

Meeting Minutes
Cedar Rapids Public Library
Board of Trustees
October 5, 2023

Board members in attendance: [President] Clint Twedt-Ball, Jade Hart, Elisabeth Hepworth, Jeremy Elges (in person); [Vice President] Monica Challenger, Rafael Jacobo (via Zoom)

Board members unable to attend: Chris Casey, Susie McDermott, Hassan Selim

Staff in attendance: Dara Schmidt, Amber McNamara, Kevin Delecki, Erin Horst, Todd Simonson, Jessica Musil (in person); Patrick Duggan (via Zoom)

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

- A. Call to Order
 - Mr. Twedt-Ball called the meeting to order at 4 pm.
- B. Consent Agenda – **Action**
 - Minutes: September 7, 2023

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
 - The Friends and Foundation biannual FOCUS newsletter should be mailed no later than Oct. 16. It celebrates the Van Vechten Society brunch and provides more information on the Inspiring Big Dreams campaign and Westside Library Project. Readers will get a sneak peek to the upcoming public campaign.
 - Foundation staff continue to make progress in the capital campaign with donor follow-up meetings and weekly donor asks. They are awaiting final decisions on multiple donor requests. This week, the Foundation received a commitment of \$75,000.
 - The Foundation's Raygun shirt site has new offerings, big champions of intellectual freedom and libraries. The Foundation shirt site has more shirts available unique.
- E. Friends of the Library Report – Libby Slappey
 - Friends volunteers are preparing for two sales this year: the annual big sale during the first weekend in November at the downtown library and the Very Cherry Open House in the Cherry Building. Shoppers can find giftable books on the main level with vintage and collectible books on the lower level.
- F. Board Education: Intellectual Freedom and Banned Books Week History – Amber McNamara
 - Ms. McNamara presented on the history of Intellectual Freedom and Banned Books week. The annual event highlights and celebrates challenged books, specifically those targeted for removal in public and school libraries. The attempts to remove books have significantly increased over the last several years. This year's theme is 'Let Freedom Read'.
 - Both the downtown and Ladd libraries have displays highlighting events starting in 1939 with the American Library Association (ALA) adopting the Library Bill of Rights. The Cedar Rapids Public Library first participated in events regarding book challenges in 1943, commemorating books burned by Nazis. The rest of the display highlights local and national news calling for intellectual freedom, book challenges, and legislative changes. Censorship is on the rise. In 2003 – the first year data collection started – the number of unique titles challenged that year was 305 versus 2,571 in 2022. 2023's preliminary data shows the trend is continuing and will likely exceed 2022's data.

- For those who are interested, this Saturday is Let Freedom Read Day. People are encouraged to support intellectual freedom, by reading or checking out banned materials, writing letters to political leaders, making social media posts, and more.
- The trustees discussed the importance of intellectual freedom. Mr. Elges noted the freedom of thoughts, expression, and speech are in the Constitution because they are important but also have independent value. Ms. Challenger shared a young Black boy was prohibited from his library and later became a future astronaut. The library, which previously denied him access on account of race, was later named after him. Mr. Twedt-Ball noted previous Supreme Court support of books and is hopeful this will happen again as people begin to challenge materials' restriction. Ms. Tyler shared there are numerous resources online with ALA and the Freedom to Read Foundation, including legal resources for libraries.

G. Library Board Committee Reports

- Advocacy Committee – Rafael Jacobo, Committee Chair
 - The committee is continuing to make tweaks to the Advocacy Toolkit. When it is ready, the document will be shared with the board. Trustees also received an email to select City of Cedar Rapids' Council candidates to discuss the library and services. A reminder will be resent.
- Finance Committee – Monica Challenger, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Challenger reported on August 2023 financials. Revenues are higher than expected for this time of year and expenses are at 12% of the overall budget. Ms. Challenger highlighted a few of the expenses, such as unbudgeted tuition reimbursement to support staff, full payment of the Service Navigator position with Willis Dady, and payment of cyber security insurance.
- Personnel and Policy Committee – Susie McDermott, Committee Chair
 - **Action:** Policy 1.07: Library Finance and Purchasing Policy
 - The proposed packet was reviewed by both Personnel and Policy and Finance committees. We have technically had a policy since 2014, last updated in 2015, but it was never included in the board policies. Our policies are created if they differ or don't exist at the City. If we don't have a policy then we follow the City policy. The bolded text indicates the differences between library and City, which is specifically only for the approval personnel as we don't rely on the City Manager but instead the Library Director and Board.

The committee recommendation to adopt the new policy as presented in the packet carried with unanimous approval.
- Westside Project Committee – Jade Hart, Committee Chair
 - The project remains on hold with the architects as fundraising catches up, though discussions with OPN should start again later in the year. Ms. Schmidt received some library-specific feedback from the Westside Library Park open house, which aligns with everything we have heard from the library project's community feedback. Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Tyler have been working through property parceling as well as restrictive covenants for the development side.

H. Library Director's Report

- Annual Report
 - Ms. Schmidt reviewed the annual report for fiscal year 2023. The document included photos, the mission and vision, multiple stories highlighting library services and resources as well as staff great stories. The report is on our website.
 - Library usage statistics also tell a story. Most of the statistics exceeded last year's numbers with visits, attendance in programs, volunteer hours, and total programs. However, the physical materials circulation was impacted by the downtown library's collection being unavailable for five weeks following clean-up from the fire, resulting in a 50,000 circulation drop. Digital materials are also

down about 10,000, which is attributed to an increased cost to purchase or lease these materials. In order to stretch the budget through the fiscal year, the Materials team had to impose check-out limits for pay-per-use items. There were slight decreases between the computer sessions and meeting room uses due to the fire.

- The supporting organizations – Friends and Foundation – were recognized for the above and beyond contribution to materials, Summer Dare, and more. Revenue and Expenses are accurate as much as possible because the City financials are not yet audited. Ms. Hart asked what is considered revenue under ‘charges for services’. For most of the items, this includes building rental for the café and patron use as well as Foundation pass through for items, rent, and personal services. The Library reports financials in its annual report, to the City, and also the State Library that is passed to the federal level. The City’s reporting differs from the State Library requirements so the annual report financials tries to simplify the numbers.
 - Meeting tomorrow morning, Ms. Schmidt will meet with the electrician, OPN, and City Facilities Manager to discuss the new timeline for the downtown light installation. She hopes to have updates and a plan forward to complete the project by next week.
- 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 5:08 pm.

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, November 2, 2023, at 4 pm in the Conference Room, Downtown Library