

## **OBERLIN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**December 9, 2021**

President Bruce Ente called to order the meeting at 5:03 p.m. Roll call: Marcia Peterson, Bethany Baker, Anita Lock, Megan Newson, and Bruce Ente were present. Meredith Gadsby was absent. Also present were Darren McDonough, Director, and Kristin Cioffi, Fiscal Officer. There was a well-attended public.

Baker moved, seconded by Peterson, to accept Resolution # R-21-12-1, approving the minutes of the November 11, 2021, regular meeting. All present voted in favor.

**MOTION PASSED**

### **FISCAL OFFICER'S REPORT**

Fiscal Officer Cioffi reviewed the November 2021 financial reports (Fund Status, Revenue Status, Appropriation Status, and Bank Reconciliation), reporting on PLF revenue, expenditure percentages, and the transfer of money from the General Fund to the Building Fund. Lock moved, seconded by Peterson, to accept Resolution # R-21-12-2, accepting the November 2021 Financial Reports. Roll call vote: Peterson, Baker, Lock, Newson, Ente, ALL AYES.

**MOTION PASSED**

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Director McDonough reported a pickup in patron traffic and meeting room usage. The library distributed 612 COVID-19 test kits in November. McDonough noted that the building was in good shape since landscapers trimmed trees and removed the ivy from the building. He also reported that workers resolved the problem with the sound in the community room, which was a hardware and software issue. The substantial carryover of funds would allow for some needed projects at the library. Lock asked if they could determine the cause of the leak in the. McDonough replied that it was still under investigation.

McDonough noted that The Bridge report was in the packet of information, pointing out the description of a new program on page two of the report called Northstar. Lock asked how long Northstar had been going on. McDonough replied that it was a brand-new program offered through OPLIN. Peterson noted a recent OLC newsletter mentioned the program.

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Ente commented that it was delightful to see so many members of the public at the meeting and to know of their interest in the library. Ente thanked everyone in attendance for coming.

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VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT none

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

### LIBRARY SERVICES

Lock moved, seconded by Newson to accept Resolution # R-21-12-3, approving the following holidays for 2022:

#### Holiday Closings:

- Saturday, January 1 – New Year's Day
- Monday, January 17 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Sunday, April 17 – Easter Sunday\*
- Monday, May 30 – Memorial Day
- Monday, June 20 – Juneteenth
- Monday, July 4 – Independence Day
- Monday, September 5 – Labor Day
- Thursday, November 24 – Thanksgiving Day
- Saturday, December 24 – Christmas Eve
- Sunday, December 25 – Christmas Day
- Monday, December 26 – Christmas Day observed

#### Floating Holidays:

- Monday, February 21 – President's Day
- Friday, November 11 – Veteran's Day
- Saturday, December 31 – New Year's Eve

\*Library closed with no staff earning holiday pay

All present voted in favor.

**MOTION PASSED**

Lock reported that the committee had a positive meeting with Library IQ via Zoom to discuss the technology needs assessment. Lock noted that Library IQ's proposal was in the packet. Lock moved, seconded by Peterson to accept Resolution # R-21-12-4, accepting the proposal for Technology Needs Assessment for Library Technology Services from Library IQ at a cost of \$16,200. Ente praised the staff of OPL for coming up with the strategy. Lock thanked Adult Services Team Leader Rebecca Wedge for researching Library IQ and contacting them. There was some discussion concerning the need for a Spanish language version of the survey. Roll call vote: Newson, Peterson, Lock, Baker, Ente, ALL AYES.

**MOTION PASSED**

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### PERSONNEL

Newson reported that the committee met with McDonough and Cioffi and discussed the 2022 Salary chart and giving employees a salary step increase. The 2022 chart reflected a 2.5 percent adjustment, and eligible employees would also receive a one-step increase. The committee moved and seconded to accept Resolution # R-21-21-5, approving the 2022 Salary Chart and giving all eligible employees a one-step increase effective the first pay in 2022 (December 26-2021). Roll call vote: Ente, Baker, Lock, Peterson, Newson, ALL AYES.

MOTION PASSED

Newson reported that the committee looked at the Fiscal Officer Evaluation form used at Amherst Public Library and revised it to be applicable for the Fiscal Officer position at Oberlin Public Library, noting the revised form was in the packet. Newson moved, seconded by Lock to accept Resolution # R-21-12-6, approving the Fiscal Officer Evaluation form and using the same evaluation process for the Fiscal Officer as was used for the Director. Roll call vote: Baker, Lock, Peterson, Newson, Ente, ALL AYES.

MOTION PASSED

Newson reported that the committee looked at the Director's job description and made a few additions. The revised Director's job description was in the packet with changes highlighted in yellow. The committee moved and seconded to accept Resolution # R-21-12-7, accepting the revised Director's job description. Roll call vote: Newson, Peterson, Lock, Baker, Ente, ALL AYES.

MOTION PASSED

Newson reported that the committee looked at the library's organizational chart and revised it to be more detailed, especially regarding the chain of command. The committee moved and seconded to accept Resolution # R-21-12-8, approving the revised Organizational chart and adding it to the Employee Handbook. Roll call vote: Peterson, Lock, Baker, Ente, Newson, ALL AYES.

MOTION PASSED

Newson moved, seconded by Peterson to accept Resolution # R-21-12-9, approving a 5% wage increase for Fiscal Officer Cioffi effective the first pay of 2022. Roll call vote: Lock, Baker, Ente, Newson, Peterson, ALL AYES.

MOTION PASSED

OLD BUSINESS none

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### NEW BUSINESS

Baker commented that she would like to create an orientation process for new trustees. Baker noted that although McDonough and Cioffi met with her when she joined the Board and explained everything, a formal process to supplement explanations works better. Ente agreed. Baker and Peterson volunteered to start a draft orientation process document, with Lock volunteering to edit it. Baker noted that OLC's Trustee Workshop tailored to OPL would be helpful.

### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

David Ashenhurst commented that he hoped for the amendment of the President's report to reflect appropriately in the official minutes the resignation of Patrick Prosser. He commented that the timetable referenced in The Bridge discussions was received by McDonough on October 26 as a product of the executive session of October 21 held to discuss the employment of a public employee. Ashenhurst commented that McDonough received the process of evaluating the Director on October 26 and it was a product of the same executive session held to discuss the employment of a public employee. Ashenhurst went on to say that the Fiscal Officer evaluation form, just adopted in public session, corresponds to the Director's evaluation form, created during the November 1 executive session to discuss the employment of a public employee. The Fiscal Officer received the Director's evaluation form on November 8 and added it to the minutes. Ashenhurst commented that an executive session to discuss the employment of a public employee held on November 11 included the lengthy discussion on the implementation of the Director's evaluation form. The discussion on the evaluation continued during a second meeting of the Personnel Committee with McDonough on around November 23, but not mentioned during this month's extensive report of the Personnel Committee.

Dorothy Luciano commented that she had sent a letter to the Board in response to the fake news of McDonough's firing, noting that there would be less fake news if the Board were more open. Luciano commented that McDonough runs a fantastic library with a fantastic staff and collection. Luciano noted that McDonough is the engine that runs and created such a jewel of a library. Luciano commented that many people come from outside of the county to visit the library.

Tony Wilgus read the following prepared statement:

“Having been a member of the Oberlin Community since 2009 and having been an avid devotee and user of the Oberlin Public Library, I would like to express my support for the performance of the Director Mr. Darren

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McDonough. Within the larger community, there is a widespread admiration for the accomplishments of the director among those who not only frequent the library on a regular basis but among those who are aware of the library as one of Oberlin's public jewels.

As an academician by profession and a long-time voracious reader who has frequented public and university libraries in Detroit, Chicago, Ann Arbor, and Findlay, OH with daughters and now grandchildren, I have tremendous admiration for Oberlin Public Library. Very early in my residence here, I noted that the library's holdings were so noteworthy and comprehensive that I approached the Director and indicated that 95% of the books that I requested were available and that those not on the shelves were immediately ordered or secured via inter-library loan. In response to my compliments, Director McDonough indicated that this effort requires a good deal of time which made perfect sense. I thanked him for his extraordinary work, indicating that the town of Oberlin was quite fortunate to have a library of this caliber.

Additionally, the staff at the public library is among the most welcoming that I have encountered over many years. Whether it's an open and pleasant demeanor in responding to questions, seeking holdings, or setting up a Kindle account, the personnel go out of their way to engage and assist the public. During Covid and its community impact (a library shutdown), I continued to put books on hold. Shortly thereafter, a staff member (Erin Shiba), called me and asked if it would be alright to drop off those books on my porch since she lived nearby. In my view, this orientation toward helpfulness is a reflection on the leadership within the library, viz., the Director. Additionally, the longevity of many library staff again manifests an orderly process under his direction. The outpouring of support on his behalf reflected in recent Board minutes is an indication of the respect that he has garnered from his staff.

Another example of the library's sensitivity to the community is the abundance of activity and programs for young people. From the youth collection and play area to the presence of college tutors for local students to children's story hour, the library is a gift to the entire family in this community. When my 3-year-old grandson walks in the doors and throws his arms up in the air and exclaims, 'T'S THE LIBERRY,' one immediately knows that this public library is doing many things right.

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In summary, I reiterate my solid support for the exemplary work of Mr. McDonough in maintaining a well-functioning and professional institution. He is responsible in no small part for this marvelous resource in our small community. Indeed, the quality of service the welcoming nature of staff, the holdings, and the multiplicity of programs for the entire family speak to an invaluable resource in our town.”

Kathy Carpenter commented that she was here because she was concerned that we could be losing our Director. Carpenter said that Darren had been here for seventeen years, with everything running smoothly. Over that time, she had never heard anything bad about the library. Carpenter commented her concern with a ninety-day evaluation period even though the library met the needs of the community. She noted that typically during review processes, a person is given a year before re-evaluation if anything is found wrong. Carpenter commented that she visits the library all the time, and the materials she wants are either at the library or placed on order. Carpenter commented that the library’s collection development, which McDonough is directly responsible for, is excellent. She noted the children’s collection is terrific and diverse, and she frequently uses its materials to supplement while tutoring. Carpenter commented that the staff is extremely happy and helpful, which is a direct reflection of its leadership. Carpenter commented that the Board should think about all the positive things the library has achieved under the direction of McDonough.

Youth Services Team Leader Amanda Guttman read the following:

“I respectfully request that the Board of Trustees consider the following when re-evaluating Director McDonough:

1. Over the course of Director McDonough's tenure, OPL has been listed as a Star Library numerous years on Library Journal's list of America's Star Libraries.
2. Page 9 of OPL Director Evaluation Form 2021 states: "It is unknown if he supervises collection development." Director McDonough is responsible for the collection development and maintenance of the Adult Fiction, Nonfiction, CDs, Audiobooks, and DVDs.
3. Page 11 of OPL Director Evaluation Form 2021 states: "Director McDonough has not been observed to assist in public areas, either within OPL or at other community settings." Director McDonough is one of the founders of Chalk walk along with a community member and the FAVA and AMAM Education Coordinators at that time. Annually, Director

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McDonough works with community members, local artists, businesses (Ginkgo Gallery - chalk for event), organizations (Oberlin Business Partnership), and schools (Children's workshop led by an Art Teacher) in order to plan and execute the event. Every year (except when it was cancelled due to pandemic), Director McDonough can be seen at a table with Mr. Shurr (community member) outside of the library handing out chalk and water. Most recently, Director McDonough could be seen at the Oberlin Heritage Center's Root Beer and Yesteryear event handing out popcorn. Director McDonough has and will fill in as needed in Circulation, Reference, Tech Services and Office Management.

4. Page 6 of OPL Director Evaluation Form 2021 states: "...he has led staff to believe that their performance is in question, rather than his." This is untrue. Director McDonough has not communicated anything to staff that would lead us to believe that our performance is in question.
5. Page 8 of OPL Director Evaluation Form 2021 states: "Even during Covid many other libraries have offered a wide range of virtual programming, but the Director has insisted that those services have not worked and will not work in Oberlin. I am skeptical about what sounds like an excuse for low expectations." When seeking feedback about virtual programs, staff and Director were all told by various people that this is not what they were looking for from the OPL. Is it "low expectations" to push for more from 4 front end staff working 6 days a week? Staff who are high risk, have young children at home, caring for elderly parents and/or struggling with severe mental health issues? Is that low expectations or a supervisor who knows his staff and knows when it is appropriate to push for more and when it is not?
6. 16 years of Boards and the City Council members who have appointed these Boards have supported Director McDonough's leadership which has allowed OPL to flourish."

Henry Bent introduced himself as an active member of the Friends of OPL. He gave some statistical information regarding the Spanish-speaking population of Oberlin, commenting it might not be a good use of funds to pay for a Spanish version of the survey. Bent commented that the employees at the library are extremely concerned about the Board discussions regarding reorganization. He noted that there are few workplaces where employees really like to come to work. Bent commented that there is no guarantee a credentialed person could do a better job, and he thinks that kind of thinking is shortsighted. Lock replied that she is interested in looking at the Spanish Language statistics Bent presented in more detail.

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Dorothy Luciano commented that she lives at Kendal and the facility was closed during COVID-19. She noted that McDonough personally delivered book requests to Kendal during COVID-19, and she thanked him for that. Luciano commented that McDonough in the process of being recommend for commendation for his work during COVID-19.

Aliza Weidenbaum commented that the book collection at the library is excellent, but some other changes are needed to keep up with the times. Weidenbaum noted there are no viewing rooms for watching videos, The Bridge should be open later than 9 p.m., and periodicals should be available for reading online.

Scott Medwid commented that he has used the computers at both the library and The Bridge and had no trouble accessing periodical articles online.

Palli Holubar commented that she lives on the last road in the county and could go to any library, but she chooses to come to Oberlin Public Library. Holubar asked the Board if they want a Library Director or a CEO. She commented that she would like a Library Director who hires people at all levels of thinking to welcome people into the building. Holubar commented that it is important to think about people before thinking about anything else, and that data doesn't define people. Holubar noted the Board would be better off observing the staff or asking for McDonough's input.

Marcia Peterson commented that when she first moved to Oberlin, she got a library card and spent a lot of time in the library, talking with staff and friends and checking out books.

David Ashenhurst commented that the staff knows most of the library users by name, and that the Trustees are not well known by the staff.

Technical Services Team Leader Erin Shiba commented that McDonough's evaluation reflected the Board's concern about hiring a family member of another employee at the library. After interviewing several qualified applicants, Shiba commented that she hired Bailey Jones, a family member of an employee, as Technical Services Clerk. Shiba noted that Jones was doing a fantastic job and couldn't be a better employee. She also noted that McDonough was a huge part of why she likes coming to work.

Ente thanked the members of the public for their comments. Ente commented that it is wonderful to know the community is so invested in the library, and it



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reflects how wonderful a community Oberlin is. Ente commented that the trustees are motivated by that and much more. Ente noted the trustees give their time and service to the library Board, and they are proud of Oberlin Public Library. Ente commented that the hallmark of this Board was their willingness to do hard work that hasn't been done before, to raise the bar, and not become complacent. Ente noted that those changes could create uncomfortable moments, but they want to make the library even better.

Peterson moved, seconded by Lock, to adjourn. All present voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:29 p.m.

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President

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Attest