

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Cedar Rapids Public Library**  
**Board of Trustees**  
**May 1, 2025**

**Board members in attendance:** [President] Monica Challenger, Susie McDermott, Jade Hart, Elisabeth Hepworth (in person); Hassan Selim (via Zoom)

**Board members unable to attend:** [Vice President] Jeremy Elges, Chris Casey, Rafael Jacobo, Ana McClain

**Staff in attendance:** Dara Schmidt, Amber McNamara, Jessica Musil, Kevin Delecki (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 4:03 pm.
- B. Consent Agenda – **Action**
  - Minutes: April 3, 2025  
*Ms. Hart 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. Foundation and Library staff have been busy, just a few weeks following the Literary Vines event. This has been the most successful event so far, raising over \$20,000. They solve more tickets and had more attendees than past events.
  - For those interested in the Library Lager, all six-packs are sold out. Kegs are available at Benz and people can still try it at Lion Bridge.
  - The Foundation is set to close on the remaining parcel, adjacent to the Westside Library, at the end of May. In addition, the goal is to close the campaign at the end of this fiscal year is still on track.
  - The Foundation has other events planned for this fall including the return of the Back to School social on August 9, celebrating Dolly Parton's Imagination Library; the Van Vechten Society brunch on September 7; and a donor event to sign a beam for the new Westside Library. The open house-style event will take place on Tuesday, May 20 from 4:30-6:30 pm. Invitations will be sent to donors and library staff in the next week.
- E. Friends of the Library Report – Libby Slappey
  - Ms. Slappey reported. Last month's Spring Book Sale was successful, earning over \$12,000. The event was supported by volunteers and library staff. Ms. Slappey expressed appreciation for library staff, for their help as well as an interaction she witnessed while setting up for the book sale: a compassionate exchange with a sleeping individual.
  - She also encouraged everyone to watch *Free for All: The Public Library*, which aired on PBS and will be on again on Saturday, May 3. Ms. Slappey noted it was a great documentary on how public libraries shape our nation and are a beloved sanctuary.
- F. Board Education: Summer Reading Challenge – Kevin Delecki
  - Programming Manager Kevin Delecki shared about the 2025 Summer Reading Challenge, which begins June 7. The reading challenge is designed for learners of all ages, focusing on literacy, especially for students in the summer months. The goal is to read as much as possible, though the challenge is considered complete after reading 600 minutes.

- This year is slightly different based on feedback from schools, partners, patrons and staff. We have found more ways to participate, increased the literacy focus, simplified participation, and added more opportunities to engage in the community. In addition, we're looking at a changing media landscape – how people get their information.
- Susie: an amazing and incredible amount of work, thank you. Outreach is expanding to new park locations with multiple short park visits in one day as well as classroom and organization participation. The Library will promote its Maker Space by creating prizes on the technology available to patrons.
- In order to participate, patrons will get a reading log or register through Beanstack. They can track their reading minutes. At 300 minutes, participants will get a free book; at 600 minutes, they will get a small prize and be entered into grand prize drawings. Patrons can log their minutes in Beanstack or drop off reading logs.
- Over the summer, the programming team will provide outreach in parks using the Mobile Technology van, at camps and daycares, or the Juvenile Detention Center; special guests will do large performances on Mondays along with weekly programs; offer Maker Space appointments; and library staff will attend fairs and festivals to connect with readers.
- Mr. Delecki gave a preview of the promotional items, such as reading logs and postcards for different audiences. The Community Relations team will also create bookmarks, flyers, and digital ads through print and social medias.
- Ms. Hepworth asked if any collaborations with other libraries for summer reading following the Corridor Libraries Staff Day. At the time staff day occurred, Cedar Rapids had a bulk of the planning for this summer complete. However, Mr. Delecki noted that his team communicates with other area libraries about programming in general.
- Ms. Challenger asked about adding new park locations, such as Noelridge, how does this work for staffing? The Programming Team is now visiting six parks instead of four. The team wants to go to high impact areas – walkable parks with good amenities in neighborhoods of need. The two new park visits won't replace others but time spent there will be shorter to reach more people. Ms. Schmidt noted that prioritizing staff time, resources, and outreach opportunities will be essential as we open the new Westside Library while thinking about potential budget restrictions and staffing levels.

#### G. Library Board Committee Reports

- Advocacy Committee – Elisabeth Hepworth, Committee Chair
  - Ms. Hepworth reported. We are through most of the state level legislative issues for the current session, as it should close tomorrow. She praised the Literary Vines event's success and is looking forward to more opportunities to highlight the Westside Library with the beam signing event.
- Building Committee – Jade Hart, Committee Chair
  - Ms. Hart reported. A new dividing wall was installed in Beems Auditorium. The new wall will be similar to the wall for the Westside Library. The walls are covered in vinyl for improved cleaning and has improved sound proofing. New chairs will be installed at the downtown library on May 9.
  - The committee met with Fehr Graham at the end of April to continue discussions for the Urban Plaza refresh. It is taking longer than we thought but it's coming along. We don't have a revised timeline yet.
  - On May 15, we're meeting with OPN to start discussions on furniture, fixtures, and equipment for the Westside Library.
- Finance Committee – Chris Casey, Committee Chair
  - Ms. Hepworth reported for Ms. Casey on the March 2025 financials. We are 75% of the way through the fiscal year. We have collected 78% of revenues with 79% of expenses spent. There are no concerns but the board will vote on a budget amendment for this fiscal year. Ms. Hepworth shared that the City's Finance Director, Abhi Deshpande, joined this month's Finance Committee meeting and

had a great conversation with everyone about how City finances and his personal connection to libraries.

- **Action:** Budget Amendment for FY25. Ms. Schmidt shared that historically, the board has not approved budget amendments. However, the Finance Committee feels that amendments may become more regular – we’re expecting an amendment for FY26 – and wishes for the full board to understand and approve amendments.

Ms. Schmidt provided an overview of changes to the FY25 budget, as noted in the Finance memo. She’d like the board to approve the changes in the Finance memo with an understanding that charges will be moved from bonding (account 316) to operations (151) based on a new interpretation by the City’s new bond attorney for digital materials.

The Regular Employees budget will be increased by \$32,887.77 due to a reallocation, moving \$52,887.77 from External Contracted Labor. The change allows the library to add more full-time staff versus hiring part-time staff. The remaining \$20,000 from External Contracted Labor was transferred to City Facilities for labor to support project management of the Westside Library project. Temporary/Seasonal Employees was reduced by \$15,000 in response to challenges to the overall City budget and a request to cut costs.

With the changes in bond interpretations, we will receive \$200,000 in Books and Subscriptions to cover expenses we’ve been paying throughout the fiscal year. This isn’t additional money but rather enough to cover the full \$500,000 Books and Subscriptions budget we had anticipated.

The last two changes are reducing intra-departmental charges for City Finance and IT services by \$89,775 and \$6,542.59, respectively. The City is no longer using this method to charge departments for services. The money will not be reallocated to other uses.

*The committee recommendation to accept the Budget Amendment for FY25 as noted in the Finance memo passed with unanimous approval.*

Ms. Schmidt also noted that the bids came back for the downtown roof replacement. They were significantly under budget that we can replace all four roofs instead of one. The costs will be covered in the City’s budget.

- Personnel and Policy Committee – Susie McDermott, Committee Chair
  - Ms. McDermott reported. The committee did not have any policies to discuss at this meeting. However, they did discuss further the new Continuous Feedback model for the library director’s review. The committee will move forward with using this new method for Ms. Schmidt’s goals.
  - Ms. Schmidt noted that at the next meeting, the committee will bring a draft of the new mission and vision statements. Ms. Schmidt has been meeting with trustees to develop final language. Last week, the senior managers met to write a first draft of the strategic plan, which Ms. Schmidt hopes to show a draft at the next board meeting as well.

#### H. Library Director’s Report

- Last month, Ms. Schmidt went to Washington, DC, in a federal-level advocacy effort, paid for and organized by the American Library Association (ALA). She was joined by Sam Helmick from Iowa City Public Library and current ALA President. Ms. Schmidt met with staff from Senators Ernst and Grassley’s offices as well as Representatives Miller-Meeks and Hinson’s offices. Overall, the experiences and conversations were positive. The

politician's staff expressed their personal love of libraries and appreciation of libraries as civic and public spaces. Conversations will continue even though the trip ended. In addition, Ms. Schmidt will join advocacy efforts with the Urban Libraries Council in future calls with legislative leaders. At this time, the proposed federal budget does not eliminate IMLS' budget fully; instead it cuts the funding in half, which will severely reduce significant programs it offers. Ms. Schmidt will report back to the Advocacy Committee on the conversations with legislatures and develop talking points for those who wish to continue efforts at the federal level.

- Ms. Schmidt has been busy with building needs as well as the strategic plan. The final strategic initiative of the current plan – Create infrastructure to welcome new community members and provide access to community resources – will be reported on at the next meeting.
- In addition, Ms. Schmidt has attended several events with the Ms. Tyler from the Library Foundation to talk with Westside Library donors. It has been delightful to hear from the donors who are excited about the Westside project and also believe in the vision of this new building. It's been uplifting to talk to library supporters.

I. Old Business

- There being no old business, the meeting continued.

J. New Business

- **Action:** Contract Approval, Purchase Order, and Payment Approval – cost of subscription for circulation/cataloging software and services for the downtown and Ladd Libraries. First year payment in the amount of \$116,000 (\$540,000 total for five years) to Clarivate.
  - The Finance Committee has discussed this contract but the action item does not come from the committee. Following a Request for Proposal (RFP) process with the City's Purchasing department, a committee with Cedar Rapids, Marion, and Hiawatha public libraries staff recommended to remain with the Polaris software through Clarivate for the Metro Library Network's (MLN) circulation and cataloging software. The previous five-year contract was ending. We were able to get some new features for staff – the use for patrons will remain the same – and reduce our overall cost over the five-year period by about \$20,000.
  - The board is being asked to approve the overall contract for five-years of \$540,000 as well as the purchase order and payment for the first year for \$116,000. The contract will start July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2030. Next month, Ms. Schmidt will bring the MLN agreement that the three libraries will use this product and pay for the shared resources.

*Ms. Hart motioned to accept the five-year amount for \$540,000 as well as the first-year purchase order and payment for \$116,000 when the final contract is prepared. Ms.*

*Hepworth seconded. The action carried with unanimous approval.*

K. Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:25 pm.

**The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, June 5, 2025, at 4 pm in the Community Room, Ladd Library**