

Meeting Minutes
Cedar Rapids Public Library
Board of Trustees
March 6, 2025

Board members in attendance: [President] Monica Challenger, [Vice President] Jeremy Elges, Chris Casey, Jade Hart, Susie McDermott, Ana McClain, Elisabeth Hepworth (in person); Hassan Selim, Rafael Jacobo (via Zoom)

Staff in attendance: Dara Schmidt, Jessica Musil, Kevin Delecki, Erin Horst, Amber McNamara (in person); Patrick Duggan (via Zoom)

Others: Charity Tyler, Executive Director, Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation (in person); Libby Slappey, President, Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library (via Zoom)

- A. Call to Order
 - Ms. Challenger called the meeting to order at 4 pm.
- B. Consent Agenda – **Action**
 - Minutes: February 6, 2025

Ms. Hart moved to accept the consent agenda. Ms. McClain 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 reported. The Foundation continues to work hard on the capital campaign as well as planning the annual fundraiser, Literary Vines, which is on April 18. Library Lager will be canned ahead of the launch on April 9. Invitations to campaign donors will be emailed next week for this event.
 - Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Tyler visited Alliant Energy as part of their gong tour. It turned into another opportunity to receive support. Alliant committed to a sponsorship opportunity at Literary Vines while being celebrated for their contributions for the Westside Library project. The tour has been going well and the excitement with staff has been infectious – staff have loved participating.
- E. Friends of the Library Report – Libby Slappey
 - Ms. Slappey reported. She pulled together statistics on the continuing success story of the donated railroad books that the Friends put for sale on Amazon. Over the last three months, the Friends has sold 37 books to 35 individual buyers that live all over the country.

Mr. Elges joined the meeting at 4:08 pm

- Pricing is based on books available elsewhere on Amazon to stay competitive. Books sold ranging from \$10 to 150 each for a total profit of \$1,227, with more books still available to purchase. The Friends will highlight the donation and sales in the upcoming Spring newsletter.
- F. Board Education: State Legislative Process – Amber McNamara
 - Ms. McNamara reported on the 2025 legislative session process. Tomorrow is the first funnel date for the session, which marks a deadline for legislative action. Bills must be voted out of the House or Senate to be debated beyond this date. Some bills are exemptions to this, such as those that are budget related. The next funnel date is April 4, which behaves similarly to the first funnel date. If a bill is tabled, it can continue through the funnel. The last day of the session is May 2, which is the 110th day of the session; though lawmakers may continue working if necessary.

- The library is watching bills that impact libraries and posting information on our website and sharing via email advocacy alerts. Ms. Schmidt noted we're watching companion bills that will make it through the first funnel: restrict libraries' ability to join professional organizations and removal of obscenity exemptions for public libraries. A bill limiting materials' purchases that contain a sex act appears will not move past the first funnel.
- Ms. McNamara noted that state lawmakers don't seem to have the same standard for announcing committee dates and agendas. Governing boards are required to post agendas no less than 24 hours in advance and action items have to be on the agenda. This does not appear to be true for the legislative process. Subcommittees are posted ahead of time, usually 24 hours in advance, but the full committee can post agendas on the same day. In addition, it doesn't have to be on the actual agenda – it can state: Any other bills to be brought forward. The public is allowed to speak at a subcommittee meeting and not at a full committee hearing.
- Ms. Casey noted that trustees and other library supporters have about four weeks to contact lawmakers regarding these bills that could impact libraries' funding and access to materials.

G. Library Board Committee Reports

- Advocacy Committee – Elisabeth Hepworth, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Hepworth reported. The current legislative session is a bit component of the committee's efforts. As it was primarily discussed in Board Education, Ms. Hepworth wanted to discuss the success of the Corridor Libraries Staff Day. The event was a great way to make community connections with other libraries within the Linn and Johnson counties, and hosted by Cedar Rapids. Ms. Hepworth felt it was a point of pride for our library. She believes now is a good time for libraries to support each other and learn together in order to impact our communities. She shared kudos to Jessica Musil for her efforts to organize the event – she heard many positive things about the day. Ms. Casey asked about feedback from staff. Ms. Schmidt shared that we have only heard good things and it was amazing to see our staff interact with the other libraries. The other libraries and their staff also had great feedback. Ms. Casey shared a story about how it was clear that staff were excited to learn and talk with each other. Ms. Hepworth loved the keynote, Shola Richards, for his presentation. He was well received across the library professionals and City staff alike. Ms. Challenger wanted to personally thank Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Musil for their effort and pulling together a wonderful staff day.
- Building Committee – Jade Hart, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Hart reported. The Westside Library projects continues to progress now that the weather is warming up. She showed an aerial photo of the building site. In it, you can see the enclosed basement and concrete walls and footings that will eventually be the adult collection and meeting room sides. The basement is roughly the center of the building. Contractors continue to find some natural springs throughout the land, which needs mitigation. It is an inconvenience but it is not a concern to the overall project's cost and timeline.
 - Progress continues with the Urban Plaza refresh at the downtown library. We've gone back and forth with the contractor, and hope to share a drawing soon. Ms. Casey asked about a general timeline and completion. Ms. Schmidt hopes it'll be complete in the fall.
- Finance Committee – Chris Casey, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Casey reported on the January 2025 financials. We're seven months into the fiscal year. Our expenses and revenues are evening out as we had anticipated with no concerns at this time. At the last meeting, the board approved the budget, and since then, City Council also approved the budget. The City has also set aside \$300,000 to repair the downtown library's roof.

- **Action:** Purchase Order and Payment Approval - new chairs for the downtown library Payment in the amount of \$55,207.18 to Pigott. The soft seating at the downtown library needs replacement. The quote will replace all the furniture in most areas of the library, except children's and young adult. The cost to replace versus re-upholster was within \$5,000 and replacement adds a warranty.

The committee recommendation to accept the Pigott quote for new chairs at the downtown library for \$55,207.18 as presented in the packet carried with unanimous approval.

- Personnel and Policy Committee – Susie McDermott, Committee Chair
 - Ms. McDermott noted that the committee did not meet and does not have any business for the full board.

H. Library Director's Report

- Ms. Schmidt reported. February was busy with preparations for staff day and providing public comment at the state legislative session. Her goal is to bring back strategic planning conversations with the board. Staff sessions are now done. We're still on track to write a plan in the spring. The goal is to schedule conversations over the next four to six weeks.
- During his visit, Shola Richards shared with Ms. Schmidt that he noticed the board of trustees' engagement and support of the library and staff. He spoke at the Public Library Association (PLA) conference in 2024 and he's been at more libraries since then. He feels like Cedar Rapids has great trustees, and Ms. Schmidt wanted to share that their efforts are noticed.
- This year, we had the most successful winter reading challenge ever. Two City Council members shared a post promoting the challenge on their respective social media and that they were participating. It resulted in a big sign-up bump over the next 48 hours. Ms. Schmidt shared with them the impact of their posts and thanked them. Both wrote back to thank the library. It's truly amazing that we have support from City Council members. Along that same vein, it's been fun to meet with campaign donors – it's also a long-term advocacy effort. While things seem heightened, Ms. Schmidt is looking for ways to show libraries are not the enemy.
- In April, Ms. Schmidt has the opportunity to lobby in Washington, DC and will miss the next board meeting. Ms. Hepworth loves to use the *OPEN+* magazine in advocacy conversations as it's a great resource to leave with people and share what the library does in our community. Ms. Hart shared a story about how someone in her hometown posted a question on social media about the relevance in libraries today and he received hundreds of posts, pushing back.

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 4:50 pm.

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, April 3, 2025, at 4 pm in the Conference Room, Downtown Library