

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Cedar Rapids Public Library**  
**Board of Trustees**  
**November 7, 2024**

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

**Board members unable to attend:** [Vice President] Jeremy Elges, Rafael Jacobo

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

**Others:** 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 pm.
- B. Consent Agenda – **Action**
  - Minutes:
    - October 3, 2024
    - Special Event Application

*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
  - Ms. Schmidt reported for Ms. Tyler, who is unable to join the meeting. Instead, Ms. Tyler is attending a reception to honor her and other nonprofit leaders. Ms. Tyler is a 2024 Spirit of Minnie Rubeck Honoree for her efforts in leading the Inspiring Big Dreams campaign for the new library project. We're proud of her work and her recognition in our community.
  - The remaining 12.7 acres of land owned by the Foundation has been rezoned to suburban/residential for the prospective buyer to continue the purchase. The Foundation is continuing to work through the process before final sale completion. In addition to the promised \$10 million capital campaign on the Library's behalf, any proceeds from the land sale will go into the building project. Ms. McClain asked if we know the anticipated earnings at this time. Ms. Schmidt noted it depends on the property's taxation, which is under investigation, as the difference could be significant. We should know by the end of the calendar year.
  - Campaign continues to go well and working to close the campaign no later than March/April 2025.
  - The joint Foundation and Friends newsletter was mailed the second week of October. The year-end appeal will be forthcoming in the next few weeks. The Foundation will also participate in GivingTuesday and use it as an opportunity to bring awareness to the library project. It will also serve as another opportunity for smaller gifts for those who haven't had a chance to contribute yet.
- E. Friends of the Library Report – Libby Slappey
  - Ms. Slappey reported. The large fall sale was a success, earning \$11,000 with proceeds going toward the Friends' \$250,000 pledge for the Westside Library. Sale shoppers appreciated knowing that the sale would directly impact this project. Volunteer turnout was tremendous to help move books from storage and the sorting center into the library. Ms. Slappey expressed thanks to the volunteers and the board of directors for their coordination. Ms. Schmidt felt that the Friends and volunteers brought so much joy to the

library during the setup and sale. She shared appreciation and thanks for all the hard work.

- Next up, the Friends are preparing for the Very Cherry Holiday event at the Cherry Building on December 7. They will offer giftable books and basement books will be open, offering vintage books and other collectibles.

F. Board Education: Collections Move Report – Erin Horst

- A year ago, the library staff made a major collection change for the downtown library. The committee reviewed data and other information to make recommendations on moving items with a goal to improve overall access. When the library opened in 2013, we made assumptions on where to shelve items and over time, we understand what is working and what needs updated.
- One of the main priorities was to make large print accessible on the first floor as well as improve browsability in the children's library and reduce loss for certain collections. The committee had to ensure that if a collection was moved, that the new spaces could accommodate the incoming collection. Some of the work could be done during open hours. The biggest moves involved the Fiction area and was completed on the November 2023 all staff day to reduce disruptions.
- Ms. Horst reported on the changes over the past year since the move. Circulation for the large print collection increased by 25%. Spark Kits and Book Club kits, now shelved in a central location, increased by 275%. Science Fiction moved upstairs and despite that showed a 4% increase. They were moved next to Graphic Novels, which were brought closer to a staff station, cutting the loss rate by 75%. Biographies took over the large print space and increased by 11%. Ms. Casey asked materials planning has started for the new library. We have not yet but in general, we know there are some collections to keep by the door and others you wouldn't. Ms. McDermott asked if kits experience high theft. A majority of the kits are not stolen though consistently the stress relief kit is stolen. The Spark Kits are grouped throughout the library – kits upstairs are for adults, such as crafts, activities, and something to try but not purchase. In the Children's Library, children can pick from early childhood literacy-based exploratory kits. At this time, we do not circulate toys but have started circulating Tonies players and figurines.
- Feedback surveys were also conducted with staff and patrons. Most of the responses were positive from both groups.

G. Library Board Committee Reports

- Advocacy Committee – Elisabeth Hepworth, Committee Chair
  - Ms. Hepworth did not have a report or action as the committee did not meet in October.
- Building Committee – Jade Hart, Committee Chair
  - Ms. Hart reported. The Westside Library Groundbreaking event happened on Oct. 18. It was a wonderful event, and well attended. The committee invited two vendors to present more on their qualifications for the Urban Plaza refresh project at the downtown library. The hope is to have a contract and start the project kick-off in December.
- Finance Committee – Chris Casey, Committee Chair
  - Ms. Casey reported on the September Financial memo. We are a quarter of the way through the year and would want to see revenues/expenses at 25%. However, several large expenses are due at the beginning of the year, such as Ladd Library's rental has been paid in full. In time, this will all even out as it does every year. Ms. Casey also noted that energy costs are going up and we'll ask for an increase for the next FY budget. Otherwise, there are no concerns.
  - We have received our first pay application from Garling for the project. The board approved the contract so we don't have to approve payment unless there is a contract change. The pay applications will be part of the board packets going forward so the board can see the project's progress.

- **Action:** Contract Amendment No. 3: OPN Architects for Westside Library Project (original contract amount was \$1,272,100; total contract amount with this amendment is \$1,331,300).
  - We are asking for an amendment to the OPN contract. With the reduced construction cost, we'll be able to pay for the design and construct the landscaping with a Discovery Garden and native plantings. We're working in direct connection with the parks department so the work's timeline is complementary, economical and efficient. The exterior areas of the library will be maintained by the Parks Department so we want their expertise as well when designs are developed. This landscaping work will be done when the library opens regardless of the parks' progress.

*The committee recommendation to approve the OPN contract amendment for \$1,331,300 as presented in the packet carried with unanimous approval.*

- Personnel and Policy Committee – Susie McDermott, Committee Chair
  - **Action:** Policy 1.01 Bylaws. The committee reviewed the ByLaws and made two recommended changes. First, in Article II, Section 8, the suggested language meets the actual practice for expense processing. Second, in Article V, Section 1, the committee recommended not calling out the Nominating Committee as no others are listed.

*The committee recommendation to update the ByLaws as presented in the packet carried with unanimous approval.*

- **Action:** Policy 4.06 Use of Security Cameras. This policy outlines how security cameras are used with respect to privacy and within the law. Internal footage is considered a library record and requires a subpoena to obtain to respect the privacy of patrons' use of materials. External cameras are public, and people can request copies, such as for an accident in the parking lot. This process is in alignment with public library records' designation in Iowa law. Ms. Hart asked how often cameras are reviewed for requests. It varies – it can be once a month or several months without a request; and requests are not about materials. Our camera software has the capability to blur a bystander and the materials they have when releasing subpoenaed footage.
- **Action:** Policy 5.00 Foundation and Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library. This policy gives basic information on how the Library, Foundation, and Friends work together to benefit the library. The committee did not recommend as they feel the Library has a great working relationship with the respective organizations.

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

#### H. Library Director's Report

- Ms. Schmidt reported. Today was the first owner/architect/contractor meeting for the Westside Library Project. So far, contractors have completed mass excavation and have dug the basement foundation as well as install foundation tile. Things have slowed down with the recent rains and attempting to dry out the basement, where geothermal equipment will be housed. In next two weeks, the team will pour the basement footings, work on drainage of west parking lot, and bore the geothermal lines. These meetings will occur bi-weekly through the end of the project. Ms. Schmidt is also working with OPN on design change orders, such as adding solar panels and other larger expenses, now that the project has more money. Ms. Casey and Ms. Hepworth shared stories of community excitement over the project.
- Now that the election is over, we can focus on advocacy efforts with elected officials. We know that Republican priority is to reduce taxes, which could impact the library. Final Linn County tax valuations will not be ready until January so our preliminary budget may need to change when the numbers are set. In addition, the FY26 budget is the first one that registered seniors over 65 will have property taxes reduced over a three-year process to

\$0. The library will continue to monitor and hold conversations for both advocacy and finance.

- The current plan ends in June. Ms. Schmidt is starting a new process. With the new building process, it's not the right time to bring in an external consultant. Ms. Schmidt would like to bring a two-year plan that we can accomplish with the opening of the new building. The goal is to have facilitated conversations with staff, high impact community stakeholders, and trustees. The library will ask the public to prioritize suggestions from staff and stakeholders. Staff conversations will begin in December with the goal to bring priorities to the community by April. Ms. Schmidt is grateful we can open a new building for our community. Funding challenges funding may alter hours but a rental location is vulnerable to closure. The groundbreaking event reinforced the importance of this new building for our community.
  - As a reminder, the library chose not to hold the staff professional development day on Nov. 11. Instead we're partnering for a joint all staff day in February with five other libraries in the corridor. Trustees are welcome to attend and we'll send a save the date. In the morning, we'll host author Shola Richards as keynote and move to the downtown library for staff-led afternoon sessions. This is the first event we've hosted like this.
  - Ms. McDermott wanted to highlight a great story in the director's report submitted by Branch Supervisor Wes Shirley. It's a special story about relationship-building can impact a patron's life to find compassion, housing, and stability during a difficult period.
- 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 5:13 pm.

**The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, December 5, 2024, at 4 pm in the Community Room, Ladd Library**