

Alexandria Library Board Minutes

Date

June 16, 2022

Location

Charles E. Beatley, Jr. Central Library; Ilka K. Dickman Board Room

Present

Trudi Hahn, Kathleen Schloeder, Canek Aguirre, Robert Ray IV, Patsy Rogers, Oscar Fitzgerald, Director Dawson, Division Chief Gates.

Excused: Karen Marshall

The meeting was called to order at 4:05pm.

Public Comment

Ms. Realista Rodriguez, Director of Advocacy for Friends of the Beatley Central Library, submitted and read a short statement. Ms. Rodriguez reported on membership, book sale revenue and other group activities as of May 2022. A copy of that report and its attachments are submitted into the record.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Schloeder to approve the April 18, 2022 meeting minutes. Mr. Ray requested a correction in the Investment Committee Report. Ms. Schloeder accepted the friendly amendment and Mr. Aguirre seconded the amended motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Report

Chair Hahn thanked the Board for its flexibility in rescheduling the meeting due to the Juneteenth holiday. She expressed her regret that Ms. Marshall could not attend and thanked Ms. Marshall for her military service. Chair Hahn reported that it had been a busy time at the Library since the April meeting with an outdoor program in Del Ray featuring former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, and with the Library's Staff Day on May 20. New City Manager, Jim Parajon, was the key note speaker at the Staff Day event and expressed his support of the Library. Chair Hahn also stated that Director Dawson would update the Board on the appointment of a new Deputy Director and that the Board is eager to meet him.

Director's Report

Director Dawson reported that COVID-19 numbers are increasing. The current data on COVID-19 was reported as follows:

- 361.3 cases per 100,000
- 594 new cases in the past 7 days
- 7-day moving average of cases is 84.9 (up 1.4%)
- 7-day moving average positivity rate increased to 16.16%
- 77.7% of Alexandria residents (5+) are fully vaccinated; 85.6% are partially vaccinated

Director Dawson stated that the branches are still distributing at-home COVID-19 test kits. The Library entered its "new normal" Phase V where facility hours were expanded and capacity limits were lifted. Director Dawson reported the following monthly statistics:

- Patron count is up (104%); circulation is up (13%)
- E-borrowing has dropped (-20%) while registered borrowers have increased slightly
- Website and web page visits continue to be down while Wi-Fi usage holds steady
- Passport services have increased but remain below pre-pandemic levels
- In May, 41 of the hotspots and 19 of the Chromebooks were checked out

Director Dawson announced that a new Deputy Director, Luis Labra, had been appointed and will begin work on July 11. Mr. Labra is currently an Area Director for the Prince Georges County Memorial Public Library System where he oversees four branches and supervises 12 direct reports. Prior to this position, Mr. Labra was the Branch Manager at the Barrett Library in Alexandria.

Director Dawson reported that given recent national and local events, the Library system is reviewing security in all of its buildings. This includes a review of alarm systems, cameras, and security guards as well as safety training. She stated that several leaks had occurred at the Beatley branch and were being repaired by General Services.

Director Dawson reported that the City's contract Architect of Record would be used for design of the Burke branch first floor renovation and that the initial meeting would be scheduled soon. ARPA grant funds will be used to sponsor a community event to replace the landscaping that was removed as part of the public art installation. Councilmember Aguirre stated that he spoke with City staff regarding the necessity of exterior lighting for the building and its sign.

Treasurer's Report

In Ms. Marshall's absence, Mr. Ray reported that as of May 31, 2022, the Library is 91.7% of the way through the fiscal year and has expended 85.4% of the budget. Approximately 84.5% of State Aid funds were expended in that period. The Library has collected \$141,107.25 or 112% of its requirement of \$126,000 in fees revenue. The Law Library has received \$23,256.60 in filing fees.

Investment Committee Report

Mr. Ray reported that as of May 31, 2022, the market value of the Library's investment account was \$3,520,588.17. Calendar year to date portfolio performance over the last five months was -12.67% as compared to the benchmark of -11.43%. Portfolio performance over the last twelve months was -8.30%, as compared to the benchmark of -7.16%.

Ms. Schloeder asked the Board to consider if it should shift its investment funds to a 50/50 split between stocks and fixed income versus the current allocation of 60% stocks and 40% fixed income. After discussion, it was decided that Mr. Ray would contact the Board's investment advisor (Truist) to convene a meeting to gather information and to report back to the Board.

Old Business – Budget Update

Director Dawson reported on the final fiscal year 2023 Library budget and shared the printed budget summary with the Board, highlighting that Library staff will receive a 4.5% increase due to adjustment of the general pay scale.

New Business

Director Dawson reported that the new City Manager updated the format for department head evaluations. Chair Hahn and Mr. Ray were appointed to the committee to evaluate the Library Director. Ms. Schloeder and

Ms. Rogers were appointed to the nomination committee for election of officers. Mr. Fitzgerald was appointed to draft the annual report.

Director Dawson outlined the request to close the Library on Saturday, December 24. All City facilities will be closed on December 23, 25 and 26 in observance of the Christmas holiday. Ms. Schloeder voiced a concern that the Federal government would not be closed for four days and Director Dawson responded that Federal employees do not typically work on weekends, thus removing the need for such closures. Councilmember Aguirre moved to approve the request and Mr. Ray seconded the motion which was approved unanimously.

Director Dawson requested the Board approve that special funds received from investment accounts, Friends groups and other miscellaneous gifts be carried over into the next fiscal year. Councilmember Aguirre made a motion for approval which was seconded by Ms. Schloeder and approved unanimously.

Mr. Ray addressed the Board on the topic of compensation for Library employees, making a motion to draft a letter to the City Manager and City Council to do the following: (1) note that the Library Board is concerned about the compensation level of Library staff; (2) ask that a comprehensive compensation study be undertaken for all Library staff to align with market conditions in the area; and, (3) request that steps be taken to address the study findings such that Library employees receive fair compensation and to ensure that the Library is in a strong position to attract new hires. Ms. Schloeder seconded that motion which was approved unanimously.

Councilmember Aguirre stated that the City routinely undertakes compensation studies, but that the Library's separate entity status may have impacted the current status of such a study. Director Dawson stated that the delay in the compensation study had occurred under three separate Human Resources Directors over a six-year period. Chair Hahn asked Director Dawson to assist with documentation for the letter and asked Mr. Ray and Ms. Rogers to draft the letter in consultation with Ms. Dawson.

Ms. Schloeder made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Councilmember Aguirre and approved unanimously.