

Meeting Minutes
Cedar Rapids Public Library
Board of Trustees
February 6, 2025

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

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

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

- A. Call to Order
 - Ms. Challenger called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm.
- B. Consent Agenda – **Action**
 - Minutes: January 2, 2025

Ms. McDermott moved to accept the consent agenda. Ms. Hart 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 started the week at Lion Bridge Brewery with the library lager brew day with the guest brewmaster. So far, Foundation staff with Dara Schmidt have visited seven to eight local organizations and businesses for the Gong Tour. This has been a unique way to celebrate the gifts toward the capital campaign and has been well received. At this time, the Foundation has raised \$7.4 million for the campaign with ongoing conversations for more donations and they are also submitting applications for grants.

Chris Casey joined the meeting at 4:05 pm.

- Development Associate Jess Netolicky is organizing Literary Vines, which will take place on April 18. Early bird postcards were mailed to last year's donors and attendees. Invitations to the event will go out the end of February.
 - The Foundation also celebrated Dolly Parton's birthday with over 200 in attendance. The Programming Team helped with children's activities. Enrollment partners were present in support of Dolly Parton's Imagination (DPIL) program. Volunteers helped to enroll kids and hand out cookies donated by HyVee.
- E. Friends of the Library Report – Libby Slappey
 - Ms. Slappey reported. The Friends sold children's books at the Dolly Parton birthday party and earned more than three times as much as last year's event. This year, in addition to children's books, they also sold parenting books. Amazon continues to grow in sales. January's sales figures were higher than December, which was a record month. February appears to be promising. Previously, the Friends sold about two to three books a week on the platform and is now selling about two to three books a day.
 - The Friends are also selling book sets on Facebook Marketplace. They will evaluate this new endeavor. Online sales of book sets would be cost prohibitive with shipping costs. The Friends plan to sell books at Lion Bridge Brewery to on the Houbly Days' weekend in Czech Village.
 - F. Library Board Committee Reports

- Advocacy Committee – Elisabeth Hepworth, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Hepworth reported. At this time, there are no action items to report. The committee is watching what’s happening at the state and federal level and will share updates as the legislative sessions unfold.
- Building Committee – Jade Hart, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Hart reported. The committee met with Fehr Graham, contractors for the Urban Plaza. The committee and the contractor are continuing to revise the plan to meet the project needs and budget. The Foundation graciously increased their contribution to the project so we can do more. There is nothing to show the full board at this time. Ms. Hart also noted that our City partners have been helpful in the process.
 - Plans for the Westside Library continue. Recently, the committee met with Genus Landscaping to review design ideas and give feedback for the building’s east and west entrances, both courtyards, and the Discovery Garden, which is adjacent to the west entrance. Ms. Schmidt showed the designs and noted that the final designs and furniture are not yet final. The Discovery Garden, which will have seating, interactive literacy features, and an outdoor classroom space, is part of the library’s project because it’s right outside the front door. The idea is to include it right away so that space is finished at opening. The design has been in collaboration with the City’s Parks and Recreation department – they will maintain it – and are thrilled to have this addition to the Library and Parks campus. Construction continues on the library itself has slowed down because of the weather. Garling Construction still feels good about the progress and overall timeline. Contractors are on top of the ordering items to be cognizant of cost and lead times. Friends volunteer Steve Sovern has been taking drone photographs for us, which are helpful as underground work turns into above ground work.
- Finance Committee – Chris Casey, Committee Chair
 - Ms. Casey reported. She briefly reviewed the December finances, which marks a halfway point through the fiscal year. There are no concerns or surprises.
 - **Action:** Contract Amendment No. 4: OPN Architects for Westside Library Project (original contract amount was \$1,272,100; total contract amount with this amendment is \$1,460,800). Ms. Casey noted that this request came from OPN. As the construction cost was underbudget, we are adding items back into the project. These fees are for OPN’s time to investigate and incorporate those changes into the design.

The committee recommendation to approve the revised contract total with OPN to \$1,460,800 as presented in the packet carried with unanimous approval.

- **Action:** Linn County Contract for Library Services FY25. Linn County sent the contract for library services to support unincorporated county residents. This is the standard contract to accept \$79,161.50 for services in this fiscal year.

The committee recommendation to accept the Linn County Contract for Library Services in FY25 for \$79,161.50 as presented in the packet carried with unanimous approval.

- **Action:** FY26 Budget. Ms. Casey walked through the budget, which will ultimately go to City Council for approval. As a reminder, the approval is for Operations (151), Public Library Grants (7010) and CIP (316). Operationally, this is a flat budget to maintain current services – nothing has been added or removed. Revenue and expenses are increasing a bit but they balance each other out without extras. The City asked all departments to cut discretionary spending by 3% and with increased revenue, overall expenses can remain the same. We will need to watch a few things in FY26 for potential amendments:

- A bill has been proposed at the State, which may alter the revenue we receive at approximately \$115,000.

- With our MLN partners, we are close to deciding on our ILS provider for a five-year contract. So far, the bids are under our current rate; however, this is also reflected in revenue because Marion and Hiawatha pay us for their portion of the contract.
- The library will take the opportunity to review any staff opening and make the best call for future state for the new library in FY27. The goal is to add two FTE for the new library.

For the Public Library Grants portion of the budget, there are no changes or concerns to discuss. In the CIP budget, money is set aside for the books budget. A sizable bequest was given to the Foundation for materials, which is being held to support the new library's collection.

The committee recommendation to accept the FY26 budget as presented in the board packet carried with unanimous approval.

- Personnel and Policy Committee – Susie McDermott, Committee Chair
 - Ms. McDermott reported. The committee reviewed two policies this month.
 - **Action:** Policy 3.05 Internet and Computer Usage. This policy is established to remind patrons of their responsibility to use library-provided computers and Internet at their discretion. Library staff do not control or monitor the information available so it's the person's responsibility – or parents for a minor child – to use the resources appropriately and responsibly. There are no recommended changes at this time.
 - **Action:** Policy 3.06 Library Access for Sex Offenders Convicted of Sex Offenses Against Minors. By law, these individuals cannot come to the library in person; however, they still have options to access the library, which are outlined in the policy. The committee did not recommend changes as there have been no issues in maintaining access in these cases.

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

G. Library Director's Report

- Ms. Schmidt reported. Ms. Schmidt, along with the other MLN directors, attended the Iowa Library Association's (ILA) Lobby Day at the State Capitol. Unfortunately, timing was bad – a member of House died and the funeral was the same day. She did not see anyone from the House but spent time with local Senators. It was nice to hear how much these leaders use and appreciate libraries.
- This month's ILA newsletter highlighted our library twice. One feature was about the story time with Iowa athlete Ethan Hurkett, which brought in new audiences. Another article featured an ILA member who is a school librarian at Washington High School. He was part of the school librarians who presented at the spring 2024 staff day to talk about book recommendations for kids. It was a great presentation for our staff and to build connections with school librarians.
- We're in the process of getting quotes to replace a majority of the soft seating around the downtown building. Based on preliminary quotes, it is more cost effective – and with warranties – to buy new versus replacing pieces. The current chair styles we have are discontinued but we're looking at very similar styles in vinyl for easier cleaning. In addition, some of the lighting is not working or bulbs has been discontinued without replacements. For example, there is a mud-in light over the Commons that we can no longer get bulbs for. We're working with Hawkeye Electric for options. A discussion as held on when decisions like this go to a committee versus staff. Ms. Schmidt felt the distinction would be if staff were electing to choose a style significantly different. The board agreed. Regardless, anything over \$50,000 will go to the Finance Committee for approval.
- This winter, Cedar Rapids' homeless population has increased, which brings more individuals to the library. Ms. Schmidt and Public Service leadership have had several

conservations about how everyone is welcome at the library but not all behaviors are welcome. There are levels of frustration but it has been helpful for people to understand everyone is welcome and staff can address behavioral concerns. The Public Service team does an incredible job at addressing behavioral issues with dignity and respect. There have been issues downtown with groups of teens, which has happened at the library and in other areas. Similarly, kids are encouraged to be here if they can behave. Ms. Casey asked what does success look like for teens at the library. Mr. Simonson shared success is 15-20 teens using the spaces and not impeding on access or being disruptive. Staff are more effective at managing behaviors because they have built relationships with our regular teen users.

- As a reminder, the first Corridor Libraries Staff Day is on Thursday, February 20. We will host staff and representatives from 14 libraries from Linn and Johnson counties. The day starts with our keynote speaker, Shola Richards, at the DoubleTree along with the City leadership team. Then we'll come back to the library for a book signing – Mr. Richard's book called *Civil Unity* – followed by lunch and afternoon sessions. All trustees are invited to attend and should have received the program guide via email yesterday.

H. Old Business

- There being no old business, the meeting continued.

I. New Business

- **Action:** Tentative Agreement CWA Wages July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2027. The library and Union negotiated for wages for fiscal years' 2026 and 2027, as the agreement only noted years 2023-25. Ms. Schmidt is pleased that the Library and City could give bargaining staff the maximum across the board wage increase we could offer.

Mr. Elges moved to accept the Tentative Agreement for CWA wages as presented in the packet. Ms. Casey seconded. The action carried with unanimous approval.

J. Adjournment

- There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:14 pm.

The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Thursday, March 6, 2025, at 4 pm in the Community Room, Ladd Library