

Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of the February 25, 2025 Meeting

Present: Rachel Durso, President; Melissa Walters, Vice President; John Murphy, Treasurer; Erin Counihan, Secretary; Clara Rankin, Trustee; Deborah Westerland, Trustee; Robert Bell, Executive Director; Chris Walmsley, Director of Office Administration

Ms. Durso called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

Ms. Durso requested an update from Mr. Bell on the vacant trustee position. Mr. Bell said that he recalled Ms. Durso would follow up with Mr. Murphy about the letter to the commissioners' office. Mr. Murphy confirmed he would modify the letter and send it to Mr. Bell for submission to the commissioners' office.

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed. The trustees discussed some of the language within the minutes as submitted. Mr. Murphy moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Counihan seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

The agenda for the meeting was reviewed. No changes were made to the agenda.

No members of the public were present to comment.

Officer Reports

Treasurer

Mr. Murphy informed the trustees that the Finance Committee had met earlier in February.

Mr. Murphy reviewed the bank balances, noting that the balance of the PNC Checking account was \$56,955, the PNC Money Market account was \$31,245, and that the Peoples Bank Savings account was \$219,153.

Mr. Murphy noted that the Finance Committee had reviewed projected cash flow including for Salaries and Wages, and that at present the Library was projected to underspend by \$48,000 due to positions which had been vacant throughout the fiscal year.

Mr. Murphy commented that between the Money Market account and the Savings account, the library had approximately \$250,000 that was earning a very low interest rate, and that he would be introducing a proposal at the next Finance Committee meeting about a better way to handle savings balances.

Mr. Murphy stated that he had met with Jeanne Edwards, the Senior Accountant for Kent County, related to the responsibilities of the Treasurer and noted that the main responsibility was reviewing and signing checks.

Secretary

Ms. Counihan thanked the trustees who had set up Outlook or Microsoft email account to access the trustee portal. Ms. Counihan stated that she would resend the information related to account creation and access.

Ms. Counihan stated that one responsibility of the Secretary was to recognize staff for accomplishments, and that two library staff, Annie Woodall and Natalie Hagan, had been nominated for an award which they did not receive, but Ms. Counihan thought it was appropriate to recognize them internally. Ms. Counihan also noted that Alexia Garvin had been promoted to Director of Branch Services, and that Honey Raines and Sara Richards had recently completed Master's in Library Science degrees. The trustees discussed ways to recognize their accomplishments.

Committee Reports

Ms. Durso confirmed that the committee appointments from the previous meeting stood.

It was noted that there was no Friends of the Kent County Public Library or Foundation for the Kent County Public Library reports. Mr. Walmsley confirmed that the Library had received the funds from the Foundation for the grant for library technology.

Mr. Bell shared that he had met with the Women's Literary Club and discussed the possibility of a non-voting member from the Literary Club to join the committee for the Chestertown Library, Inc. Building. Mr. Bell noted that the Women's Literary Club had sent some recommendations. The trustees discussed the role of the committee and how progress of the project should be shared with partner organizations.

Mr. Murphy asked if it should be considered to create a Liaison for the Women's Literary Club position. Ms. Durso indicated that this would likely be a short-term need, but it could be reevaluated in the future.

Director's Report

Mr. Bell noted that he was attending virtually due to the Maryland Statewide Public Services Conference.

Mr. Bell stated that things were going well at the branches, and that he had visited each branch at least once a month and had regular communication with the landlords. Mr. Bell said that he was working with the landlords to resolve issues that had been identified by

the branch staff such as desiring crash bars on the doors. Mr. Bell commented that programming was going well at both branches, and that he was working on additional inquiries related to cleaning the shelving in the former Rock Hall branch location.

Mr. Bell provided an update on staff recruitment, noting that there had been over 50 applicants for the two positions, with several of the applicants applying for both positions. Mr. Bell stated that Ms. Alexia Garvin and Mr. Michael Sampson would be on the hiring committee.

Mr. Bell informed the trustees that he had attended legislative day in Annapolis, noting that it was mostly observing how the legislative process works, but that he had the opportunity to meet with the delegates.

Mr. Bell shared a suggestion from Ms. Annie Woodall to create a committee for staff development. Mr. Bell noted that Ms. Woodall was very active in making sure that staff were aware of training and professional development opportunities. Ms. Durso asked what Ms. Woodall would expect from the board input, or what the goal of the committee would be? Mr. Bell said that staff development was very important, but also expensive and may require some flexibility in scheduling and an examination of training days. Ms. Durso asked if Ms. Woodall would be willing to come to the next trustees meeting to speak about the committee and expectations of the committee. Mr. Murphy stated that this seemed more operational and that librarians may present ideas that could be presented to the trustees for approval. Ms. Rankin commented that if there was something staff development related that needed trustee input, it could be added to the agenda on an ad hoc basis.

Mr. Walmsley reviewed the documents presented, noting that the county request form, the fiscal year 2026 budget draft, and the fiscal year 2025 budget were presented and broken out by funding source.

Mr. Murphy asked if there was a justification statement. Mr. Bell said that he would be working on it Thursday. Mr. Murphy stated that the strength of the justification could make or break the request and that strong support of the request was very important.

Mr. Bell reviewed some information which contributed to the request including updated security cameras and compensation. Mr. Bell noted that a quote had been received last year to upgrade cameras, which was included in the budget for this fiscal year. Mr. Bell stated that Kent County Public Library was behind other counties when it came to compensation, and that as a result he was looking to give a slightly higher Cost of Living Adjustment, which contributed significantly to the total request.

Mr. Murphy questioned why the expected contribution from municipalities was anticipated to be lower for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Walmsley reviewed the history of contributions from the municipalities served by the library, and how it had informed the revised request for the fiscal year 2026 budget request. Ms. Rankin asked if it would be worth requesting funding contributions from other municipalities such as Galena and Rock Hall. The trustees discussed how to request funds from the towns and municipalities.

Mr. Murphy moved to approve the fiscal year 2026 budget request as presented. Ms. Counihan seconded the motion. Ms. Durso called for discussion. Ms. Rankin asked how much federal funding cuts could impact this request. Mr. Murphy noted that there was one federal grant for staff development. The trustees discussed federal grants and the potential impact on the budget. Ms. Durso called for a vote, which was approved unanimously.

Mr. Bell thanked the trustees for approving his membership to the Chestertown Rotary Club, and stated that he and Ms. Woodall would be presenting at an upcoming meeting.

Mr. Bell informed the trustees that he had attended a meeting of the Democratic Club to speak about the library.

Old Business

Meeting Schedule

Ms. Durso noted that the scheduling of trustee meetings had been deferred so that all current trustees could be present. The trustees discussed the meeting schedule and set the schedule for 2025 as March 31, April 29, May 27, June 30, July 28, August 25, September 29, October 27, and November 17 with the April meeting happening at the North County branch, and the June 30 meeting happening at the Rock Hall branch.

Volunteer Trustees

Mr. Bell noted that the document included in the packet was informed from a discussion about community involvement in the library board. Ms. Durso asked if the document was requesting board involvement with all library programming, or publicity about attendance at trustee meetings. Mr. Bell said that if Ms. Woodall was available to attend the next trustee meeting, she could speak further about efforts that the trustees could take related to promoting themselves.

New Business

Ms. Rankin asked about outreach into schools and registration of children for library cards. Ms. Walters notes that Ms. Honey Raines, the Director of Youth Services, had visited the

high school in 2024. Ms. Durso asked if H. H. Garnet Elementary School visited the library since it was nearby. Ms. Counihan noted that the relationship between the library and the schools has not been as strong as the trustees would like. Ms. Walters said that there was a new superintendent, and this may present an opportunity to renew the relationship. Mr. Murphy suggested a letter to the superintendent inviting younger children to the library.

Ms. Westerland thanked Mr. Bell for going out and speaking at local groups, but noted that it would be helpful to hear what Mr. Bell was sharing with the community. Ms. Westerland suggested a summarized presentation could be shared with the trustees. Ms. Rankin asked what time the upcoming Rotary presentation would be. Mr. Bell stated it would be at noon.

Ms. Counihan revisited the document presented by Mr. Bell with Ms. Woodall's input and asked if she was looking to have trustee attendance at library programs. Ms. Bell noted that the document came out of the discussion about a non-voting member of the public attending trustees meetings. Ms. Counihan said that she thought the "meet the trustees event" and press release were good suggestions.

Mr. Murphy stated that there would be an Open Meetings Act presentation at a future meeting of the trustees.

Ms. Westerland asked how emails and letters were handled when they came to the Board of Trustees. The trustees discussed the handling of email communication. Ms. Counihan stated that she generally responded to communication.

Ms. Westerland asked who should be notified if a trustee could not attend a meeting and how that should be shared. The trustees discussed attendance at the trustee meetings.

No additional business was brought before the trustees.

Ms. Counihan moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:33 pm.