

New Haven Free Public Library

Library Board of Directors

Minutes of Meeting

April 23, 2024

**Board Members Present:** Dr. Lauren Anderson, Ms. Giulia Gambale, Mr. Andrew Giering, Ms. Susan Lamar, Alder Jeannette Morrison, Mr. Lee Cruz

**Members Absent:** (vacancy waiting for appointment), Ms. Claudia Merson, Ms. Jeannette Sykes

**Staff Present:** Maria Bernhey, Luis Chavez-Brumell, Robert Kinney

**Guests:**

**Welcome**

Dr. Anderson called the meeting to order at 5:36pm.

**Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes**

Ms. Lamar motioned to approve the agenda and minutes. Mr. Giering seconded.

**Treasurer's Report**

Library Board Financials and Budget

Review of March Financials

Ms. Lamar shared the total income is at 96% of budget. The City purchase order for books is at 100% of annual allocation, plus an 8% carryover from Board funds. The passport office is at 82% of the budget. E-rate grants have ended and related technology expenses have shifted back to Library Board expenses.

City reporting of open purchase orders for capital expenditures on Library improvements remains at \$153,068.

The Library received \$1,000 from the Greater New Haven Green Fund and \$86,075 from the State of CT for Fiber to the Library Funds.

Fixed expenses are ahead of budget. The endowment remains stable.

## **Director's Report**

City Librarian Maria Bernhey delivered the Director's Report.

### Staffing

Circulation supervisor candidate has been selected and is in the pre-hire process.

### Professional Development

Six staff members are going to the Connecticut Library Association conference. Jennifer Gargiulo and Alexandria Robison of the Ives Squared team will present on small business services. Two employees will receive awards for their great work in libraries: Abby Franz will receive support staff of the year and Jake Gagne a Connecticut Library Association scholarship.

### Budget Workshop

Ms. Bernhey shared that the budget workshop went well. Asks were standard contract increases around book budget and contracted services. Alder Hamilton shared that the library does not receive enough money. Alder Festa asked about library hours. The Technology Supervisor position is included in Special Funds for the next year.

### Naming Rights

There is a need for a naming rights subcommittee with the Library Foundation Board to consider possibilities for spaces, collections, and programs. Ms. Bernhey believes that two members of the Municipal Board should participate. Anderson asked board members to self-nominate to participate on the working group. Ms. Gambale and Alder Morrison volunteered to be part of the working group which will include renaming the Noah Webster award for Mardi Gras.

### Summer Learning

Summer Reading program will kick-off on June 1<sup>st</sup>. The new brochures have been created and include the tag #getcaughtreading to promote reading for fun. The Peabody Museum will provide a private tour for grand prize winners from each location. Teen winners will receive gift cards from Atticus bookstore.

### Technology/Infrastructure

The Library is participating in the regional Digital Navigator, an IMLS Grant funded program in partnership with the CT State Library. A dedicated bilingual navigator will be at the library 7.5 hours a week to support patrons with technology training. There is a plan for an event launch on May 29<sup>th</sup> with all partners on the New Haven Green.

The Library will be implementing new software in July and August to improve functionality and end user experience for our events calendar, library card sign-up, meeting room reservations and email/marketing engagement. Many libraries across the U.S. and local libraries such as Stamford and Hamden use this platform. This platform will help expand engagement and make library cards more accessible.

Ms. Bernhey shared that capital funds are low for a library system with aging infrastructure. \$300k funding for 5 branches for two years. The Library Building Supervisor is looking at actual dates to replace three of five roofs. Ives HVAC and roof must be replaced which would require a capital campaign and the closure of Temple Street. The goal will include clean energy. CT State Library requires a detailed plan before a proposal can be submitted.

The Ives Children's Room is undergoing a light renovation including a new carpet and paint.

Café proposal open until May 20<sup>th</sup>- we hope to have someone activate the café space soon.

### **Code of Conduct**

Ms. Bernhey presented a draft of the Code of Conduct for review. Proposed changes centered around simplifying language, addressing accessibility, and clarifying weapons and bathroom use.

Ms. Bernhey will update the code of conduct with board edits to be reviewed for approval for the May board meeting.

### **Strategic Planning Update**

Ms. Bernhey shared that she, Luis Chavez-Brumell, and Public Services Administrator Karina Gonzalez, met with Maureen Sullivan and Jeannine Esposito to discuss the Library's strategic planning process. Ms. Bernhey shared that the new plan will build off the previous work done by Esposito with the EXCITE model from the previous Strategic Framework and the SOAR process from the ASPEN institute that Ms. Sullivan contributed to. The new plan will focus on patrons asking what they need from their libraries. Ms. Esposito shared that the in-depth life map would not necessarily be needed. The goal is to have 60-minute community sessions to gain community feedback to improve library services. There is a working session planned with Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Esposito to create a formal contract with both consultants.

Dr. Anderson asked board members about their interest in being part of the subcommittee of board around strategic planning. Dr. Anderson and Mr. Giering plan to serve on the strategic planning committee.

### **Board Member Terms and Officer Nominations**

Dr. Anderson moved to approve the proposed officer slate of Andrew Giering as President, Claudia Merson as Vice President, and Susan Lamar as Treasurer, with the new officer term to begin in June 2024. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Anderson shared that she has no responses or updates from the City on the board nomination front as names that were submitted in early December. The hope was that one of the candidates would move forward. At least one candidate was informed that they could not serve on the board due to their political party affiliation.

Potential Board members should be asked about whether they would become Board officers in the future. Ms. Merson and Dr. Anderson have been renewed for their last board terms (final two years of their nine-year cycle). Dr. Anderson encourages board members to think of the possibilities.

### **Public Comment**

Alder Morrison shared that the rededication of the Q-House Plaza is scheduled for May 30<sup>th</sup>. The rededication will honor David White Stewart who was an author who wrote about Black New Haven. Rob Goldman will create a lightbox for Mr. Stewart who was a contemporary of Dr. Fred “Freddy Fixer” Smith. The event will be in concert with the Freddy Fixer parade weekend.

Dr. Anderson shared that it is Independent Bookstore Day on Saturday 4/27/24. Dr. Anderson shared that Possible Futures Bookstore will have two authors visiting on Saturday 4/27/24 Gwendolyn Wallace and Aya Ghanameh and a comedy show hosted by New Havener Shawn Murray.

Ms. Gambale shared that there are 43 master gardener interns who will need to complete office hours for seeds and outreach. Each needs a combined 60 hours of internship between May and September 30<sup>th</sup>. Please consider sharing this information with local spots that would benefit from hosting or attending their office hours.

Motion to adjourn at 6:57pm by Alder Morrison and was seconded by Ms. Gambale.

Respectfully submitted,

Luis Chavez-Brumell  
Deputy Director