



Minutes of the Regular Meeting of
The Board of Trustees
Webster Groves Public Library
November 18, 2020

The meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Webster Groves Public Library was held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, November 18. The meeting was held via Zoom teleconferencing. President Justin Hauke presided and Library Director Tom Cooper kept the minutes. Also present: Trustees Bethany Curtis, Joan Esserman, Tess Thompson, Jenine Harris, Leanne Waugh, Sherry Taylor, Ed Scholl, and Janey Worthington, and City Council Liaison Karen Alexander.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

Public Agenda

Mr. Cooper reported that upon hearing that the library may soon return to curbside-only service, two patrons, both users of our computers, had asked him if the library could continue offering public access to computers. They both cited using the computers for job applications and other important personal business.

Minutes of the October 21, 2020 Meeting

Ms. Thompson moved to approve the minutes, Ms. Curtis seconded, and the minutes were approved.

Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

President's Report

Mr. Hauke discussed the previous week's discussion, which he had initiated, about holding our meetings in person, or at least in a hybrid in-person/Zoom fashion. He believes that taking seriously our responsibility to provide a forum open for public attendance should not be a controversial point. As a public entity, the library has a responsibility to maintain the greatest amount of services it can to the greatest extent possible. This should be the primary basis for all decision-making. He is concerned that instead, this Board's default position has been to reduce services and to seek external validation as justification rather than seeking maximal solutions to maintain access.

Other trustees who spoke stood by their belief that Zoom meetings were important until the coronavirus pandemic showed signs of abating.

Librarian's Report

Mr. Cooper said that Shawn Greene, president of Webster Groves Historical Society, had called to ask if the library would be interested in appointing a staff liaison to the Society. We will do that, as soon as we hear that the move has been approved by the Historical Society Board.

Advanced Planning

Ms. Harris showed everyone the draft of a short survey the committee had put together to solicit public opinion about the services the library has offered during the COVID-19 crisis. After discussion and suggestions, she said she will produce a final draft to be presented to library patrons. She suggested that it would be a good idea if there were an incentive to get people to fill it out, and asked whether the Friends of the Library might fund that. Ms. Worthington said she would inquire.

Building and Grounds

Ms. Curtis showed everyone the drawings and pricing proposal for the front yard sign from ASI signage. There were several questions.

Ms. Curtis moved that \$20,000 be moved from reserves to the Building and Grounds fund to pay for the sign. Ms. Worthington seconded, and the motion passed.

Finance

Ms. Esserman reported that receipts in October were more than \$8,000 better than in September. She also reviewed the items that were charged to the Friends in October. Ms. Curtis moved to approve the financial report for October, Ms. Taylor seconded, and the report was approved.

Human Resource

Ms. Thompson inquired about the status to this year's staff day, since the board usually purchases a ham for the staff on the day. But since we will be skipping staff day this year, and there is no safe way to have a staff holiday buffet, Mr. Cooper thanked the board for the sentiment but did not think it was a good idea this year.

Mr. Cooper reported that Jim Hunter, who has worked for the library since 1978, is retiring and moving out of state. Ms. Esserman moved that the board present him with a resolution thanking him for his service and congratulating him on his retirement. Ms. Thompson seconded, and the motion passed. Mr. Cooper will draw up a draft of the resolution for Ms. Thompson to review.

There was also a discussion of staff efforts during the pandemic. Ms. Esserman moved to present a resolution thanking the staff for their efforts. Ms. Thompson seconded, and the motion passed.

Policy

Ms. Taylor noted that since the problem of recertifying our credit card processing security had been resolved, there was no need for the committee to meet to consider this.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

There was a discussion of new public health restrictions and whether the library should pull back from its current services and offer only curbside service for a while. Mr. Hauke opposed the idea, his main point being a question of social equity: that there are citizens who need services of the library, such as computer access, that they get nowhere else. Mr. Scholl moved to return to curbside service until the situation improved. Ms. Curtis seconded. There eight votes in favor, with Mr. Hauke voting nay.

Ms. Waugh initiated a follow-up discussion of whether the board should continue meeting via Zoom or in person. She believed it should be resolved now, in a meeting, rather than a discussion via email. Ms. Waugh moved that our January meeting be held via Zoom. Ms. Harris seconded. There were eight votes in favor, with Mr. Hauke voting nay.

Adjournment

Ms. Taylor moved to adjourn and Ms. Thompson seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

The next meeting of the Library's Board of Trustees will be held on Wednesday, January 20 at 7 p.m.