

New Haven Free Public Library  
Library Board of Directors  
Minutes of Meeting  
Tuesday January 26, 2021

**Members Present:** Ms. Schneider, Dr. Anderson, Dr. Garcia-Blocker, Mr. Giering, Ms. Merson, Mr. Cruz, Ms. Logan

**Members Absent:** Alder Morrison, Ms. Lamar

**Staff Present:** John Jessen, Gina Bingham

### **Welcome**

Ms. Schneider called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm. A quorum was present.

Ms. Schneider requested that the Board form a nominating committee for April's meeting, where new officers will be voted in. Ms. Logan, Ms. Merson, and Dr. Garcia-Blocker agreed to be the nominating committee.

### **Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes**

Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, including the November 2020 Minutes. Ms. Logan moved to approve the Consent Agenda and Minutes, Dr. Anderson seconded, and with no questions or comments, the Board voted to approve the Consent Agenda and Minutes.

### **Treasurer's Report**

#### November and December 2020 Summary

Mr. Jessen reviewed the November and December 2020 financials. Revenues saw the addition of \$31,839.10 arrive from the Library's quarterly endowment payments. Expenditures for the two months were below average. The Library continues to offer free printing, which was established as part of the Covid-19 response, which is currently being supported by the Everybody Learns grant.

The Library's Foundation account saw activity in both revenues and expenditures. In November, CTNext paid the library \$79,826 for materials and services provided throughout the year. The Library's expenditures include purchases of materials and services for Ives Squared as well as payments to Stirling Bandworks for the new website, and OrangeBoy, the Library's new data analytic software. As mentioned, the Library was also busy in November and December spending money from the Everybody Learns grant. The Library was awarded \$146,730 and this money has gone towards new hands-free bathroom fixtures, PPE, coverage of printing costs for the public, and new cameras at the Wilson branch - to name a few items.

#### Endowment

The Endowment's net worth saw an increase this quarter that brought the Endowment's position to a yearly high of just over \$3,000,000.

Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to approve the November and December 2020 financials, Mr. Giering moved, Mr. Cruz seconded, and with no questions or comments the Board voted to approve the November and December 2020 financials.

Mr. Jessen presented a transfer from the NHFPL Foundation: \$146,730 from the Everybody Learns grant. Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to approve the transfer, Ms. Merson moved, Mr. Cruz seconded, and the Board voted to accept the funds from the NHFPL Foundation.

### **Website Reveal**

Mr. Jessen introduced Ms. Bingham, the Library's newest Public Services Administrator, who previously ran Ives Squared/Tinker Lab. Ms. Bingham has been leading the Library's new website design and implementation team. Ms. Bingham highlighted the concerns around the old website's organization, limited mobile application use, and accessibility. Ms. Bingham gave the Board a tour of the new website. It is scheduled to go live to the public on January 27, 2021.

The new website addresses questions that patrons most frequently ask and is accessible in over 108 languages. These include: "how do I search for books?" and "where are you located?" The search bar for the catalog has been centered prominently on the homepage. Ms. Bingham said her team will be actively working on adding enhancements to the website as new comments and suggestions are made. The Board praised Gina for her presentation and the Library team that worked on the project for a wonderful new digital offering that enhances and showcases the Library's variety of resources and services. There was general discussion around the creation of a website tutorial video highlighting all the new features that could be shared social media and YouTube.

Ms. Bingham left the meeting at 6:10 pm.

### **Board Bylaws Vote**

Mr. Giering sent the Board the revised Bylaws prior to this meeting. Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to approve the amended Board Bylaws, which had been discussed at a prior meeting. There were no new comments or questions. Mr. Cruz moved to approve the amended Board Bylaws, Ms. Merson seconded, and with no questions or comments, the Board voted to approve the amended Board Bylaws. Ms. Schneider thanked Mr. Giering for his hard work on revising the Bylaws.

### **Reopen Updates**

Mr. Jessen reported that the Library plans to reopen all locations for in person services incrementally starting as soon as mid-February if in line with CDC and Health Department recommendations. Patrons would have access to all branches on a limited basis and would be asked to make appointments for inside services. To prepare for reopening of the physical locations, the Library has changed all sinks and toilets to hands-free, added hand sanitizing stations throughout buildings, and moved furniture to promote social distancing. Checkout of materials will be handsfree using the MeeScan application, which will allow patrons to check out materials themselves using their personal devices.

There was Board discussion about the logistics and safety protocols for in person services as well as strategy for enhancing outdoor services as weather permits.

The City's Youth Services Department will be opening a Learning Hub at the Wilson Library, allowing 20 kids, 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade to access the lower level at some point in the future.

As the Library plans to further open their physical spaces, it can continue to be a warming center as needed. Mr. Jessen reassured the Board that the Library is doing everything it can to make sure that both staff and patrons will be safe upon reopening.

## **Director's Report**

### Staffing

The Library is interviewing for two open positions in Adult Services and interviews for a Branch Manager will be in the works very soon. Mr. Jessen voiced concern that these three positions will be held up due to recent City budgetary constraints.

### Passport Office

The Library would like to open a Passport Office by the end of this fiscal year, which will be a great resource for patrons and create two to three new part-time positions. Mr. Jessen stated that he is updating job descriptions as for this new service at the Library. Mr. Jessen said that the Stamford Public Library's Passport Office has been and continues to be successful and he is hopeful that the New Haven Free Public Library's office will be able to replicate that success.

### OrangeBoy

OrangeBoy is a data analysis company. This system is now in place and has been extremely useful in sending personalized e-mails out to patrons to provide a more customized and useful experience.

### Stetson Update

The Stetson campaign has hit its two million dollar goal! The Q-House is now scheduled to open late June or early July. In the meantime, furnishings and technology for the location will begin to be purchased in March 2021.

### Mardi Gras

This year, Mardi Gras will be a free virtual event. Part of the event will be a conversation in celebration of Black poetry featuring Toi Derricotte, Cornelius Eady and Reginald Dwayne Betts. There will be a presentation of the Library's Noah Webster Award to Elsie B. Chapman. Registration is available here:

<https://nhfpl.libnet.info/event/4859899>

### Programming

Recently, the Wilson Branch had a Three King's Celebration event in which 190 people used curbside service to receive free gifts. These gifts were donated by the Peabody Museum gift shop and included items like educational toys, books, and stationary

Books Sandwiched In has been reestablished. This perennially popular lunch time author series is hosted by the Library every other Thursday at noon. This Thursday, author Joan Cavanagh will be joining to talk about her book, *Our Community at Winchester: The City and Its Workers at New Haven's Gun Factory*. A full slate of authors and speakers has been released for the Spring 2021.

### **Public Comment**

Ms. Logan invited Board members to volunteer for World Read Aloud Day on February 3. Volunteers can also be from the community. These volunteers can record themselves reading a Children's book of their choice to be posted to the City's website for students to watch.

The Board adjourned the regular meeting and entered Executive Session at 7:01 pm.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 7:22 pm. Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Merson made the motion and the meeting adjourned at 7:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John Jessen  
City Librarian