

Alexandria Library Board Minutes

Date

December 20, 2021

Location

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

Present

Trudi Hahn, Kathleen Schloeder, Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, Karen Marshall, Robert Ray IV, Patsy Rogers, Oscar Fitzgerald, Director Dawson, Deputy Director Knight, Division Chief Gates, HR Manager Farley.

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

Public Comment

Mr. Chuck Ziegler, Director of Advocacy, Friends of the Beatley Central Library, submitted and read a short statement. The submitted statement reported on membership, revenues, and activities as of November 30, 2021 and included attachments regarding the organization's 2022 budget as well as statistics on book deliveries. This report is attached and submitted into the record.

Mr. Ziegler stated that it was his last presentation for the organization as he is moving out of the area. Mr. Ziegler thanked the Board for their support over the years and Ms. Hahn expressed the thanks of the Board for his contributions over the years.

Mr. Doug Wade, President, Friends of the Duncan Library, submitted and summarized a report related to the activities of the organization. Mr. Wade provided highlights on their book fairs, overall revenue, and the recent re-branding and outreach efforts. Mr. Wade also reported on the work of the gardening committee and highlighted that the Friends of Duncan Library were proud to have funded the first Zoom contracts which allowed the Library to conduct virtual programs.

Chair Hahn closed the public comment period as no other speakers were present.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Ms. Schloeder to approve the September 20, 2021 meeting minutes. Ms. Rogers seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

Chair's Report

Chair Hahn thanked Deputy Director Knight for reporting back to the Board on the efforts of the Virginia Library Association (VLA) in support of intellectual freedom for the public and for students. Chair Hahn also reported that a memo was received from Diane Ruggiero (Deputy Director, Office of the Arts) explaining that the existing Burke Branch entrance sign will be relocated in the Spring and that their office will review whether the existing sign lighting can be repurposed to provide lighting for the new art installation.

Director's Report

Director Dawson reported that the rate of transmission for COVID-19 is currently high. The City Manager announced that in-person staffing levels would be reduced until the high rate of transmission is reduced. It was reported that 68.4% of Alexandria residents are fully vaccinated and 78.9% of residents are either partially or fully vaccinated. Director Dawson also reported on the status of the Library's partnership with the Virginia

Department of Health (VDH) COVID-19 test kit program. Alexandria Library was one of the first library systems in the state to offer the kits. The kits are extremely popular and were quickly out of stock once received.

Director Dawson reported on the status of the Library's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant projects. Outdoor programming has been well attended and circulation of the mobile hotspot units was started on December 13 with further promotion of the program planned for after the holidays. Director Dawson also reported on the status of the Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) grant which funded 80 Chromebooks for circulation. The units have arrived and the Library is in the process of purchasing cases and necessary software.

Director Dawson reported that the Library will be hiring a new communications officer and a new digital librarian. Since those positions are now vacant, there will be a review of how other systems use those positions before completing the hiring process.

The Beatley parking lot reconstruction was temporarily paused due to a technicality pertaining to the permitting paperwork. The contractors were required to stop work just prior to the Thanksgiving holiday so that the City could resolve the issues. Work is currently planned to restart during the second week of January and to be completed in March.

It was reported that Deputy Director Knight and Burke Branch Manager Schuler met with the City's General Services team to discuss options for the first floor of that facility. General Services will provide a timeline on next steps and will provide a draft scope of work for review. Ms. Schloeder asked if funding is still available for the project. Director Dawson confirmed the funds were still available; however, she stated she was concerned that the funding may not be sufficient given the amount of time that has passed.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Marshall reported that as of November 30, 2021, the Library was 42% of the way through the fiscal year and had expended 41% of the budget. Approximately 64% of State Aid funds were expended in that period. As of November 30, 2021, the Library had collected 48% of its fee revenue budget requirement and that the Law Library had received \$10,357 in filing fees.

Investment Committee Report

Mr. Ray reported that as of November 30, 2021, the market value of the Library's investment account was \$3,961,090.65. Portfolio performance over the last twelve months was 12.03% as compared to the benchmark of 10.86%. Portfolio performance for the calendar year to date was 8.94%, as compared to the benchmark of 7.57%.

Old Business – Budget Update

Director Dawson reported that the Healthy and Thriving Focus Area Team met to discuss the City Manager's FY23 budget target reduction, dividing their budget requests into four tiers for consideration. Tier 1 included the items in each department which absolutely must be saved. For the Library, Tier 1 included the budget proposal regarding reduction of Sunday hours given that it is an equity issue. Retention of security guard services was also included in Tier 1. The elimination of the Talking Books Librarian position was included in Tier 2 and the request to increase materials spending was included in Tier 3 since it was a supplemental request instead of a reduction.

Requested funding to sustain the mobile hotspot and Chromebook lending programs was included in the list of items for consideration in the second tranche of ARPA funding. The Library's compensation requests were removed from consideration in the regular FY23 budget process and set aside for a larger review of compensation for City employees. HR Manager Farley explained that his internal review coupled with an initial

City review of librarian salaries at all levels indicated that staff salaries are between 12-20% below market. Director Dawson reminded the Board that she had been requesting compensation adjustments for staff for 6 years. The new City Manager will present his recommendations to City Council just prior to the Board's February meeting and Director Dawson will report on the results at that meeting.

Old Business – Reopening and the “New Normal”

Director Dawson reported that she had originally planned to begin rolling back some pandemic restrictions in mid-January and that she had been working and meeting with branch managers on this effort. However, after evaluating the new data on the current pandemic spike, those changes have been put on hold. Conversations regarding expansion of hours, indoor programming and meeting room usage have now shifted to consideration for later in 2022. Director Dawson stated that these decisions are made based on criteria and data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and from the local and state departments of health. Chair Hahn asked if those conversations had included opening branches on days when they are currently closed and Director Dawson responded affirmatively.

Chair Hahn stated that it was the last meeting with Ms. Bennett-Parker serving on the Board and thanked her for that service. Ms. Bennett-Parker responded that it had been an honor to serve and that she would continue her work in support of libraries through her new role in the General Assembly.

Ms. Schloeder made a motion to adjourn which was approved unanimously at 5:17 pm.