

Meeting Minutes
Cedar Rapids Public Library
Board of Trustees
October 3, 2024

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

Board members unable to attend: Ana McClain

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

Others: Charity Tyler, Executive Director, Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation (in person)

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

Ms. Hart moved to accept the consent agenda. Ms. Casey 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 Foundation continues to be active with the capital campaign. The final proof of the semi-annual Friends and Foundation joint newsletter was completed and will be mailed by end of next week. Foundation staff are also preparing for two appeals: Giving Tuesday, which focuses on the capital campaign; and the annual year-end appeal for Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library.
 - In a collaboration with Lion Bridge Brewery, they have a new Library Lager to promote awareness of Westside library. A launch party is scheduled for April 9. In addition, the Foundation has released new items to library swag store for purchase including totes and notebooks.
 - Ms. McDermott shared that the Van Vechten Society brunch was a great event. Ms. Tyler agreed and the Foundation have received two estate gifts in the last week, which will be recognized at next year’s event. She is honored and humbled by those who choose to include the library in estate plans.
- E. Friends of the Library Report – Libby Slappey
 - Ms. Tyler reported for Ms. Slappey. The Friends have been busy with their big fall sale, which again will be held at the downtown library. The event is Friday, Nov. 1 through Sunday, Nov. 3. The Sunday book sale is the fill a box and pay \$10. Friends will also participate in Very Cherry Open House on Saturday, Dec. 7.
- F. Board Education: Banned Books Week – Amber McNamara
 - This year for Banned Books Week, the library chose to focus on the freedom to read. Ms. McNamara shared that we celebrate this week annually. Last year, we setup a timeline of the Freedom to Read movement for our country and community. This year, the display was also at Ladd Library and on our website.
 - This year, Banned Book Week took place from September 22 to 28. It started in 1982, though the idea of freedom to read started in 1939 with the American Library Association’s (ALA) Bill of Rights to counter censorship. In 1954, the Freedom to Read document laid out duties to protect Americans’ freedom to read. In 1967, the Office for

Intellectual Freedom was established to raise awareness of the Library Bill of Rights and the principles of Freedom to Read.

- Locally, our library received its first complaint to remove a book from the collection in 1975 as schools were also starting to pull several books by Judy Blume. Another book challenge came in 1985 at the Cedar Rapids Public Library.
- A Supreme Court ruling came down in 1982 that removing books from school libraries violates students' First Amendment Rights. Following this landmark case and a surge in book suppression, Banned Books Week was launched. More lawsuits about materials would be dismissed in 1996.
- In the state of Iowa, there have been some events attempting to suppress materials including the Orange City book burning in 2018; Pella City Council tried to take over the control of their public library in response to a book issue in 2022; and also the temporary closure of Vinton Public Library after staff resigned due to community reactions to the library's materials. In 2023, Iowa Legislature passed SF 496 requiring public schools to remove books with "depictions or visual depictions of a sex act" among other things. This law is still in effect, even after an injunction was overturned. The case has been sent back to the district court for further proceedings.
- ALA tracks the number of unique titles challenged each year, which has continued to climb since 2020. In 2022, 2,571 challenges were recorded with a jump to 4,240 in 2023. In September, ALA released preliminary data for the first eight months of the year: 414 censor and 1,128 unique title challenges. So far, it appears to be trending downward but still much higher than 2020. ALA has noted soft censorship – items are pre-emptively not included or purchased to avoid a challenge.
- Our library continues to monitor the data and information on censorship and book challenges. We have policies in place in the event of a challenge here. Otherwise, we continue to have a collection based on what the community asks for, representing various viewpoints.

G. Library Board Committee Reports

- Advocacy Committee – Elisabeth Hepworth, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Hepworth presented. She reminded trustees that we will host the Westside Library groundbreaking event on Oct. 18. Garling Construction will clear the site for the event including parking. More information will be communicated. Both locations will offer satellite voting opportunities and serve as precincts on Election Day. Staff are connecting patrons on how to participate in the voting process as well as collaboration with partners to make information accessible for unhoused individuals.
- Building Committee – Jade Hart, Committee Chair
 - The committee has not met recently but has an upcoming meeting to review responses to the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to refresh the the downtown library's Urban Plaza.
- Finance Committee – Chris Casey, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Casey reported on the August Financial memo. We are two months into the fiscal year. It appears that and some discretionary expenses are overspent; however, some high expenses are paid at the beginning of the fiscal year and finances will even out in time. Ms. Casey noted that the Foundation is contributing \$125,000 for the Urban Plaza refresh and the library will pay for the design work. The downtown library roof repair project will be taken care of by the City. We are contributing \$20,000 toward the City FMS department for increased staff support as project manager for the Westside Library. The FY26 budget work will start soon.

- Personnel and Policy Committee – Susie McDermott, Committee Chair
 - **Action:** Policy 4.01 Meeting Rooms. This policy sets basic guidelines for meeting room use. The committee is recommending two changes: first, allowing food in the Technology Classroom as it has been converted into a maker space, and also noting that the Commons can be used for events. Ms. Casey asked if food is generally allowed in the Maker Rooms. Yes, those spaces generally supervised unless the patron is certified and is at low risk for issues.
 - **Action:** Policy 4.02 Public Display Art. The committee did not recommend any changes to this policy.
 - **Action:** Policy 4.07 Philanthropic Naming and Recognition. The policy was originally written with very finite stipulations for naming and recognition opportunities. It is also are very different from what most libraries nationwide are doing. As the campaign has proceeded, questions have come up to question the policy; and following research, the committee wanted to review it more thoroughly. Every project is unique and this policy in its previous form did not allow us to work through unique projects. The updates allow for freedom in working through projects' needs but also protect the library's best interest. The suggested edits add flexibility to operate within clear boundaries. Ms. Hepworth agreed – she likes the changes to be responsive to the respective project and the donor.

The committee recommendation to approve the reviewed policies as presented in the packet carried with unanimous approval.

- **Action:** Westside Library Recognition Opportunities. This recognition list – including both selected and available opportunities – has been updated. Ms. Schmidt noted that the library approves the final signage and the Library Foundation denotes areas for recognition. The Foundation keeps the Gift Agreements, which are signed by library director, Foundation, and donor. Ms. Hepworth is excited to see this list, which offers a peek at the amenities coming to the new library.

H. Library Director's Report

- Ms. Schmidt reported on the FY24 Annual Report, which has articles and data to highlight the previous year. Generally, it's used in advocacy conversations with local leaders and key stakeholders. Ms. Schmidt highlighted the following topics:
 - Most people don't realize that planning and conversation around the Westside Library Project started in 2020. The article and timeline is exciting to see how far we've come with groundbreaking next week. Ms. Tyler was happy to notify Nadine Sandberg's attorney that the library will be on Sandberg Lane.
 - The Opportunity Center at Ladd Library's article highlighted the impact on those looking for workforce development and other support resources. Ms. Dermott is glad to see the article, which is another great advocacy piece as most people probably have no idea of the services. Ms. Tyler noted that two families have donated to sponsor the Center at the Westside Library based on the work it provides.
 - The success of summer reading was also highlighted. It can take time to see change but the data shows a significant impact after one summer.
 - End of year data shows how close we were hitting one million in circulation, which feels hopeful to break that in this fiscal year. Physical circulation has increased. It can be a difficult balance maintaining both digital and physical collections with a stagnant materials budget as digital content becomes more expensive. Total programs and attendees are also up. Those numbers, along with meeting room uses, are great ways to get people into the library to visit, positively impacting our visits count.

- Ms. Schmidt cautioned that the financials may change as the City completes their annual audit. In general though, the year ended well in that regard.
- 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 5:07 pm.

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, November 7, 2024, at 4 pm in the Conference Room, Downtown Library