

Meeting Minutes
Cedar Rapids Public Library
Board of Trustees
November 3, 2022

Board members in attendance: [President] Clint Twedt-Ball, Susan McDermott, Jade Hart, Chris Casey, Jeremy Elges, Elisabeth Hepworth (all in person); [Vice President] Monica Challenger, Rafael Jacobo, (all via Zoom)

Unable to attend: Hassan Selim

Staff in attendance: Dara Schmidt, Erin Horst, Jessica Musil (in person); Patrick Duggan, Todd Simonson, Jessica Link (all via Zoom)

Others: Charity Tyler, Executive Director, Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation

- A. Call to Order
 - Mr. Twedt-Ball called the meeting to order at 4 pm.
- B. Consent Agenda – **Action**
 - Minutes: October 6, 2022

Ms. Hart moved to accept the consent agenda. Ms. McDermott seconded. The action carried with unanimous approval.
- C. Public Comments and Communications
 - There being none, the meeting continued
- D. Foundation Report – Charity Tyler
 - Ms. Tyler thanked the City of Cedar Rapids and Linn County for their support of the westside library project. The government agencies approved \$6 million and \$4 million respectively in ARPA funding.

Ms. Casey joined the meeting at 4:02 pm.

- The westside library project has been in development with Ms. Schmidt and key library stakeholders since 2018 with the unexpected estate gift from Nadine Sandberg.
 - The Foundation released its fall newsletter that is shared with the Friends.
 - This year's holiday gift box fundraiser has officially launched. Evelyn Zerzanek secured black ink drawings from Maurice Sendak and The Sendak Foundation has allowed limited release of a drawing for the fundraiser. The drawing has been reproduced on notecards, and will be accompanied with a metal bookmark and stone coaster for \$40.
 - Local store Raygun invited the Library Foundation to print and fulfill on demand merchandise with a portion of proceeds going to the Foundation. Items can include shirts, stickers, notebooks, mugs, and more. These will be available for purchase online by the end of the month on Raygun's website. Raygun does a similar program with the Des Moines Public Library. Ms. Tyler hopes to refresh the available merchandise every quarter.
 - Mr. Twedt-Ball asked Ms. Sandberg gifted the library. The library was the sole beneficiary of her will, amounting to \$1.8 million. A general discussion was held on donor and name recognition for Marilyn Ladd and Nadine Sandberg, as well as naming opportunities.
- E. Friends of the Library Report – Libby Slappey
 - Ms. Tyler reported for Ms. Slappey. The Friends are actively setting up for the fall book sale. It will be hosted this Friday-Sunday during open library hours.
 - F. Board Education: Fine Free Update – Erin Horst
 - In 2019, a staff group reviewed access as a part of the strategic plan; this group specifically looked at how overdue fees impact access to patrons. Later that year, Ms.

Horst presented the final report to the board and fines were eliminated along with MLN partners.

- At that time, a plan to establish a data baseline in February 2020 derailed due to the pandemic. The following month, the library closed for an extended time and the libraries decided to start going fine free then. For the first time, we could view trends and report consistent data though it was impacted due to COVID closures, the derecho, and the downtown fire.
- Ms. Horst showed data that demonstrated the rate of returned materials did not change after fines were eliminated and loss of materials has not increased. Prior to the policy change, we had about 16,000 blocked cards every month, or \$35,000 with a fee regardless of blocked status. With changes, we have approximately 6,000 blocked cards in a given month, and the cardholders are able to get out of blocked status quickly by returning the materials. Previously, mapped blocked cards showed clear divisions in neighborhoods based on invisible socioeconomic lines. Now, the mapped blocked cards are spread out and less densely clumped.
- Patrons who have not returned materials in 55 days are sent to a library specific collection agency. Charges are removed when the items are returned. We see a higher return of materials instead of making payments. Mr. Elges asked how many materials are returned as a result of the collection agency statements? Ms. Horst will look. She also noted that the collection agency is not punitive like debt collectors. Based on federal laws, the collections don't show on credit reporting.
- Mr. Twedt-Ball asked those with previously blocked cards have returned to the library. Unfortunately, we can't pull this as the pandemic created unreliable data as the pandemic made it difficult to communicate with patrons. He also asked if we can map to see library cards per neighborhood. This is possible.
- Ms. Hart asked if hold wait times are impacted by those who don't return materials on or before the due date. We have no concrete data for this yet, as data is not yet reliable from impacts to our service hours; antidotally, this does not appear to be an issue.
- Ms. Hepworth noted that forgoing annual revenue of \$100,000 in fines may seem like a lot but it may be made up in other ways. Ms. Horst said the initial report tried to quantify the staff time to discuss fines and handle fine transactions. In reality, staff time spent on those interactions was significant so when those interactions are eliminated and staff can focus on other things, we lost approximately \$10,000 a year. Staff and patron relationships benefitted greatly when those interactions stopped.
- Ultimately, assessing fines did not guarantee materials return but instead made materials inaccessible.

G. Library Board Committee Reports

- Advocacy Committee – Rafael Jacobo, Committee Chair
 - The committee recently discussed some opportunities for advocacy. Ms. Hepworth presented at the City Council meeting for the ARPA discussion and vote. Ms. Hepworth is grateful that the Westside Project has been brought to the front and appreciated the unanimous support of the City Council.
- Finance Committee – Monica Challenger, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Challenger reviewed the September Finance memo, which is a quarter of a way into the year. Revenue and expenditures are on target. Some of the billings were off schedule last month but have caught up. Drafts for FY24 budget are in process and will be presented to the board by January.
- Personnel and Policy Committee – Susie McDermott, Committee Chair
 - **Action:** Policy Review. Ms. McDermott reviewed the following policies.
 - 3.03 Fines and Fees. There are no recommended changes to the policy, which was updated to eliminate fines in 2019. Based on evidence, the board knows the policy works.

- 3.05 Internet and Computer Usage. The committee did not make any recommended changes. However, Ms. Schmidt felt it was important to highlight this policy as it speaks to an intellectual freedom issue. Public libraries operate differently than schools. Libraries do not have the power to act as a parent or guardian, as schools can. The policy notes it is up to the parents to monitor their kids' access to materials and computers at the library.

The committee recommendation to approve the above policies as in the board packet carried with unanimous approval.

- Westside Project Committee – Jade Hart, Committee Chair
 - **Action:** Foundation Capital Campaign Request.
 - The library needs to formally request the capital campaign amount from the Library Foundation in order to move forward with the Westside Library project. The Library would like to ask for a \$10 million capital campaign for a \$25 million project. Ms. Tyler notes that the Foundation Board and their financial feasibility study are supportive of the requested amount.
 - Ms. Casey asked if the project has a timeline yet. Upcoming meetings will better inform us of the timeline but we anticipate the campaign's quiet phase to possibly start in January.
 - Ms. Hepworth agreed that the \$10 million request feels appropriate and responsible with the planning and information available.

The committee recommendation to approve the \$10 million capital campaign request from the Library Foundation carried with unanimous approval.

H. Library Director's Report.

- It has been a huge month for the library with County and City ARPA allocations, and winning the Jerry Kline Community Impact Prize. Ms. Schmidt has received so many amazing compliments and kudos from the board, community partners, and national recognition from library affiliated organizations. To celebrate, we hosted a party at the Quarter Barrel with support from the Library Foundation. Ms. Schmidt and Mary Beth McGuire were invited to present at the Library Director's Summit in early December. The library will also be honored at the American Library Association's winter conference, LibLearnX. We will send 10 people to celebrate and learn.
- Ms. Schmidt showed two light replacement options for the downtown library following the fire. She'd like trustee feedback for the concepts and noted that price may be the deciding factor as we're still awaiting confirmation of how much insurance will pay. The former light has been discontinued. Ms. McDermott noted that the light was not just a fixture but a distinctive statement piece. The general consensus was that trustees are fine with either choice.

I. Old Business

- There being no old business, the meeting continued.

J. New Business

- There being no new business, the meeting continued.

K. Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:17 pm.

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, December 1, 2022, at 4 pm in the Conference Room, Downtown Library