy moved to accept the document with the discussed changes, and Ms. Counihan seconded the motion. Ms. Sine asked to confirm that this would be added to the employee handbook. Ms. Dowell affirmed that the Core Committee is currently going over the employee handbook, and that these changes will be addressed before new board members start in January. The motion was then passed unanimously.

New Business

Rules of Conduct Review and Discussion

There was discussion regarding a rowdy day the library had experienced which resulted in a patron emailing the board. Ms. Dowell reviewed the code of conduct following this, and realized that there was not a specific procedure for how this situation should have been handled, so the Core Committee is looking to implement procedures without having to change the policy. She was asked if the code of conduct was posted in the library which she confirmed, though it was a condensed version of the document. Ms. Dowell explained that the volume in the library was becoming a problem as well, though this is partly due to the acoustics of the building so the library is considering implementing acoustic muffling to reduce the noise. She also discussed the possibility of implementing quiet days or acquiring a noise meter to manage the volume in the library, as how loud is too loud can be subjective. Mr. Silcox added that new procedures were not something that required board approval as they are not policy, though the trustees will provide input, and brought up how procedures will be important for ensuring consistency in the response of the staff to behaviors that violate the code of conduct. He asked if the new procedures would be available for the next meeting for the trustees to review and comment on, which Ms. Dowell confirmed. Ms. Counihan asked if the staff felt comfortable handling the sort of situations that were in concern, asking if there was some kind of training that could be implemented for the staff when Ms. Dowell confirmed that many of them do not feel comfortable handling these situations. Mr. Silcox affirmed Ms. Counihan's point, adding that perhaps some new training had come out following covid that could be undertaken with the staff. Ms. Dowell explained that training on de-escalation and working with teenaged patrons had been done, but this does not

help when practical application is needed. The trustees further discussed ways to discourage unruly behavior in the children and how old a child had to be to be alone in the library.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm with a motion by Ms. Sine, which was seconded by Mr. Murphy, and accepted unanimously.