

Alexandria Library Board Minutes

Date

September 19, 2022

Location

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

Present

Trudi Hahn, Kathleen Schloeder, Canek Aguirre, Robert Ray IV (phone), Patsy Rogers, Oscar Fitzgerald, Karen Marshall, Director Dawson, Deputy Director Labra, Division Chief Gates, Burke Branch Manager Schuler.

The meeting was called to order at 4:04pm.

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 and revenue data as of August 2022 as well as on the upcoming Fall book sale in October. A copy of that report and its attachments are submitted into the record.

Doug Wade, President, Friends of Duncan Library, submitted and read a short statement. Mr. Wade reported a successful book sale in April and that the group plans another sale for October. Mr. Wade also reported on organizational membership, revenue and recent program support. A copy of that report and its attachments are submitted into the record.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Fitzgerald to approve the June 16, 2022 meeting minutes, was seconded by Ms. Marshall and was passed unanimously.

Chair's Report

Chair Hahn reported that the Library Board had been busy this summer. The Board met with its investment advisors in July to review its investment profile and allocations given recent market fluctuations. Mr. Ray reported that the group decided to retain its current allocations. Mr. Fitzgerald prepared the draft annual report. Mr. Ray and Ms. Hahn conducted Director Dawson's annual review resulting in the highest recommendation which will be discussed in executive session at the end of the meeting. The Board focused heavily on the Foundation and the hire of its new Development Director. Ms. Schloeder and Ms. Rogers formed a committee to nominate officers for the upcoming year.

Director's Report

Director Dawson reported that the Library continues to distribute free COVID-19 test kits and reported the following monthly statistics as of June 30, 2022:

- Patron count is up (98%); circulation is up (11%)
- E-borrowing has dropped (-20%) with a notable decline in the use of e-material due to increased in-person visits
- There was a slight increase in registered borrowers
- Website visits are down (-6%) and web page visits are down (-17%) due to more efficient website use by patrons; Wi-Fi usage remained steady

- Passport services have increased but remain below pre-pandemic levels
- 41 hotspots were checked out and 34 were renewed; 27 Chromebooks were checked out and 40 were renewed

Director Dawson reported that the vacant Human Resources Manager position would be posted in October with the goal of having a new employee onboard in January. Director Dawson formally introduced Deputy Director Labra, welcoming him back to Alexandria after serving in Prince George's County. Mr. Labra previously served as the Barrett branch manager. Hiring and compensation continues to be a challenge with surrounding jurisdictions competing for the same people. Due to retirements and resignations, staffing at the Beatley circulation desk is currently down 100 hours.

Director Dawson reported that the Beatley windows and envelope project is under contract, although issues with material selection and ordering have caused further delays to the project start. General Services has reported that it hopes to get started in early Fall. The project will take 8-10 months once underway. The second phase of the Beatley parking lot project which includes installation of a concrete dumpster pad and upgrades to trench drains and the front drive lane is scheduled to begin in October and end in November.

Director Dawson reported that the Library awaits an update on improved lighting and signage for the Burke branch which was expected as part of the public art installation project. Branch Manager Schuler requested an update from City staff over two months ago. Ms. Schuler reported that there will be an ARPA sponsored community outdoor planting event on October 15 to further beautify and protect the art project. Council member Aguirre asked if the Library needed support for the landscaping. Director Dawson responded that support in the form of ongoing maintenance would be needed in addition to assistance with obtaining a new sign and lighting for the Burke facility.

Director Dawson reported that Barrett will receive new HVAC and exterior painting and that the Barrett and Duncan branches will both have fire panels replaced this year. Roof repairs were made at Duncan due to leaks discovered after a recent storm. Ms. Schloeder asked about the status of a meeting with the architect regarding the Burke first floor renovation project. Director Dawson responded that the meeting had been delayed due to health issues for the General Services project manager.

Finally, Director Dawson reported that the Library is celebrating its 85th anniversary as a public library with an open house at Burke and a fall festival at Beatley. The Library had a successful SummerQuest program this summer along with popular Fix-It Clinics and bilingual story times. The Library was represented at the City's annual citizenship day, providing resources to new citizens such as special coupons for passport and notary services.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Marshall reported that as of June 30, 2022, the Library is 100% of the way through the fiscal year and has expended 97.6% of the budget. 100% of State Aid funds were expended in that period. The Library has collected \$150,758.57 or 119.65% of its requirement of \$126,000 in fees revenue. The Law Library has received \$25,685.40 in filing fees.

Investment Committee Report

Ms. Marshall reported on Mr. Ray's behalf that as of August 31, 2022, the market value of the Library's investment account was \$3,387,504.11. Calendar year to date portfolio performance over the last eight months was -15.62% as compared to the benchmark of -13.49%. Portfolio performance over the last twelve months was -14.44%, as compared to the benchmark of -12.65%.

Old Business – Director’s Evaluation

Ms. Hahn reported that she and Mr. Ray convened in the summer to evaluate the Director and that they will present and discuss the positive report during the upcoming executive session.

Old Business – Annual Report Draft

Mr. Fitzgerald prepared a draft annual report and asked the Board for any suggestions or edits. Mr. Aguirre observed that the report was concise and well done. Ms. Schloeder noted that the report should be updated to reflect that she is on her fifth term, not the fourth. Ms. Schloeder made a motion to approve the report with that one correction, Ms. Marshall seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Old Business – Election of Officers

Ms. Schloeder and Ms. Rogers submitted a proposal to maintain the current slate of officers (Hahn as Chair, Ray as Vice Chair, Rogers as Secretary and Marshall as Treasurer). Ms. Marshall stated that while she will serve out her current term, she is not able to commit to another term. The decision to appoint a subsequent Treasurer was deferred until the next meeting. Ms. Marshall moved to re-appoint the current slate of officers (with the exception of Treasurer), Mr. Aguirre seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.

New Business – FY24 Budget and Library Staff Compensation

Director Dawson reported that the fiscal year 2024 budget season was underway and shared a copy of the current calendar. The City Manager issued a memorandum requesting input from boards and commissions on budget priorities. Ms. Hahn reported that the Board prepared a draft letter requesting that the City review compensation for all Library employees to ensure fair pay for existing employees and to ensure that the Library remains competitive with surrounding jurisdictions. The Board will send that letter to the City Manager now and will draft an additional letter for review at the next meeting to outline Library Board priorities for the budget process. Ms. Rogers made a motion to approve the draft compensation letter and Mr. Fitzgerald seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

New Business – Five Year Plan Refresh

Deputy Director Labra outlined the process used to conduct the Five-Year Plan refresh, including the communication strategy and use of a survey prepared in multiple languages. A total of 498 surveys were received, plus an additional 40 from staff. The Library reviewed the City’s demographic information and noted changes such as increased diversity, widening of the wealth gap and the need for materials in different languages. The seven focus areas contained in the past plan were retained, although there were slight changes in how they are prioritized. The organizational health and development focus area moved up one place and the marketing and branding focus area moved down one place. The committee worked with Communications to distill down the information and to publish a four-page document summarizing the refreshed plan. Deputy Director Labra researched the strategic plans of other communities and determined that the current standard was to create a much shorter and more digestible finished project. Director Dawson explained that the new plan would be used as the guiding document for the Library. As the Library reviews projects and programs, it will align its work to the refreshed plan. Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to endorse the plan and Ms. Marshall seconded that motion which passed unanimously.

Executive Session and Adjournment

Council member Aguirre made a motion to begin an executive session at 5:30pm. That motion was seconded by Ms. Marshall and approved unanimously. At completion of that session, Ms. Schloeder made a motion to exit the executive session. That motion was seconded by Ms. Marshall and approved unanimously. Ms. Rogers then made a motion to adjourn the meeting. That motion was seconded by Ms. Marshall and approved unanimously.