

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Cedar Rapids Public Library**  
**Board of Trustees**  
**January 2, 2025**

**Board members in attendance:** [President] Monica Challenger, [Vice President] Jeremy Elges, Ana McClain, Chris Casey, Elisabeth Hepworth (in person); Hassan Selim, Jade Hart (via Zoom)

**Board members unable to attend:** Rafael Jacobo, Susie McDermott

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

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

- A. Call to Order
  - Ms. Challenger called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm.
- B. Consent Agenda – **Action**
  - Minutes: December 5, 2024

*Ms. Casey 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. The year-end fundraising appeal was sent to over 900 households and at this point, the fundraising goal has been exceeded. In addition, the Foundation received a number of Big Dreams appeal cards, which were also returned by the end of the year. Co-chairs, Libby Slappey and Lois Buntz, sent an appeal to the Wise Women Circle, which received approximately \$210,000 from ten donors alone. Ms. Tyler expressed appreciation for the co-chairs' leadership.
  - The hope is to close-out the capital campaign by the end of this fiscal year and move to donor stewardship. One way that Ms. Tyler is celebrating with donors is to 'ring the gong' at businesses and organizations. Ms. Tyler started a tradition of ringing the gong for staff to announce large gifts. Donors heard about this and requested to join the celebrate. Ms. Tyler and Ms. Schmidt are scheduling visits; in addition, they will host a lunch and learn at the library with donors and corporate leaders for updates as well. The Wise Women Circle is planning a spring gathering.
  - Conversations have started to design the donor wall in the new Westside Library.
  - The Brewmaster for a Day opportunity sold for \$2,000 in an online bid; proceeds will benefit the capital campaign. In the next few weeks, the Foundation will make a splash about the winner and the brewmaster date at Lion Bridge Brewing.
- E. Friends of the Library Report – Libby Slappey
  - Ms. Slappey reported. At this time, the Friends do not have an impending sale to plan except a special children's book sale at the Dolly Parton's birthday party event at the library on January 18.
  - Amazon sales continue to be strong for the Friends. December was a record month for sales, earning almost \$2,000 in used books' sales; the year total was just under \$10,000. A small team of volunteers sort through books and identify those that could sell on Amazon. Online sales started several years ago with a small selection online at a time; now, they have approximately 3,000 books for sale.
  - Ms. Casey asked about fees to pay Amazon in order to sell online. Ms. Slappey reported that there are several fees, such as a marketplace tax, transaction fee, and selling fee.

Mr. Selim joined the meeting via Zoom at 4:17 pm

- Ms. Casey asked if the Friends share with donors about how their donated books turned into successful sales for the Friends. It's difficult to do that in most cases as a majority of the books are donated anonymously. Ms. McClain thought it might be fun to highlight Amazon sales and its impact on the Friends' earnings through social media.

#### F. Library Board Committee Reports

- Advocacy Committee – Elisabeth Hepworth, Committee Chair
  - Ms. Hepworth reported. At this time, there is nothing new to report other than a reminder that the committee will follow the legislative session and ways to advocate for libraries during that time.
- Building Committee – Jade Hart, Committee Chair
  - Ms. Hart reported. The committee is looking forward to a design meeting with Fehr Graham for initial concepts for the downtown library's Urban Plaza refresh project next week.
  - Ms. Schmidt reported on that morning's Owner/Architect/Contractor meeting for the Westside Library. The contractors are working around temperature fluctuations to provide frost protection for the poured basements. In addition, structural steel beams are on-site and hope to be erected in the basement. With the anticipated cold, however, they don't think much work will occur in the next week. The team continue to work through multi-step processes to discuss and study project drawings and potentially modify them to produce the best option.
- Finance Committee – Chris Casey, Committee Chair
  - Ms. Casey reported. The Finance committee did not meet in December. Finances so far in the fiscal year appear to be normal and on track as expected. Ms. Casey shared appreciation for the oversight by City Finance to pay and manage bills for the Westside Library project.
  - Ms. Schmidt noted that the formula for tax rollbacks was released last month and it was enough of a concern that each City department was asked to reduce discretionary spending by 3%. The library does have the ability to move money between line items so it will be a combination of reductions in multiple lines, which Ms. Schmidt will share with the Finance Committee. The expectation is that the 3% reduction will be permanent for all departments. At this time, this will be the first step of reductions without understanding full impacts of tax changes. In addition, the City is significantly reducing CIP funds. Ms. Schmidt is advocating to keep book funds, which are CIP paid as designated by the City, as is. The industry standard is to spend 10% of budget on materials. Ms. Schmidt hopes to slowly increase the book budget but is cognizant of budget constraints for the City.
  - The Library's Union through CWA will open for wages negotiations at the end of January. The Library, as with other departments, will be told the maximum increase amount we can negotiate.
- Personnel and Policy Committee – Susie McDermott, Committee Chair
  - Ms. Schmidt reported for Ms. McDermott. The committee did not meet in December as well. However, they have been aggressive in covering the accreditation review for policies and are still comfortable to meet accreditation deadlines.

#### G. Library Director's Report

- Ms. Schmidt reported. At this time, libraries are preparing for potential discussion and action regarding public libraries at the federal legislative level. With the Iowa legislative session, it is suspected we'll see more public library-related bills as well.
- In April, Ms. Schmidt will participate in an American Library Association (ALA) advocacy event, meeting with national leaders to advocate for libraries. Travel expenses are paid for

by ALA. Ms. Challenger gave Ms. Schmidt permission to miss the April board meeting, Ms. McNamara will cover the meeting in her absence.

- The Library is meeting with most of the staff in small strategic planning sessions, which should end by early February. Ms. Schmidt would like to conduct strategic sessions with the board as well. Her plan is to take time in committee meetings to go through the exercise in January and February. She will follow-up with any individuals who were unable to attend committee meetings in those months.
- Ms. Schmidt thanked the board and her team for support in the past month.

H. Old Business

- There being no old business, the meeting continued.

I. New Business

- There being no new business, the meeting continued.

J. Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:41 pm.

**The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, February 6, 2025, at 4 pm in the Conference Room, Downtown Library**