

Meeting Minutes
Cedar Rapids Public Library
Board of Trustees
April 3, 2025

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

Staff in attendance: Amber McNamara, Jessica Musil, Kevin Delecki, Erin Horst, Todd Simonson, Meredith Crawford, Wes Shirley (in person); Patrick Duggan (via Zoom)

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

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

Ms. McClain moved to accept the consent agenda. Ms. Hepworth 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 Westside Library capital campaign has brought in a little over \$7.5 million toward the final goal. Ms. Tyler is working with OPN to develop internal donor recognition including the donor wall. The team continues to have conversations with major gift donors and complete grant applications. She hopes to close out the campaign by the end of the fiscal year.
 - Next week, the Foundation is hosting a donor appreciation event in conjunction with Lion Bridge. Attendees can try the limited brew Library Lager as well as have other drinks and pizza. Proceeds will go toward the Westside Library. Library Lager is available in limited stores and also at Lion Bridge.

M.s Hart joined at 4:06 pm.

- The annual Literary Vines fundraising event on Friday, April 18 is Alice in Wonderland themed. Both maker rooms will be open for demonstrations as well as virtual reality experiences. Images of the Westside Library will be on display in Whipple Auditorium. The Foundation and library are looking forward to another successful event. Upcoming, they will host a Van Vechten Society Brunch in the fall and they are planning a Wise Women Circle event.
- The Foundation is shifting to donor stewardship in order for campaign donors to understand progress on the new library building project. In addition, there are more requests for the Foundation and Library to speak about the project at various community events now that we're moving into spring and summer.
- E. Friends of the Library Report – Libby Slappey
 - Ms. Slappey reported. The Friends will sell books at Lion Bridge during Houbly Days on Saturday. This will be the first sale during the community event and Ms. Slappey hopes for good weather so the sale can happen outside.
 - Friends are preparing for their big spring sale from Friday, April 11 to Sunday, April 13 at the downtown library. Volunteers are needed for setup shifts and during the sales days.

- The bi-annual Friends and Foundation newsletter will be mailed soon. The newsletter will feature the railroad book donation and its impact, as well as celebrating Francis Woods, an active Friends volunteer who just celebrated her 100th birthday.
- F. Board Education: Urban Libraries Council Teen Consortium Update – Meredith Crawford
- Community Engagement Librarian Meredith Crawford presented an update on the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) Teen Consortium project that started in 2021. Following COVID and working to get programming running again, Ms. Crawford and another staff member provided services to teens in juvenile detention. This work was chosen as a presentation topic at the Public Library Association (PLA) conference in 2022. After the presentation, ULC invited our library, as one of 14, to target youth opportunities for those at risk of incarceration. Prior to the project start, Ms. Crawford spent two days to learn from experts and practitioners on the best approach to assist teens. Regular project support check-ins were also scheduled.
 - The library's first approach was to go to the target population, focusing on the SW side of Cedar Rapids based on criteria, and also address family needs. A portion of the grant money was used to employ an intern who fit the target population as well as use their firsthand knowledge to help plan and benefit others. The plan included expanding summer 2024 programs to specific sites, providing food, a special guest, books, and a STEM activity. While the library was in the right place, the program didn't serve the intended target, and there were issues with the supported employment.
 - Following last summer, the grant participants met again and learned from each other and experts to improve their next approach. This winter, Ms. Crawford connected with IowaBIG students to assist with this coming summer's programming directed toward at-risk youth. Under the guidance of their school mentor, the students are gathering data on social capital and resources and analyzing responses. The plan is to offer three large-scale events this summer and engaging local organizations to draw in teens, such as athletes, music, and art. Although funding has been for a short-term project, Ms. Crawford is thinking of how to continue working with youth long after the grant ends.
 - Ms. Crawford was asked to speak about the project at the National Youth Employment Coalition's 2025 Youth Advisory Council in Minneapolis. While there, she'll also have the opportunity to speak with the other libraries as part of this larger ULC project.
 - Ms. Challenger appreciated that the project uses data and data analysis with the students as it's an important employment skill.
- G. Library Board Committee Reports
- Advocacy Committee – Elisabeth Hepworth, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Hepworth reported. There has been a lot happening at both the state and federal levels, include the executive order to eliminate the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The library's advocacy website has information on the core functions of IMLS and funding. Ultimately, without IMLS, states cannot provide the funding which makes up the Enrich Iowa reimbursement program.
 - We had also been watching two house files, which advanced past the first funnel but no action has been taken since. Tomorrow is the end of the second funnel and the legislature is adjourned until Monday. For now, it appears they are off the floor calendar and dead for the session; they may return next year. Items can come back before the session ends on May 2 if money is involved. Ms. Hepworth encouraged anyone to continue discussing concerns with lawmakers. Mr. Elges noted these are not likely to be tacked on to other bills and we'll keep up the fight. Ms. Hart thanked the committee for the great communication to keep people informed through different channels.
 - Ms. McNamara also noted that IMLS funding has stopped and staff were put on leave on Monday. There are a lot of unknowns at this time and we will share more information and talking points for those who wish to advocate. In addition,

Ms. McNamara has been in conversation with other corridor libraries and feel confident libraries will continue as best as possible with the least impact.

- Building Committee – Jade Hart, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Musil noted that the committee will meet with Fehr Graham to review the design so far and answer questions about the Urban Plaza. The pre-bid meeting has been scheduled for the downtown library roof replacement project.
- Finance Committee – Chris Casey, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Casey reported on the February 2025 financials. We do not have anything required an action item at this meeting but Ms. Casey anticipates a budget amendment at the May meeting. Money will move from Operations, our 151 account and Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), which is in our 316 account. Ms. Casey referred the board to the Finance Memo that details the switches.
 - First, we're moving money into different categories within 151 to cover the \$20,000 towards the Facilities Manager's salary for his time to provide Project Management services for the Westside Library project.
 - In 316, we'll see money move into this account to help pay for the roof replacement, which is paid for by the City. Money placed in 316 allows us to roll over money between the fiscal years as the project may have to occur between FY25 and FY26. The Urban Plaza refresh project will be paid for by the Library Foundation so it won't be reflected in the budget.
 - In addition, the City will move money between 151 and 316 to pay for digital materials this fiscal year. The City hired a new bond attorney and an updated opinion states digital material can't be paid for with bonding. That amount will be determined this month.
- Personnel and Policy Committee – Susie McDermott, Committee Chair
 - Ms. McDermott reported. The City is making changes into their employee evaluation process. Instead of an annual review, they are moving to a Continuous Improvement model where employees would have goals to work on throughout the year but have formal quarterly check-ins to discuss goals, needs, and issues with their supervisor. The committee is considering this change for the library director evaluation as well.
 - A discussion was held. Ms. Challenger believes it is a good idea as it provides several opportunities to address issues and needs throughout the year. Ms. McClain has concerns that an on-going may be less formal. Mr. Elges noted there would be required check-ins to prevent informal discussions. He also shared that evaluations are not merit-based as raises are determined in the budget. Already, many board members in regular committees have monthly meetings with open and regular communication with the director. The Personnel and Policy Committee would enforce the formal check-in structure. Ms. Hepworth agrees that it makes sense, especially with Ms. Schmidt's presence in the regular committee meetings. She'd like to see a structure that allows for concerns to be escalated as they come up. Ms. Challenger said the proposed structure would give the full board an opportunity to provide input during the quarterly reviews Ms. Hepworth asked if this was adopted, would it be used for successive directors. Ms. McDermott said yes, it would. Mr. Elges shared that nothing is formalized yet but the committee wanted a direction from the full board before writing out the process. Ms. McClain asked if this process would be more work on the evaluators. Both Mr. Elges and Ms. McDermott do not believe it will add a lot more work and don't intend to make it a cumbersome process.
 - The board seems to agree about the proposed process. The committee will discuss more and bring a formal written structure. Mr. Elges thanked everyone for the questions and feedback.

H. Library Director's Report

- Ms. McNamara reported for Ms. Schmidt who is in Washington, DC, advocating for libraries as a guest of the American Library Association (ALA).
 - National Library Week is April 6 through April 12. This year, our general focus is saying thank you. Staff will receive a thank you gift from the library, which was generously funded by the Foundation. Stations will be setup in both locations, allowing the community to write notes, thanking staff. We are also sending thank you cards to local representatives, recognizing them for their support of libraries. They will also receive a library lapel pin. The Community Relations team has planned social media posts throughout the week to share stories from advocates. We have some themed days for posts as well including Monday: Right to Read Day; Tuesday: National Library Workers Day; and Thursday: Take Action for Libraries Day. Other highlights will include the Foundation and their Library Lager and Literary Vines events and the Friends along with their Book Sale.
- 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, May 1, 2025, at 4 pm in the Conference Room, Downtown Library