

New Haven Free Public Library

Library Board of Directors

Minutes of Meeting

September 26, 2023

Board Members Present: Dr. Anderson, Alder Morrison, Mr. Giering, Ms. Lamar, Ms. Sykes, Mr. Cruz

Members Absent: Ms. Logan, Ms. Merson

Staff Present: Maria Bernhey, Luis Chavez-Brumell

Guests: Eliza Halsey

Welcome

Dr. Anderson called the meeting to order at 5:33pm and welcomed Eliza Halsey Community Services Administrator for the City of New Haven. Ms. Halsey shared her experiences living and working in New Haven and is excited to work with everyone and will attend Library board meetings occasionally and when needed.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes

Dr. Anderson asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda and the July 2023 minutes. Mr. Cruz motioned to approve, and Ms. Lamar seconded.

Treasurer's Report

Library Board Financials and Budget

Ms. Lamar provided an overview of the Library financials for July and August 2023. Ms. Lamar shared that the City's approved budget is online and that there are more funds allocated to the Library special funds account. Five Library staff vacancies and their total salary cost of \$322,529 was shared. Ms. Lamar reported that the endowment has increased thanks to the Stetson capital funds which went to the endowment last spring.

Director's Report

Ms. Bernhey delivered the Director's Report.

Staff vacancies

Ms. Bernhey shared that there are currently 8 vacancies total. Two of the vacancies shared by Ms. Lamar in the treasurer's report are in process of getting filled. Ms. Bernhey shared that long-time Library Technical Assistant Haley Grunloh has departed for graduate school in California. Vaccines have improved since the summer as 15 vacancies have been reduced to 8.

New Haven Free Public Library Grants

Ms. Bernhey shared that Library is partnering with the City of New Haven's Economic Development Department and Concepts for Adaptive Learning (Cfal) on the American Connectivity Plan grant to hire staff to work with the community to sign up for a \$30/month discount on internet access to those who traditional cannot afford it. Outreach events will happen at Library locations and Elm City Communities. There is a kickoff press conference scheduled of October 2nd at the Wilson Branch Library.

Ms. Bernhey shared that the Library is part of a regional Digital Navigator Grant to supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services along with other towns in New Haven county most notably Hamden in having grant funded staff support the public with digital literacy.

Ms. Bernhey presented that these two grants highlight the dual work of the library in supporting access and competencies with digital literacy and equity. The Library will have more technology classes and which aligns with Digital Inclusion week in early October.

Library Open Houses/ Summer Reading Success

Ms. Bernhey described the success of the Library open houses which aligned with library card signup month with 435 additional library card users which is a testament to library staff marketing the open houses via social media and other platforms and customer service points. Patrons provided feedback on how to improve library services and programs.

Summer reading numbers doubled from last year 322 summer learning participants to 651. A focus on reading 20 minutes a day seemed to make a difference in supporting the completion of the summer reading program.

Staff Development

Ms. Bernhey thanked the Board for the budget increase in staff development. The increase will allow more professional development and formal training with staff in addition to sending staff to conferences including Connecticut Library Association and The New England Library Association. Ms. Bernhey shared that there will be a special focus on de-escalation training as there was an incident where a patron assaulted a staff member over a disagreement on accessing a resource. Ms. Bernhey and Mr. Chavez-Brumell have been in discussions on providing more trainings as the need is on-going. Ms. Bernhey shared that the patron has been permanently suspended.

Board members provided feedback on connecting with commuting resources on outreach such as local health clinics, the City's Elderly Services and local churches as well as special run (limited edition library cards) to encourage signup similar to the Brooklyn Public Library's efforts with Jay-Z. Ms. Bernhey shared that she had discussions with Mr. Chavez-Brumell and the Library leadership team on possibilities.

Board Member Terms and Nominations

Mr. Giering shared that Leslie Blatteau was not approved as board member as she is a current city employee. Mr. Giering acknowledged that the insights of former board members who were public school educators were beneficial to the board. Mr. Giering suggested that potential board

candidates are vetted with the Mayor's office to ensure that they would be approved. Mr. Giering plans to meet with Ms. Sykes to meet with potential candidates to fill the vacancies of Ms. Schneider and Ms. Logan.

Dr. Anderson shared that having a Library board that is reflective of the community is important. Dr. Anderson shared that a potential Library Board Member was presented at the board of alders meeting on 10/25/23 where Ms. Lamar was reappointed treasurer. The potential board member is Giulia Gambale.

Public Comment

Alder Morrison invited the board to attend the upcoming Yale vs Morgan State football game on Saturday 09/30/23. Dr. Anderson shared that there is a rally in conjunction with the Beinecke Library's Art and Protest exhibit to support the freedom to read on Friday 9/29/23 at 4pm.

Dr. Anderson called for adjournment at 6:56pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Luis Chavez-Brumell

Deputy Director