

OBERLIN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

March 10, 2022

President Bruce Ente called to order the meeting at 5:01 p.m. Roll call: Marcia Peterson, Anita Lock, Bruce Ente, Meredith Gadsby, Megan Newson, and Lili Sandler were present. Bethany Baker arrived later, as noted. Also present were Darren McDonough, Director, and Kristin Cioffi, Fiscal Officer. There was a well-attended public.

Ente thanked Beth Marshall and Tony Wilgus for the homemade cookies they brought to the meeting.

Peterson moved, seconded by Sandler, to accept Resolution # R-22-3-1, approving the minutes of the February 10, 2022, regular meeting. All present voted in favor.

MOTION PASSED

FISCAL OFFICER'S REPORT

Fiscal Officer Cioffi reviewed the February 2022 financial reports (Fund Status, Revenue Status, Appropriation Status, and Bank Reconciliation). Cioffi noted that the Appropriation Status report displays Permanent Appropriations as approved at the February meeting. Cioffi also reviewed the expenditure percentages and reported on PLF and property revenue status. Lastly, Cioffi noted that OLC's annual Fiscal Officer Conference will be held in Columbus on the same day as the April Board meeting and asked for permission to miss the meeting to attend the conference. The Trustees indicated Cioffi was permitted to miss the meeting to attend the conference. Lock moved, seconded by Peterson, to accept Resolution # R-22-3-2, accepting the February 2022 Financial Reports.

Baker arrived at 5:07 p.m.

Roll call vote: Peterson, Lock, Ente, Gadsby, Newson, Sandler, Baker, ALL AYES.

MOTION PASSED

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director McDonough reported that foot traffic is slowly picking up at the library, and that 94 home COVID-19 test kits were distributed in February. McDonough also noted that the Community Technology Needs Assessment survey, which included focus groups, is over. The next step is for Library IQ to assess the data and issue a report.

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McDonough reported that the library's insurance company sent a structural engineer who, according to his report, indicated that the cause of the crack was due to a defect in the original construction of the building: the expansion joints were filled with mortar, which was common construction practice during that time. The next step is to have Midstate Restoration do some explorative work to determine the best way to fix the problem. Baker reported that the Building, Finance, and Audit Committee met with Building Facilitator Mike Sherril and discussed the issue and the next steps as explained by McDonough.

McDonough reported that the library added some digital magazine subscriptions. The magazines can be accessed from the library's website either from home, in the library, or at The Bridge. The library will also begin offering Kanopy, a service, which allows patrons to stream movies. The library has been attempting to subscribe to Kanopy for a couple of years, but the company just started accepting new customers.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ente reported that an Oberlin College Environmental Studies 101 student interested in interviewing Trustees contacted him. He noted that Trustees' comments during interviews may be included on the Oberlin Environmental Dashboard. Baker, Sandler, Lock, and Peterson indicated that they would be interested in participating in an interview with the student.

GIFTS

Newson moved, seconded by Lock, to accept Resolution # R-22-3-3, to accept the following gifts:

In support of OPL:

- \$50.00 from Silver Wheels Cycling Club

In memory of Jeanne Pease:

- \$100.00 from Mary Moore Vento & George C. Quist

All present voted in favor.

MOTION PASSED

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

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Gadsby reported that the committee met and reviewed the hiring of Margaret Swendseid. Swendseid's application was circulated for review by the Trustees. The committee moved and seconded, to accept Resolution # R-22-3-4, approving the hiring of Adult Public Services Team Member Margaret Swendseid, effective 1-13-2022. Roll call vote: Sandler, Newson, Peterson, Gadsby, Baker, Ente, Lock, ALL AYES.

MOTION PASSED

Gadsby reported that the committee circled back to a conversation from last year regarding increasing staff salaries to keep up with the increasing cost of living. Gadsby reported that in acknowledgment of the fantastic work of staff, the committee is recommending a 10% mid-year increase, represented on the Proposed 2022 Mid-year Salary Chart in the packet. Baker asked why the recommended increase was 10%. Gadsby explained that positions vary greatly between libraries, but 10% helps the staff members immensely. Gadsby also noted a year-end revisitation of the Salary Chart. The committee moved and seconded, to accept Resolution # R-22-3-5, approving the presented 2022 Mid-year Salary Chart, effective 6-12-2022. Roll call vote: Lock, Ente, Baker, Gadsby, Peterson, Newson, Sandler, ALL AYES.

MOTION PASSED

Gadsby reported that the committee discussed the Fiscal Officer's evaluation and followed up with the Director's evaluation points. She noted that the Board would follow up with the Director's evaluation when they meet in Executive Session in April to discuss the next steps.

OLD BUSINESS

Ente reported that the library is awaiting the preliminary data from the Community Technology Needs Assessment. Once it is received, the committee will meet and review the data. Peterson commented that the survey reached many people, including members of the faith community, who were incredibly pleased to be added to the list. Ente reported that at least 600 people responded to the survey. Lock reported that she and Peterson, who focused on contacting faith groups, compiled and updated the directory of faith groups in Oberlin and distributed it to the groups.

NEW BUSINESS

Ente noted that with the latest information on the building's crack, hopefully, there will be additional information next month.

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TRUSTEE REMARKS none

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Tony Wilgus commented that he left last month's meeting with a sense of impasse between the Board and the Director, the Board and the staff, and the Board and the community. Wilgus commented that he researched and read the OLC Trustee Handbook regarding Board accountability and raised a few points he gleaned: according to the Handbook, the role of the Library Board of Trustees is to provide materials and services that reflect the values of the community and to see that the library operates efficiently and productively. They are also accountable to the public. Wilgus commented that the Handbook also states that having a friction-laden relationship with the Director can make a Trustee's role difficult and be disastrous for the library and its patrons. Wilgus also stated that the library's reputation would last longer than any Board member or Director. Wilgus commented that according to the Handbook, a Board should regularly self-evaluate. He also read from OLC's example self-evaluation. Wilgus noted that in an ideal world, there are possibilities for collaborations between the Board and the Director, the Board and the staff, and the Board and the community. Wilgus closed by thanking the Trustees for taking the time to serve, noting that it is not always an easy job.

Helene Aarons commented that she would like the Board to answer the question of what a "world-class library" is. Aarons noted that most Boards she's served on had evaluated themselves. Aarons commented that the spirit at the library was one of the reasons she moved to Oberlin, and she has no idea what the definition of a "world-class library" is. Aarons commented that it is important to agree on a definition in order to have a conversation about it.

Anita Lock commented that she appreciates all the fine members of the public present but noted a significant number of them representing a single age bracket. Lock commented that as a library, there many ages that need representation. Aarons responded that a judgment about who uses the library couldn't be made based on the age of people who attend a meeting. Aarons commented that she observed teens, kids, and families using the library. Lock commented that as a library, we should not remain stagnate. Aarons questioned why anyone would say that the library has become stagnate, especially with the introduction of new technologies.

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Meredith Gadsby commented that a Board self-evaluation would be worthwhile. Gadsby noted that during her 10 years as a Trustee, a self-evaluation had not been done. She commented that she believes evaluations are valuable for the Director and the staff. Aarons responded that it is important to have community input during evaluations. Gadsby commented that it is also important to recognize that what may work in one community may not work in another, and the top priority should be to have a healthy Board. Gadsby commented that Ente used the phrase “world-class library”, and if anyone has questions about it, they should reach out directly to him. Gadsby noted that his comment was not a statement coming from the entire Board.

Dorothy Luciano commented that she read the OLC Trustee Handbook, and it was very helpful. Luciano commented that after the last Board meeting, she was concerned about the disconnect between the Director, the staff, and the Board. Luciano noted that the Handbook states that the number one criterion for a Board member is to be a representative of the community values the library serves. Luciano commented that Ente cares mostly about rules and regulations while the public cares about the library. She also commented that rules and regulations only matter to stakeholders, if they are necessary to the library. In addition, Luciano noted that Ente’s President’s statement in January is his touchstone, not the community’s. Luciano explained that Oberlin is a small, college, rural, Midwestern town made up of approximately 8,300 people who are not interested in world-class status. Luciano commented that Oberlin residents want the structure necessary to have a successful, prideful library. Luciano closed by stating that she has trouble communicating with and getting answers from the Board.

Marcia Peterson responded that she met with Dorothy Luciano via Zoom for an hour and listened to her concerns. Gadsby indicated she also spoke with Luciano. Luciano responded that hearing her is one thing and listening is another. Luciano commented that Peterson told her the Board is unified and will not change their opinions. Ente responded that a Board meeting is not the venue for this type of conversation and that he would be happy to meet with Luciano and Aarons at another time. Aarons asked Ente if he was listening. Ente responded that, yes, he and the Trustees are one-hundred-percent listening.

Jan Thornton commented that while listening is great, just because someone doesn’t agree with you doesn’t mean they are not listening.

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Carrie Schwimmer referenced a comment made regarding the library's stagnation and asked what the Board plans to do to keep it from stagnating. Entente responded that the answer could be found in a strategic plan, but the library does not have one yet.

Gadsby left the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Aliza Weidenbaum commented that she planned to attend the Library Services committee meeting this month, but it was canceled. Weidenbaum noted that she intended to bring up to the committee the fact that the computers in the library are still not working.

Tom Lock commented that he would like to praise Public Service Team Member Josephine Lee for providing excellent customer service recently. Lock noted that Lee was done with her shift and leaving the library, but came back to assist him, because circulation was busy. Lock also commented that he would like to encourage the Board to place the meeting materials on the library's website before the meetings so the public had the opportunity to review them before the meetings. Lock commented that while he agrees the library offers fine services, no special events were listed in reviewing the calendar on the library's website. McDonough responded that Adult Services Team Leader Rebecca Wedge was in the process of updating the website calendar.

In response to Tom Lock's comment about the library's website calendar, Children's Services Team Leader Amanda Guttman shared details of several library events. Guttman shared that on Friday mornings at 11:00 a.m., there is an ongoing Oberlin Mama meetup group that has an activity in the craft room with Oberlin Kids, and a storytime with Mr. Jesse. Guttman reported that the library recently partnered with Oberlin City Schools and Oberlin Kids to bring Author Michael G. Williams to town for an event. The library purchased copies of his book *The Brown Crayon* for the event and is working on bringing Williams back for a future event. Guttman commented that the library is currently working on Summer Reading planning and is in contact with Oberlin City Schools and Oberlin Kids. Guttman closed by saying that she recently read and recorded chapters of *Save Me a Seat* as part of the One Book, One School program at Oberlin Elementary School.

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Tony Wilgus responded to Anita Lock's comment about the age of the members of the public in attendance, pointing out that many of the Trustees are of the same age and diversity as the public. He commented that it is not necessarily a negative because of wisdom that comes with aging. Wilgus closed by noting because of many younger people's busy schedules and commitments, they are not able to attend Board meetings.

McDonough commented that in compiling the State Library Report, he was impressed that the library held 126 programs in 2021 during the COVID pandemic.

Jan Thornton requested that the Board post the meeting materials on the library's website before the meeting. Ente responded that the Board would look into doing so.

Ente thanked the public for coming to the meeting and speaking and investing in the library. Ente noted next month's meeting schedule.

Peterson moved, seconded by Newson, to adjourn. All present voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

President

Attest