

Trustee Meeting Minutes

July 13, 2020

The regular monthly meeting of the Leominster Public Library Board of Trustees was held via GoToMeeting teleconference on Monday, July 13, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 5:02 PM.

In attendance were: Chairperson Mark Bodanza, Vice Chairperson Susan Chalifoux Zephir, Secretary Lawrence Nfor, Susan Shelton, Joanne D'Onfro, and James Despo. Others present included Library Director Sondra Murphy, and Assistant Director Nicole Piermarini.

OPEN FORUM

Brittany Recker, the Technology and Reference Librarian expressed deep concern as she had reached out to the Human Resource Office and was told that the city does not have a policy regarding financial compensation if staff are exposed to Covid19. She also voiced concern regarding the impact on services to the community if one staff member is exposed or falls ill because all staff will have to be quarantined and tested.

Diane Sanabria echoed Brittany Recker's concerns regarding the lack of an action plan in the event that library employees are exposed to Covid19 as other city departments have a plan. She invited the board to visit the library to see what the staff has accomplished since the building closed in March.

Mary Boutet, the Teen Services Librarian, expressed concern that opening the building to the public could result in greater community virus spread as it creates up to 300 new potential Covid19 exposure events per week. In addition, she voiced concerns that current services may not be able to continue as staff will now have to spend more time on desk to manage appointments and sanitize. She asked the board to consider the amount of stress and fear that staff are feeling as they are asked to police patron behavior regarding mask and social distancing guidelines.

Ann Finch, the Special Services Coordinator, asked the Board to consider the level of risk involved with reopening the building as there are staff that live with people who have elevated

personal risk and staff members that are themselves at elevated risk. She asked that the board keep the safety of the staff at the forefront of any decisions made going forward. She also asked that the board consider holding their monthly meeting at the library in a show of solidarity with the staff.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Discussion was held regarding the bidding process timeline under the NEW BUSINESS, *Building Management System Upgrade* section. Trustee Shelton noted that in her experience it does not take a year to go through the purchasing process. The one year timeline was in reference to the website bidding process.

Discussion was held regarding the use of the building fund under the NEW BUSINESS, *Building Management System Upgrade* section. Trustee Chalifoux Zephir and Trustee Shelton clarified the intent of the privately raised funds was not to maintain mechanical or technical infrastructure, but rather for replacing carpeting, furniture, lightning, or other items to enhance the facilities.

Trustee Chalifoux Zephir moved “to strike the last sentence of [NEW BUSINESS, *Building Management System Upgrade* section]” (JD’O). The motion was adopted. Vote: 6-0.

The minutes of the June 8, 2020 meeting were approved as corrected (SS/JD). Vote: 6-0.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Trustee Nfor complemented the Director on the work she has accomplished to provide a foundation and innovate how services are provided to the community during what is a trying time for leading an organization like the library. He highlighted the stats, the activities offered, as well as the training and documentation provided. This was seconded by Trustee D’Onfro.

OLD BUSINESS

Website

The Director reported the website went live on the evening of June 30 and has been very well received by the community. The library has garnered a lot of positive feedback from patrons

commenting on the new look and how easy it is to find things. The staff appreciate how easy it is to update. The Trustees complimented the site being easy to navigate, not overly cluttered, and compatible with mobile phones.

Library Reopening and Hours:

The Director recommended the hours of operation remain as they have been for the past month. She recommended revisiting this at the August 10, 2020 board meeting as hours typically change beginning in September.

Building Management System Upgrade:

The Director reported that the project had gone out to bid and the initial bid provided at the previous meeting was the lowest bid. She relayed the Purchasing Agent's recommendation to pursue the lowest bid and revisit remote access next year as businesses are currently slow to respond due to Covid19. The next step for this project is to secure funding.

Curbside and Return Statistics:

The Director explained that the total number of items checked out before curbside began could be obtained as the library was not lending items. Now that items are circulating, arriving via delivery, and being returned there is no way to tell if an item was checked out before the library closed or after curbside began.

The Chair acknowledged it is not possible to get an exact answer regarding the statistic the board had been asking for at the last few meetings due to the nature of the data. A request was made for data on the total number of items checked out after curbside began, the total number of items returned after the book drop reopened, and a comparison to the totals of what was checked out before curbside began.

The trustees expressed some confusion about the disparity between the number of curbside checkouts and the number of items circulated since March and asked Sondra to clarify where the total number of items circulated since March came from at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Reopening Communication - Mayor:

This item was moved out of order and discussed after the OPEN FORUM.

The trustees acknowledged that the speakers in the open forum made valid points and were also very concerned about the lack of a plan for financial compensation in the event of the worst-case scenario. They felt this discussion should have happened before the library was opened to the public. The trustees questioned who made the decision to open and if the Director faced any pressure to do so.

The Director stated there was some pressure to open in a reasonable time as the Mayor had inquired when the library was going to open, and the city believes in providing services to their taxpayers. She explained that the reopening plan presented was created with staff input and was designed in small steps to make sure opening the building is done in a way that is safest for both staff and the public. In the event of an exposure the local board of health is called, contact tracing is done, and the building is cleaned. She recommended in the event of an exposure that the library be closed, all staff get tested, and work from home during quarantine.

The trustees requested that the Director reach out to the Mayor and have a plan in place as well as the financial ramifications of closing the building for staff quarantine at the next meeting.

HiQ IT Company:

The Director reported that as of July 1 that citywide IT company would be HiQ, as chosen by the ITTF. The contract went out to bid and the ITTF interviewed 3 companies.

Governor's Reopening Plan and Fine Amnesty:

The Director relayed two ways to address the concerns of having lost and overdue items returned: hire a collections agency or denote a period of time for fine amnesty where late fees are waived for Leominster owned items. The Director suggested pursuing fine amnesty as it encourages patrons to bring back their materials without being punitive. In addition, the Director

reported that all items checked out at Leominster had their due dates extended from July 1 to September 1 and items are currently being returned in fine amnesty mode.

The trustees suggested advertising the ongoing fine amnesty. Trustee Shelton suggested deleting lost items from the system that were due before the library opened the new building as it is unlikely these items will be returned and are potentially skewing statistics.

Trustee Chalifoux Zephir moved to “allow the library staff to continue to check in materials in fine amnesty mode until September 1” (JD’O). The motion was approved. Vote 6-0.

Part-time Staff Increases:

The Director inquired about the possibility of giving the part time staff a pay increase with the intent of making wages equitable with the state minimum wage. The cost of the raise would be offset by the salary budgeted for the vacant outreach coordinator position. Not all staff would be receiving a raise as not all staff have been employed for one year and there is not enough money in the budget for all staff employed over one year to receive a raise. Additional raises would be budgeted and planned for in the next fiscal year.

The trustees expressed misgivings that not all staff would be receiving a raise and requested the financial impact of giving all staff a raise be brought to the next meeting. In addition, the trustees requested information on how long part time staff had been at their current wage as well as information regarding the last time raises were made.

The meeting adjourned at 6:23 PM. (SCZ/JD)

Nicole Piermarini, Assistant Director