

New Haven Free Public Library

Library Board of Directors

Minutes of Meeting

May 28, 2024

**Directors Present:** Lauren Anderson, Lee Cruz, Giulia Gambale, Andrew Giering, Susan Lamar, Claudia Merson, Jeannette Sykes

**Directors Absent:** Alder Jeannette Morrison, (vacancy waiting for appointment)

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

**Welcome**

President Lauren Anderson called the meeting to order at 5:35pm.

**Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes**

Treasurer Susan Lamar moved to approve the agenda and April minutes with minor edits. Jeanette Sykes seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report**

Library Board Financials and Budget

Ms. Lamar presented the Treasurer's Report. A discussion followed.

**Director's Report**

City Librarian Maria Bernhey presented the Director's Report.

Staffing

The new Circulation Supervisor started in May and the Library is currently fully staffed in full-time positions.

There are currently three part-time position vacancies including the Readmobile driver, which has been challenging to fulfill.

### Community Impact

We currently offer VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) tax preparation services at four Library locations with the hope of expanding to Stetson Library next year. The NHFPL was the second highest VITA site in Connecticut with over \$800,000 given back to taxpayers.

Ms. Bernhey met with Community Resilience Director Tirzah Kemp recently. The meeting has led to increased funding for Liberty Community Services including expanding services to the Stetson Branch.

Ms. Bernhey shared the strategic initiatives of the Community Services Administration: Community Wellbeing and Connection; Stable and Affordable Housing; and Career Pathways and Upward Mobility. The Library will support the areas of Career Pathways and Upward Mobility.

### Summer Learning

Summer Learning starts on June 1, 2024. The READy for the Grade summer reading tutoring program continues at Wilson Branch and Stetson Branch. There has been a steady increase in attendance and there is an interest to have the program year-round at Stetson. The Library also plans to seek additional funding to support an expansion of the READy for the Grade program to include the Fair Haven Library.

### Technology/Infrastructure

Ms. Bernhey shared that the refresh of the Children's Program Room at Ives will be completed on approximately May 30, 2024.

The Ives Main Public Elevator is currently out of service. There will be purchase orders to support the repairs.

Repairs to the Fair Haven Library gas piping system for pressure and temperature/heating were completed at the cost of approximately \$25,000.

### Fred Harris Exhibit

The Fred Harris exhibit at City Hall will move to its permanent location at Wilson Branch.

### **Code of Conduct**

Proposed revisions to the Library Code of Conduct were reviewed. Following a discussion, Mr. Cruz moved to approve the Code of Conduct as amended. Ms. Lamar seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Strategic Planning Update/Review of Ms. Sullivan's proposal**

The Board reviewed Maureen Sullivan's proposal to support the Library's Strategic Planning Process. Following a discussion, Ms. Lamar moved to approve Ms. Sullivan's proposal. Ms. Merson seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Board Member Terms and Nomination Updates**

### Board Officer Confirmation

The slate of Mr. Giering as President, Ms. Merson as Vice President, and Ms. Lamar as Treasurer was reviewed and confirmed.

Dr. Anderson shared that she and Ms. Merson will term off the board soon. Dr. Anderson encouraged board members to be willing to serve in the future as board officers.

### Proposed Board Members

Dr. Anderson shared that she has not received an answer on the political representation issue from City Hall. The general statute specifies that a board cannot have more than 2/3 of its membership representing a single political party. The Library Board is currently in compliance, however recent Board nominees were told they could not be appointed to the board due to their political affiliation.

The Board was told the mayor would present the name of Dijonée Talley (Independent) to the Board of Alders. Ms. Talley is a New Haven native, until recently worked for the City of New Haven, previously worked in the Mayor's Office and does reentry work.

Dr. Anderson shared that the Library has also consistently had board representation from the public schools, including, recently, Dr. Garcia-Blocker and Dr. Benitez. A proposed board nominee who would have represented the public schools was not accepted. Dr. Anderson hopes for a reset with Mr. Giering and Ms. Merson.

Mr. Giering plans to contact the Mayor to discuss how the board member appointment process can best serve the Library and New Haven residents going forward.

## **Public Comment**

### **Executive Session to discuss the City Librarian's performance goals.**

Ms. Merson moved to enter Executive Session. Mr. Giering second. The motion was approved unanimously at 6:56 PM.

Ms. Lamar moved to leave Executive Session. Ms. Sykes seconded. The motion was approved unanimously at 7:30 PM.

## **Adjournment**

Mr. Cruz moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Lamar seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Luis Chavez-Brumell  
Deputy Director