

New Haven Free Public Library
Library Board of Directors
Minutes of Meeting
September 28, 2021

Members Present: Dr. Anderson, Dr. Garcia-Blocker, Mr. Giering, Ms. Merson, Alder Morrison, Ms. Logan, Ms. Lamar, Ms. Schneider, Mr. Cruz.

Staff Present: John Jessen, Luis Chavez-Brumell

Welcome

Dr. Anderson called the meeting to order at 5:40 pm. A quorum was present.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes

Dr. Anderson asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, including the August 2021 Minutes. Ms. Schneider moved to approve the Consent Agenda and Minutes, Ms. Logan seconded, and with no questions or comments, the Board voted to approve the Consent Agenda and Minutes.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Lamar reviewed the August 2021 financials, summarizing both the Board and the Foundation accounts. Overall, revenues and expenses are as expected at this point in the year.

The endowment saw a slight increase.

Dr. Anderson asked for a motion to approve the August 2021 financials, Mr. Giering moved, Ms. Schneider seconded, and with no questions or comments the Board voted to approve the August 2021 financials.

Dr. Garcia-Blocker entered the meeting at 5:50 pm.

Mr. Jessen presented a transfer request from the NHFPL Foundation: \$735,000 from the Stetson Capital Campaign for furniture, fixtures, technology and the Stetson opening day collection. Dr. Anderson asked for a motion to approve the transfer, Ms. Lamar moved, Alder Morrison seconded, and the Board voted to accept the funds from the NHFPL Foundation.

Director's Report

Covid-19 Update

The City is now requiring all employees to be vaccinated or be tested weekly if not vaccinated. In August, the Library had its best monthly circulation since the beginning of the Covid-19 forced closure of physical buildings in March of 2020.

Meeting Rooms are open again with the condition that they are only filled to the capacity that can maintain social distancing and safety.

The Library will be receiving two tranches of money from E-rate called the Emergency Connectivity Fund. The first portion of the money will be used to keep Library-owned hot spots active for another year. The second round of money will be going towards new laptops, specifically for the purposes of lending outside Library buildings.

Staffing

The Library is looking to fill 18 positions. Six of the 18 are for part-time library aides, and these positions are very close to being filled.

The Board discussed different reasons behind the high number of open positions.

A “check in” survey was sent out to all staff. Initial feedback asks for more communication and direction from supervisors and administration.

Mr. Jessen commented that the NHFPL is committed to making sure staff are thriving and healthy by doing things such as providing meaningful professional development and mental health support. Sending out cards celebrating staff achievements and professional milestones, birthdays, etc. are also raising staff morale.

Programs

Books Sandwiched In hosted a successful event with Noam Chomsky, where over 500 people attended via Zoom and Facebook. The Wilson branch celebrated its 15th birthday! Mr. Jessen gave thanks to Dr. Anderson and Mr. Giering for coming out to the event. New nature-themed programs are coming up, such as birding and brown bear events, and are seeing a significant amount of interest from the community. The Library is also working with CitySeed to have story times on the Green on Wednesdays.

The BikeMobile will be getting a new coat of paint featuring the Library’s logo and will be ready for a Spring roll out – or a few perfect winter days. Staff had a lot of fun sharing different names they came up with for the bike!

Disaster Recovery Plan

Administration and facilities are working on updating the Disaster Recovery Plan from 2015 by adding pictures of shut-off valves, meeting spots, etc. Library staff will also be discussing adding scenarios to the Plan, including attentiveness to climate change concerns and flooding.

The Library ran a fire drill at Ives today and will be continuing them at the branches.

Stetson Update

Naming Rights

There are a total of 17 spaces in the new Stetson Library that are eligible to be named based on donation levels. 11 plaques are ready for Board approval. The board requested to grant approval when all the requests are presented to them. Mr. Jessen will share the contract that will be used for the naming rights, recently reviewed by the City, with the Board. The Board plans to vote by e-mail on the framework for the dedication requests and naming rights before the October 30th ribbon cutting ceremony at the new Q-House building.

Mr. Cruz joined the meeting at 6:15 pm.

The revised timeline for the official opening of Stetson is now pushed to December due to a delay in furniture delivery and other supplies.

A tour of the new Stetson Branch Library for Board members is also in the works.

Board Advocacy, Engagement and Communications

Dr. Anderson and Mr. Jessen have discussed holding the October board meeting in person at the Library.

The Board also discussed ways of being more involved with the community, such as board members choosing a branch of the Library to attend an event at least once a month. Ms. Schneider would like to visit Ives Main, Alder Morrison chooses Stetson, Dr. Anderson will go to Stetson and Mitchell, Ms. Merson chooses Ives Main, Mr. Cruz would like to visit all branches, Ms. Logan chooses Wilson and Fair Haven, Mr. Giering would like to visit Wilson or any branch.

Communication with Board members was also mentioned. Mr. Jessen will send both e-mails and calendar invites for future meetings as well as consolidating information into one e-mail to send out to Board members.

City Librarian Reappointment Update

Dr. Anderson explained to the Board the process of reappointment. Mr. Jessen is finishing out the term from the previous City Librarian, Martha Brogan, making it a shorter term than usual. His term expires in February 2022. In January 2022, appointment letters will start to go out. Before this can happen, there will be nominations from the Board starting in late November or early December. The Board will go through a process to review Mr. Jessen for reappointment, which will include a subcommittee from the Board interviewing Mr. Jessen's direct reports and then reconvening to discuss with the all Board members. Mr. Giering, Ms. Merson, and Dr. Garcia-Blocker volunteered to serve as the members of this subcommittee.

Public Comment

Ms. Lamar shared information about Lawyers in Libraries and asked if the Connecticut Bar Association has reached out to the New Haven Library about it. Mr. Jessen confirms that they have been in contact with someone about a program like this, and asked the board to stay tuned to more details.

Ms. Schneider praised the collaboration with KNOWN Coworking and the Library, which is being led by Jen Garguilo of Ives Squared. She saw it shared on social media - <https://www.instagram.com/p/CUN3zUJPK13/>

The Board entered Executive Session at 7:08 pm and came out of Executive Session at 7:20. Dr. Anderson asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Merson so moved, and the meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John Jessen
City Librarian