

New Haven Free Public Library
Library Board of Directors
Minutes of Meeting
April 27, 2021

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

Members Absent: Mr. Giering, Alder Morrison

Staff Present: John Jessen, Luis Chavez-Brumell

Welcome

Ms. Schneider called the meeting to order at 5:30. A quorum was present.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes

Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, including the March 2021 Minutes. Mr. Cruz moved to approve the Consent Agenda and Minutes, Ms. Merson seconded, and with no questions or comments, the Board voted to approve the Consent Agenda and Minutes.

Report from Nominating Committee and Election of Officers

The Nominating Committee, led this year by Dr. Garcia-Blocker, Ms. Merson and Ms. Logan, proposed Dr. Lauren Anderson for the position of Board Chair, Ms. Shana Schneider for Vice President, and Ms. Susan Lamar for a second term as Treasurer.

During Ms. Schneider's tenure as President, the Library received the 2019 National Medal for Museum and Library Service and transitioned in Mr. Jessen as the new City Librarian. As Vice President, Ms. Schneider looks forward to supporting Dr. Anderson while continuing her work on the Library Board. Dr. Anderson brings a wealth of knowledge that will prove beneficial to the Library, and noted that she is honored to be a part of the Library Board at such a crucial time.

Ms. Schneider asked for a vote on the slate of officers and the board voted unanimously to approve the recommendation of The Nominating Committee.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Lamar reviewed the March 2021 financials, summarizing both the Board and the Foundation accounts. Overall, revenues and expenses are as expected at this point in the year.

Endowment

The Endowment has seen an upward trend this month.

Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to approve the March 2021 financials, Dr. Anderson moved, Ms. Lamar seconded, and with no questions or comments the Board voted to approve the March 2021 financials.

Mr. Jessen presented a transfer request from the NHFPL Foundation for \$9,929.76 from the Everybody Learns Grant. Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to approve the transfer, Ms. Lamar moved, Mr. Cruz seconded, and the Board voted to accept the funds from the NHFPL Foundation.

COVID-19 related Service Updates

The Library further expanded services at all locations to include in-person browsing on Monday, March 29th, and branch locations now allow in-person computer use. Going forward, the Library will continue to provide more access to its spaces and all locations will resume normal hours of operation.

The Wilson and Fair Haven branches have become COVID-19 vaccination sites. The Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center is operating the Wilson vaccination site and has already administered 4,600 vaccine doses. Fair Haven has welcomed the DPH vaccine van, operated by Griffin Health Care, for multiple visits.

Ms. Logan left the meeting at 5:57 pm.

Budget Advocacy/ARP update

The Board discussed the importance of budget advocacy. Mr. Jessen described his experience testifying before the Board of Alders Finance Committee, where he talked about the Library's accomplishments and goals for the coming fiscal year. Ms. Schneider encouraged all members and the public to continue to attend public hearings and testify in support of the Library if they can. Dr. Anderson offered to create a "How To" video to help explain the process for those in the public who have never testified before. The next public budget hearing will be held on May 10th, and written testimony can be submitted at any time.

Mr. Jessen reported that, as part of the American Rescue Plan, the State Library of Connecticut will grant \$3,000 to NHFPL. This money must be used for addressing digital divide, purchasing PPE, or upgrading facilities.

Director's Report

Staffing

The City is still experiencing a hiring freeze, but the Library is optimistic that high-level positions, including the Wilson Branch Manager, will be filled soon.

Luis Chavez-Brumell, Deputy Director at the Library, will be a member of the City's new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion task force called the Cultural Equity Co-creation Planning Team. A stipend of \$1,000 will be directed to the NHFPL Foundation as a donation. Mr. Chavez-Brumell stated the goal of the new task force is to have collaborative communication with the public and stressed that cultural equity cannot exist without a fully funded public library.

Library Technical Assistant Karina Gonzalez has been awarded the Connecticut Library Associations' support staff of the year award! Nominated with numerous letters of support

from library staff and administration, Ms. Gonzalez's recognition was well deserved. While currently working in the Technology Department at the Library, Ms. Gonzalez is also in the process of earning her Library Science Degree.

Programs

The Books Sandwiched In program has been broadcast on C-SPAN for the second time. The latest talk featured a conversation with Professor Frank Snowden about his book *Epidemics and Society*.

Russell Fund

Mr. Jessen presented a proposal to reactivate the Russell Fund, established to assist staff who want to further their education in Library Science or other work-related fields. The board enthusiastically supported the idea that the Library support a career pipeline for New Haveners, especially those of color, who are considering or presently working in the field of library science. Mr. Jessen presented a scenario that increased the Russell Fund using funds from the Stetson Capital Campaign that are earmarked for the endowment. The Board decided to form a committee to assist Mr. Jessen and the Library as it looks to further develop and reactivate the Russell Fund. The committee consists of Ms. Logan, Ms. Merson, and Dr. Anderson.

Stetson

The \$105,000 grant from the Community Foundation has been used to cover costs of the opening day collection of the Stetson Library. This fulfills the grant obligation for this revenue.

Mr. Jessen will be meeting with Stetson Capital Campaign co-hosts to begin finalizing naming rights issues, which will hopefully be ready by the next Library Board meeting.

Passport Office Update

There is no update on the passport office. Job descriptions for the staff have been re-written and submitted to City Hall

Orchid Café

Mr. Jessen presented options to the Board for a new café tenant following the recent notification that ConnCAT will not be renewing their lease for the café space at the Ives Main Library. Options include creating a program to showcase food business entrepreneurs, introducing vending machines, leasing the space to another vendor, or having Library staff run the café. Board members offered ideas and possible contacts for Mr. Jessen to follow up with as the Library explores its options.

Ms. Schneider left the meeting at 6:46 pm.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Dr. Anderson asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Merson moved, Mr. Cruz seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 6:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John Jessen
City Librarian