

New Haven Free Public Library

Library Board of Directors

Minutes of Meeting

November 28, 2023

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

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Maria Bernhey, Luis Chavez-Brumell

Guests:

Welcome

Dr. Anderson called the meeting to order at 5:33pm and welcomed board members.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes

Dr. Anderson asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda and the October 2023 minutes. Ms. Lamar motioned to approve, and Mr. Cruz seconded.

Treasurer's Report

Library Board Financials and Budget

Ms. Lamar provided an overview of the Library financials for October 2023. Ms. Lamar shared that 33.3% of the Library's City approved budget was spent. Total income shows a decrease but is expected/anticipated due to cutback in passport office hours. Variable expenses are running as expected at 31%. Fixed expenses are ahead of budget as a result of annual dues being posted. The Library has spent \$97,925 in capital expenses. The endowment has decreased slightly due to the market.

Director's Report

Ms. Bernhey delivered the Director's Report.

Welcome

Ms. Bernhey welcomed Alder Morrison, Ms. Gambale and shared that Ms. Halsey was unable to attend the meeting.

NHFPL Foundation Gift

Ms. Bernhey shared that the Library Foundation just received its largest gift to date from a donor. The Library Foundation Board's Executive Committee is working on a plan to invest the funds to grow in support of the Library's plans to support community and staff.

Staff vacancies

Ms. Bernhey shared that progress is being made in filling vacancies. The Library Technical Assistant position at Fair Haven and the full-time Librarian position at Ives were filled in early November by Melba Flores and Erin Witt. A request to appoint has been sent for the Librarian IV position, Library Technical Assistant position for Ives and Readmobile driver are in the pre-hire stage and there are interviews for the fulltime Librarian position at Fair Haven were scheduled. The board congratulated Ms. Bernhey and Library Leadership for their ability to make progress toward filling vacancies and improving staff retention.

City Budget FY 24-25 Preparation

Ms. Bernhey shared her plan for upcoming City budget preparations which include a request to move the Library Technology Supervisor position from Special funds to General funds as it is critical for staff support and the Library's digital equity efforts.

Passport office updates

Additional staffing changes are expected for the passport office as Amalia, our current PT support agent, will be departing in January. The position is posted, and interviews will begin shortly.

Library café

The previous proposal for the café space is under revision in hopes to open the bid process with the city late December to begin work to have a vendor fill the space.

Community Engagement

Ms. Bernhey shared the goal to increase library card membership by 5% and highlighted areas in New Haven to target membership growth, specifically in the East Shore and Fair Haven heights. The goal is to utilize the Readmobile in these underserved areas to increase library card membership.

Staff Development

Ms. Bernhey shared photos of the All-Staff Customer Service Training on November 15th. Ms. Bernhey described a training she led which centered on New Haven demographic statistics from DataHaven and empathy mapping where Library staff imagined how the organization can effectively respond to patron needs. Ms. Bernhey invited Mr. Chavez-Brumell to discuss Andrew Sanderbeck of the People's Connect Institute's portion of the training. Mr. Chavez-Brumell shared how Mr. Sanderbeck taught library staff strategies for not personalizing negative patron interactions, for creative problem-solving with patrons, and for learning from incidents, all to ensure that safety and customer service standards are met.

Clifford Beers Collaboration Grand Avenue Development

Ms. Bernhey was informed by Alder Miller that Clifford Beers Community Centers and New Haven Public Schools received the Full-Service Community Schools grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The Library is a named community partner in the new service model and looks forward to supporting Fair Haven families.

Board Member Terms and Nominations

Mr. Giering and Ms. Sykes presented three potential candidates to share with City Hall and Library Board members to fill one vacancy on the board.—. The candidates are Babz Rawls Ivy, Marlene Edelstein, and Matt Smith. All three were seen as excellent potential board members.—. Mr. Cruz made a motion for Dr. Anderson to submit a letter on behalf of the Board to Mayor Elicker's office with the three names and Ms. Gambale seconded.—.

Public Comment

Mr. Cruz shared about his visit to the Brooklyn Public Library and its Jay-Z *The Book of HOV* exhibit. He passed around a program book from the exhibit and suggested that the New Haven Free Public Library could do something similar with celebrities with connections to New Haven. Ms. Bernhey indicated this was already something that has been under consideration among NHFPL staff.

Dr. Anderson called for adjournment at 6:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Luis Chavez-Brumell

Deputy Director