

OBERLIN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

November 1, 2021 Special Meeting

President Bruce Ente called to order the special meeting at 4:49 p.m. Roll call: Megan Newson, Marcia Peterson, Bruce Ente, Patrick Prosser, Bethany Baker, and Meredith Gadsby were present. Anita Lock arrived later, as noted. Also present were Darren McDonough, Director, and Kristin Cioffi, Fiscal Officer. Jan Thornton, Erin Shiba, David Ashenhurst, Scott Medwid, Mary O'Callaghan, James Millette, Kelly Molesky, Rebecca Wedge, Henry Bent, and Jesse Hogan were present from the public.

Ente began the meeting by noting that there were two items on the agenda: Public Participation and Executive Session.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Scott Medwid introduced himself as a town resident of over 27 years. He commented that the library is an asset to the community, and he wants to be involved in making sure the library is around for the next 150 years.

David Ashenhurst read the following email he sent to Assistant Lorain County Prosecutor Dan Petticord:

Hello Mr. Petticord

I'm sorry we haven't met, to my knowledge -- especially since Gerry Innes' retirement and J.D.'s election.

I believe I am sitting in a highly unlawful meeting of the Oberlin Public Library Board of Trustees. Your email of 3:50 pm has just been shared with me. It does not reference the memorialization of the executive session of October 21st (there would of course be no minutes) that was shared with your colleague after it was received by Darren ... with all the other material that was discussed in the executive session beyond the calling of the special meeting.

If you were here, I think you would ask the Board to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing pending or imminent litigation: because this is not the first boo-boo by this Board, and I hoped by asking you to tell them not to do this further they would avoid having me, "any citizen," bring suit under the Open Meetings Act. I spent the weekend trying to figure out how to get an injunction to stop this meeting from

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happening; I'd hoped by asking YOU to enjoin them you wouldn't have to appear before a judge to defend them from an injunction.

Ashenhurst commented that he doesn't think Petticord has a full understanding of the circumstances leading up to his email.

James Millette asked what the issue was that led to Ashenhurst's email. Ente responded that at the last meeting, the Board went into Executive Session to discuss the employment of a public employee, and he would have to ask Ashenhurst to clarify what the problem was. Millette asked what issue was on the agenda for this meeting. Ente replied the evaluation of a public employee.

Jan Thornton asked why a special meeting was called. Ente responded that there was too much to cover for a regular meeting. Thornton asked what was on the agenda. Ente responded Public Participation and Executive Session to discuss the evaluation of a public employee.

Medwid asked for more specifics. Ente replied he is not at liberty to discuss details. Peterson noted that it is a matter of confidentiality.

Gadsby asked the public what they think the purpose of the special meeting is. Henry Bent commented that after the conclusion of the last meeting, the staff was requested to develop a survey to gather information regarding The Bridge. He noted the timeline for the survey was very short, and he thought this meeting was part of that timeline. Gadsby replied that was not the case. Gadsby explained that the Board requested a survey to be done by the library to better look at the usage at The Bridge in order to know which actions to take going forward. Gadsby requested that the public put in writing anything they might want to convey to the Board.

Kelly Molesky commented that she attended the meeting to show support for the Director. She commented that the Board President often comes in the library, goes into McDonough's office, and shuts the door. Since McDonough is normally working on the floor, it makes the staff wonder what is going on and what is wrong. Molesky noted that she has worked at the library over twenty years, and she couldn't have done it without McDonough's support. She commented that it seems like the Board is trying to make big decisions regarding the library, at a time when staff members are just trying to get back to normal following the pandemic.

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Jesse Hogan commented that Ente is the only Board member that enters the library through the staff entrance and parks in the staff parking area. Hogan noted that he is handicapped and walks with a cane, and there have been times when he is not able to park near the building because Ente is parked there. Hogan commented that the staff shouldn't be the ones to figure out what is best for The Bridge. He noted that he thought there was suppose to be a focus group to look at The Bridge. Gadsby replied that was not the case. Ente suggested that Hogan take up any issues he has regarding parking with McDonough.

Erin Shiba commented that there are two issues: The Bridge and a personnel issue. She commented that the staff members were asked to put together a survey following a closed meeting to discuss a personnel issue. She noted that it feels like the staff are being set up to fail and that they must prove themselves. Shiba commented that after struggling during the pandemic, staff members are being asked to do more with less support from the Board.

Mary O'Callaghan commented that she is at the meeting to support the library. She commented that she has used the library for over thirty years, and the staff is a group of people that enrich that community. She noted that staff members are very welcoming and know most patrons by name. Ente commented that the Board is most supportive of the library and always acts in the best interest of the library, so he is glad to see they are on the same page as O'Callaghan.

Ashenhurst commented that the purpose for the special meeting was not stated in the posted meeting notice, and the meeting notice in the newspapers did not specify it was a special meeting. Ashenhurst noted that a survey regarding The Bridge was not discussed at the last meeting. Ashenhurst commented that an employment issue was to have been discussed at Executive Session, and a survey does not fall under the topic of an employment issue.

Gadsby commented that some personnel issues are confidential and can not be shared with the public. She explained there was a discussion regarding the process for evaluating employees. Gadsby commented that she strongly hopes staff members perception of the work of the Board is shared in writing.

Rebecca Wedge commented that staff members did compose an email to the Board in spring addressing various issues, and they were told the email was inappropriate.

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Gadsby asked who said the email was inappropriate. Wedge responded that Gadsby did. Gadsby replied that she will look back through her past emails to prove that was not the case. Molesky clarified that the comments Gadsby made came during a Zoom Board meeting. Gadsby commented that there must have been a misunderstanding because she doesn't support that view and never has.

Shiba commented that no one knew what was on the agenda prior to this meeting. She asked what the purpose of public participation was, since it is usually used as an opportunity for the public to respond to happenings at the meeting. She noted that it is difficult to put together thoughts on a topic that wasn't known about prior to the meeting. Ente responded that Public Participation was at the top of the agenda out of consideration for the public's time in regards to reconvening after Executive Session. Shiba asked if Public Participation is required at meetings. Gadsby responded that it is. Ente commented that he would like to reassure staff members that The Board would handle personnel issues for all employees in public. Shiba responded that she is not sure that makes her feel better since the Board should only be discussing the employment of the Director and the Fiscal Officer.

Thornton commented that it might be helpful to post the agenda for Board meetings on the library's website prior to the meeting. That would give the public the opportunity to know what issues will be discussed, so they can decide if they want to attend the meeting. Gadsby commented that she agrees, but the agenda for Executive Session can not be posted. Thornton noted that the agenda would indicate that an Executive Session would be taking place.

Millette commented that there should be guidance for topics for the public to participate on. Ente responded that Public Participation is at the discretion of the public attending the meeting. Ente commented that he would like for Millette to put his request in writing.

O'Callaghan commented that a library's purpose is to provide access to learning and this library does an excellent job at that.

Ente thanked the public and noted that the Board appreciates their valuable input.

Newson moved, seconded by Peterson, to accept Resolution # R-21-11-1, to go into executive session at 5:31 p.m. to discuss the employment of a public

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employee. Roll call vote: Newson, Peterson, Baker, Ente, Prosser, Gadsby, ALL AYES.

MOTION PASSED

The board returned from executive session at 6:38 p.m. via motion by Newson, seconded by Peterson. Lock joined the meeting during the executive session.

Gadsby moved, seconded by Lock, to accept Resolution # R-21-11-2, adopting the OPL Director Evaluation tool, as amended (copy attached.) Roll call vote: Lock, Newson, Peterson, Baker, Ente, Prosser, Gadsby, ALL AYES.

MOTION PASSED

Gadsby moved, seconded by Baker, to adjourn. All present voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

President

Attest