



Minutes of the Regular Meeting of
The Board of Trustees
Webster Groves Public Library
February 16, 2022

The meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Webster Groves Public Library was held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, February 16. President Bethany Curtis presided and Library Director Tom Cooper kept the minutes. Also present: Trustees Anita Radcliffe, Peter Ruger, Ed Scholl, Sherry Taylor, Tess Thompson, Leanne Waugh, and Janey Worthington. Absent: Trustee Jenine Harris and City Council Liaison Karen Alexander.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Public Agenda

There was no public agenda.

Minutes of the January 19, 2022 Meeting

Dr. Thompson moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Ruger seconded and the minutes were approved.

Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

President's Report

Ms. Curtis asked trustees if they thought it was timely or appropriate to do more to engage the community in a conversation about the Library Bill of Rights and other documents we adopted at our January meeting, perhaps through an article in the Webster-Kirkwood Times. Several trustees expressed the opinion that this might only cause controversy where none currently exists in our city. We adopted the documents, they are prominently posted in the library, and that should be sufficient for now. The important thing is that we are prepared with the language necessary to fight back against self-appointed censors, should they arise. A few trustees did speak to the point that in an atmosphere of spreading censorship, it was important to make a more public stand, and hoped we might revisit this question in time. Mr. Cooper said he will make a note to include continuation of this conversation in a future board agenda.

Librarian's Report

Mr. Cooper spoke about this month's circulation statistics, which indicate that our numbers continue to improve. If numbers continue as strong as they have been up to this point, we will be back to our average pre-pandemic circulation figure for the year.

Mr. Cooper also said that he is considering returning the library to mask-optional, perhaps as soon as March 1, if numbers of new COVID cases continue to decline rapidly. Several trustees said it was a matter of what he thought was best. But it was pointed out by a few trustees that if we are still under a St. Louis County mask mandate, it is important that we be seen as adhering to that. Mr. Cooper said he would certainly take that into account in making any decision.

Mr. Ruger asked why we were installing a bicycle repair station, with a projected charge of \$1,700. Mr. Cooper said that the station, similar to ones at a few other libraries, had been purchased for us by the Friends of the Library. He was surprised that the cost of installation was projected to be so high. Ms. Waugh suggested this might be something for an Eagle Scout project. Ms. Worthington, as Friends liaison, said she thought they would be happy to pay the fee, and offered to contact them.

Advanced Planning

Mr. Cooper outlined a proposal from Stakeholder Insights to assist with our strategic planning process. The proposal has been reviewed and found to be very good by the Advanced Planning Committee. It is in two parts: first is mapping data provided by the library to determine by neighborhood where usage and cardholding is stronger and weaker, as well as whether any neighborhood has more library fines than another. The second part is holding a series of public engagement meetings, by neighborhood, based on the results of the data. The mapping portion is projected to cost \$3,500, while the public engagement meetings portion could range upward from \$20,000, depending on format (Zoom or in person) and how many meetings are held. Four to six meetings are anticipated. There was some discussion of this cost, which seems expensive to some trustees. Mr. Cooper noted that the funds for strategic planning always come out of reserves, as it is only a once every five or six years expense; the last time we did it, we paid a consultant \$18,000 for a survey. Ms. Waugh moved to approve the \$3,500 to get the mapping portion done, Mr. Scholl seconded, and the motion was approved. Mr. Cooper will contact Stakeholder Insights.

Building and Grounds

Ms. Waugh said the only matter before the committee this month was placement of the bicycle repair station.

Finance

Mr. Scholl reviewed the financial report for January. Things are in good shape overall, which speaks well to our forecasting of expenses through the year. He did note that we are underspent in our payroll accounts because we had not been billed for one payroll cycle by the City. That should even out again by the March report. Ms. Worthington moved to approve the financial report for January, Mr. Ruger seconded, and the report was approved.

Human Resources

There was no report from this committee.

Policy

There was no report from this committee.

Friends Report

Ms. Worthington said the Friends were meeting, brainstorming ideas for fundraising and increasing membership. She said a special focus was on events that might re-engage the community after the dislocations of the pandemic.

City Hall

There was no City Hall report.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

Mr. Scholl provided a review of the draft audit for Fiscal Year 2020-2021. He noted that we were given an unqualified opinion, which is the best result of an audit.

The draft had noted a need for adjusting year-end entries, which he believed was pretty standard in audits.

There were two issues noted in the management letter, both of which had been noted in prior audits. One is that the auditors believe we should not have the same person who counts our daily counter receipts prepare the deposits, that there should be someone else involved. Mr. Cooper said that he reviews and signs those deposits, but that apparently is not what the auditors want. He noted that the money involved is not that much, and engaging another employee to participate in the process seemed fiscally unwise in itself.

The other matter was a note that our debt service budget as presented was at variance with our debt service as paid, and we should adjust that as we go. Mr. Scholl called this a 'housekeeping matter' that we should address in subsequent years.

Dr. Thompson moved to approve that draft audit, Ms. Taylor seconded, and the audit was approved.

Adjournment

Ms. Waugh moved to adjourn, Mr. Ruger seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

The next meeting of the Library's Board of Trustees will be held on Wednesday, March 16 at 7 p.m.