

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Cedar Rapids Public Library**  
**Board of Trustees**  
**March 4, 2021**

**Board members in attendance:** [President] Jade Hart, [Vice President] Clint Twedt-Ball, Monica Challenger, Mary Sharp, Randy Ramlo, Susie McDermott, Rafael Jacobo, Matt Wilding

**Absent:** Hassan Selim

**Staff in attendance:** [Library Director] Dara Schmidt, Patrick Duggan, Amber McNamara, Erin Horst, Jessica Link, Todd Simonson, Jessica Musil

**Others:** Charity Tyler, Executive Director, Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation; Libby Slappey, President, Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library

A. Call to Order

- Ms. Hart called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm.
- This electronic meeting of the Library Board of Trustees is being held because meeting in person is impossible and impractical due to concerns for the health and safety for Library trustees, staff, and community members presented by COVID-19. An electronic meeting is allowed by Iowa Code Section 21.8 and Governor Reynolds proclamations of emergency disaster. All trustees and staff are joining from home. This meeting is also live on the Library's Facebook page.

B. Consent Agenda – **Action**

- Minutes: Feb. 4, 2021

*Ms. Sharp motioned to accept the consent agenda. Mr. Ramlo seconded. The motion carried with unanimous approval.*

C. Public Comments and Communications

- There being none, the meeting continued.

D. Foundation Report – Charity Tyler

- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) has exceeded 6500 enrolled children, which serves 62% of eligible children. The program will be supported by a new fundraiser called Rooted in Reading – that will support one enrolled child for a year and gives the donor three native Iowa sapling trees.
- The Foundation announced it has received a large bequest. Ms. Nadine Sandberg, died in May 2020 and left her estate in excess of \$1 million solely to the Library. An ad hoc committee has formed with Library trustees, Foundation leadership, Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Tyler. The committee has identified the west side of Cedar Rapids as area of importance. Ladd Library, as a rental property, is not a permanent solution. The Library will work closely with the Foundation, as well as the City of Cedar Rapids and Community Development, to conduct a feasibility study for what's possible. This gift is a surprise and beyond transformational, and the Library will honor this gift but first must take the time and effort to see what's possible. The study results will come to the Library and Foundation's respective boards. Ms. Schmidt noted that the committee is in the very early stages of a longer process. A press release will be shared in the coming days. Mr. Ramlo asked if the Library was communicating with the City. The Library has been in communication with City partners from the beginning – the City will be an important partner to honor the gift to its full extent. Ms. Hart lauded Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Tyler for their early ground work and careful planning with partners so we can maximize the gift's intent for our community. Ms. Sharp asked what we know about Ms. Sandberg's life. At this time, we are hoping to learn more and have asked her estate trustees for a biography, which will be shared.

E. Friends of the Library Report – Libby Slappey

- The Friends are hopeful to host sales again with the Farmers Market, Saturday sales in the Library, and with the big Fall sale.
- Book donations have not slowed down. The Friends changed their process - picking up and quarantining materials before they are added to the sorting center.
- The Friends have embarked on the sustainable shelves program, which allows for the resale of books or recycling, to help reduce inventory. Ms. Slappey expressed her personal thanks to trustee Monica Challenger and her kids who have been scanning books for inclusion in the program.

F. Board Education: Fine Free Initial Report – Dara Schmidt and Erin Horst

- As we transitioned to fine free services, we intended to collect data to track patron behavior changes. However, in that time, we experienced a pandemic and derecho which could be catalysts for changed behavior and we can't necessarily attribute change due to fine free because libraries have closed. Ms. Schmidt noted staff is providing information in the best way we can but not in the way we'd like to or as asked for by the Board.
- Ms. Horst explained that overall overdue materials account for 9% of checked out materials. Since 2017, the percentage overdue has been decreasing. Most overdue materials are returned within the first one to seven days past the due date. However, it has been difficult to establish trends due to fluctuating services levels in the past year.
- Lost items for fiscal year 20 are at the lowest levels of the last four years. With the new circulation model and fine free guidelines, a majority of patrons will return books that have gone into lost status, which notifies the patron that they will be charged for the replacement, soon after receiving the notice. Materials are being recovered have increased compared to pre-pandemic numbers, and this avoids sending the patron's account to collections.
- Mr. Jacobo asked how the collections process works. Ms. Schmidt explained that we use Unique Collections, which is a library specific collection agency that uses different approaches than other agencies. The ultimate goal is to return the materials as it is more cost effective versus having a patron pay for the item because it takes staff time and effort to replace the item. This does not impact a person's credit report or score based on the outcome of a 2018 class action lawsuit. For patrons in collection status in amounts over \$40, they can't check out physical items. Previously, we rescinded computer access but there is no risk of loss or theft for computer use or digital materials access.
- Ms. Sharp asked if the fine free model has impacted revenue. At this time, it is hard to tell. Due to the pandemic, overall revenue and expenditures are down in relatively the same amount. At this time, removing fines has not impacted us and Ms. Schmidt expects it may take a few years to fully understand the fiscal impact as 2020 has not been a good indicator.
- Ms. Schmidt would like to continue regular reports on how fine free has impacted our library and community. Through anecdotal evidence, we believe that the change has had a positive impact on the community. As time goes on, we hope to have more data to support this.

G. Library Board Committee Reports

- Finance Committee – Randy Ramlo, Committee Chair
  - Mr. Ramlo reviewed Ms. Schmidt's Finance Memo and January 2021's financial statement.
  - Ms. Schmidt reminded the board about the annual refresh savings, which is on the Finance Memo. Each year, the City calculates 'refresh savings': a calculation of open positions and the cost savings for those open positions over a series of months. This savings goes back into the City's General Fund. This year, the City calculated a higher refresh savings of \$140,000 instead of \$90,000 due to \$89,000 rolled over from last fiscal year. Our total refresh savings was approximately

\$50,700. Refresh savings can help with budget amendments across the City toward the end of the fiscal year.

- Otherwise, there is nothing out of the ordinary for this point of the fiscal year.
- Personnel and Policy Committee – Clint Twedt-Ball, Committee Chair
  - There being no report, the meeting continued.
- Advocacy Committee – Mary Sharp, Committee Chair
  - Ms. Sharp reported that in April, we celebrate National Library Week. This is an opportunity for trustees to recognize library staff. More information will be forthcoming on cards from trustees to employees, thanking them for their work.

#### H. Library Director's Report

- Ms. Schmidt shared that two proposed bills in the State House, which would have changed library operations, are not coming out of committee. She also reminded trustees that the Advocacy Committee is 'on call' for advocacy efforts locally and at the state level. Ms. Schmidt is also involved at the Iowa Library Association (ILA), which is also prepared to lobby for libraries. Ms. Schmidt will share advocacy efforts as needed.
- Alburnett, which contracts with the Metro Library Network, is considering a contract with Center Point Library instead. A contract allows a city or town to offer library services from another city or town without having a library itself. However, there is no standardization of rates in the state of Iowa, which is at the center of Alburnett's concern. We currently contract with Alburnett and Robins and ask their cities to pay a fair portion of what our citizens pay for services. Alburnett is trying to decide if it worth the money to pay the contracting fees. If Alburnett choses to cancel the contract, the MLN directors will ask their respective boards to decline services through library reciprocity to Alburnett citizens, similar to Palo. It's not fair to our community to allow another community to pay significantly less and have full privileges, or to then use the state's reciprocity system to bypass the contract and receive service. Alburnett is discussing this as a community and has offered Center Point Public Library a rate for service. All MLN partners are in alignment. Ms. Schmidt has offered to the State Library to form a committee and develop a system for consistent contracts to avoid similar issues.
- The Library has expanded services about a month ago. Tax season has started, which has slightly increased traffic, and our computer use has increased. Community conditions are looking good at this time. Internally, the senior leadership team is discussing continuing to expand services safely. We feel like in-person programming and meeting room use/large gatherings are not realistic until vaccines are readily available to all adults.
- Dr. Seuss Enterprises decided to halt publication of six books that they determined contained racist depictions. As a library, we won't speak to a private company's decision. We own five of the six titles, which were all checked out prior to the controversy. We have a clear collection and weeding policy, and based on our criteria, it is possible they will be weeded due to condition or removed to make room for new materials. The Library is aware that the books in question are fetching high prices on the Internet but this is not a good reason to pull the books from circulation.
- At next month's meeting, Ms. Schmidt, Ms. Tyler, and Ms. Slappey will discuss a consultant's report on how the three organizations – Library, Foundation and Friends – can better align priorities in service to the Library and community.
- Multiple departments are actively planning the Community Cultural Celebration and Expo throughout the last full week of March. This year, we will host a variety of virtual events to celebrate community diversity with a specific event or celebration each day of the week. One major project is to collect family recipes for a community cookbook. Trustees are encouraged to submit to the online form. Events on the last full week of March.
- Ms. Hart asked how the chat service usage is doing. Ms. Schmidt reported that usage continues to increase. We have also offered in-building remote help for patrons on the public computers. The product will also allow remote technology help for a patron in their

home. All remote help is requested by staff and approved by the patron. CARES Act funds through the State Library started this service. Our public service team do this work.

- The Technology to Go van is wrapped. Soon, its ramp and shelving will be installed. We are excited to offer offsite programming this summer.
  - Ms. Sharp asked if the 72-hour materials quarantine was still in place. At this time, yes. However, we're considering reducing the quarantine to 24 hours in conjunction with switching the ILS system in June/July. Studies continue to show that a 24 hour quarantine is sufficient to significantly reduce the spread of COVID from materials.
- 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 5:13 pm

**The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, April 1, 2021, at 4 pm, via Zoom.**