

Kent County Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of the June 26, 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; Olivia Coleman, Staff Member; Chris Walmsley, 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. Mr. Murphy moved to approve the minutes as submitted. Ms. Baker seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

The agenda of the meeting was reviewed. Two action items were moved up to follow the public comments in case of loss of power later in the meeting.

Public Comment

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

Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

Ms. Dowell reviewed the revised budget for the next fiscal year. Ms. Dowell noted that there would need to be some adjustments once the audit was finalized.

Ms. Dowell informed the trustees that the library had received an additional \$8,500 in grant funding to spend on computers for staff through the Local Management Board, but that \$19,000 was needed to replace all of the staff computers, which had been ordered through the Eastern Shore Regional Library. Mr. Silcox asked if there was a plan to address the shortfall. Ms. Dowell stated that it was going to be covered out of the fund balance. Mr. Silcox asked if the budget included in the packet had been changed to reflect this. Ms. Dowell answered that it had not.

Mr. Silcox asked if there were additional questions from the trustees. There were none.

Ms. Baker moved to approve the Fiscal Year 2024 budget as presented. Ms. Sine seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement

Mr. Silcox noted that the statement was discussed at the previous meeting.

Ms. Sine moved to approve the statement as presented. Mr. Murphy seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

Officer Reports

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Sine reviewed the current grants with the trustees, noting that the library had received an increase of approximately \$8,500 from the Local Management Board, that grant applications had been submitted for LSTA funding, and that the Foundation for the Kent County Public Library grant request cycle was upcoming which would be discussed in July to meet the September 1 deadline. Mr. Silcox expressed concern related to requesting additional funding when there was no request for reimbursement related to the website redesign project. Ms. Dowell reviewed projects being considered for submission to the Foundation including public computer replacements and book drops. Mr. Murphy noted that the foundation liked items which could drive fundraising, and that patron computers would meet this as it was a public-oriented project with high visibility.

Mr. Murphy asked if there would be a report on the status of the website project. Ms. Dowell answered that the consultant was visiting on July 26.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Counihan reported that she had met with Mr. Walmsley related to the transition of roles and continuity when he was no longer the executive secretary role.

Ms. Counihan reported that she had met with Ms. Dowell related to communication, noting that sometimes information does not travel through appropriate channels, and that if a board member was contacting a staff member, Ms. Dowell should be copied on the email.

Friends of the Kent County Public Library

Ms. O'Brien reported that the Friends were in good shape, having made over \$10,000 during the book sale, which was the best the organization had in a while. Ms. O'Brien noted that the Friends were happy that Ms. Dowell had joined their meeting, and that they had welcomed new board members.

Ms. Baker asked if there was a contact for the Friends 50th anniversary celebration. Ms. O'Brien noted that there was not yet.

Committee Reports

Rock Hall Facility Committee

Ms. Mckee reported that she had met with the Rock Hall Town Manager related to the facility which had been previously discussed. Ms. Mckee continued that the manager had presented her with a number of grants that could be pursued by the library to secure funding for renovations to the facility, and individuals who could provide plans and quotes for renovations.

Ms. Mckee noted that Ms. Dowell was opposed to the discussed facility and invited Ms. Dowell to expand on her opposition. Ms. Dowell stated that the space inside was small, and that patrons had expressed that the current facility was too small. Ms. Dowell expressed that the funding required to make the space viable for the organization bothered her, and while she was generally in favor of the location, the structure as it exists did not meet the current needs.

The trustees discussed potential ways to address the shortcomings of the potential new facility. Mr. Silcox asked if the town had indicated that they were willing to provide additional funding. Ms. Mckee replied that the mayor was very flexible, but the town had several significant needs which would require a heavy investment. Ms. Dowell asked if the trustees were viewing this as a short term space, or a permanent home for the library? Mr. Silcox and Mr. Murphy expressed that they were viewing it as a permanent location for the library. The trustees discussed what this vision for the facility involved and how the facility could be adjusted to meet this vision. Mr. Silcox asked if there was the possibility of touring an adjoining facility. Ms. Mckee said that she would try to set up a tour among the involved parties.

The trustees discussed the current library location, and how the lease for this location should be handled, noting that the lease was up at the end of September. Ms. Dowell said that she would reach out to the current landlord to get a revised lease, and would include language that if there was a new owner, that the lease would be honored.

Librarian's Report

Ms. Dowell introduced Olivia Coleman to the trustees, noting that she was the new Youth Services Assistant.

Ms. Dowell reviewed the Maryland Historical Trust grant and noted that a decision will not be made until mid-July.

Ms. Dowell informed the trustees that the Library Journal prize application had been submitted.

Ms. Dowell reviewed the LSTA grants, noting that she had requested funding for sound dampening panels and a mobile computer lab.

Ms. Dowell reviewed the African American Heritage grant with the trustees, noting that the application was due in mid-July, but it could fund the renovation of the Chestertown Library, Inc. building.

Ms. Dowell noted that the grant requests to the Foundation were due September 1, and that after hours book returns and computers for patrons had been previously identified priorities.

Volunteer Program

Ms. Dowell informed the trustees that there was presently no volunteer program, and that previous programs were similar to having volunteers doing library work instead of volunteer tasks. Ms. Dowell stated that she was trying to transition into an event or program help rather than work that staff is paid to perform.

Old Business

Staff Handbook Addenda

Mr. Silcox reviewed the ongoing staff handbook revisions, noting that the changes were to establish rules and differentiate between exempt and nonexempt employees. Ms. O'Brien noted that the revisions were to make an entire second staff handbook not entirely necessary by identifying the relevant sections and addressing them with addenda. Ms. Dowell stated that she would meet with the executive committee related to the language.

New Business

Mr. Silcox noted that this was Mr. Walmsley's last meeting as the executive secretary and presented a gift certificate to Mr. Walmsley on behalf of the Board of Trustees.

Fiscal Year 2024 Goals

Ms. Dowell stated that she was looking to streamline the vision and establish goals for the next fiscal year, and wanted input from the trustees related to what the library should accomplish in the next fiscal year. Ms. Dowell reviewed staff ideas and input for themes for the next fiscal year.

Mr. Silcox suggested foundational items and basic or core components. Ms. Baker identified that the library should document successes and highlight what the library is doing. Mr. Murphy suggested literacy as a core pillar of library services. Ms. Gill expanded on literacy, noting that it could apply to computer or information literacy in addition to reading and writing. Ms. Gill suggested community advocacy, and networking and outreach.

The trustees discussed the meaning behind some of the staff suggestions, such as spaces, and how it could be shaped into goals.

American Library Association Conference

Ms. Dowell reviewed the American Library Association Conference, noting that 30 people visited the poster presentation. Ms. Dowell noted some takeaways from other presentations, such as wellness programs, and small business scavenger hunts.

No further business was brought before the trustees.

Mr. Murphy moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Baker seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:55 pm.