

New Haven Free Public Library  
Library Board of Directors  
Minutes of Meeting  
October 24, 2023

**Board Members Present:** Dr. Anderson, Mr. Giering, Ms. Lamar, Ms. Gambale, Ms. Sykes, Mr. Cruz, Ms. Merson

**Members Absent:** Alder Morrison, Ms. Logan

**Staff Present:** Maria Bernhey, Luis Chavez-Brumell

**Guests:**

### **Welcome**

Dr. Anderson called the meeting to order at 5:34pm and welcomed Ms. Gambale to the board. Ms. Gambale introduced herself as a resident of the Morris Cove neighborhood who is an experienced social media marketer who has worked with the Known Co-working space. Ms. Gambale was also an Ives Squared Entrepreneur-in-Residence in 2021-2022.

### **Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes**

Dr. Anderson asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda and the September 2023 minutes. Ms. Lamar motioned to approve, and Ms. Merson seconded.

### **Treasurer's Report**

#### Library Board Financials and Budget

Ms. Lamar provided an overview of the Library financials for September 2023.

The revenue is running close at this point in the fiscal year at 23%, only slightly off the anticipated 25%, due to the Passport office budget.

Cost for annual dues appear high but are on target for this point in the budget as most are due at the start of the fiscal year. One payment still showing as open, and those figures should adjust once resolved.

Ms. Lamar shared that the City's approved budget is tracking at 30% of the personnel budget and 25% of the non-personnel budget.

The endowment has decreased slightly due to the market.

## **Director's Report**

Ms. Bernhey delivered the Director's Report.

### Staff vacancies

Ms. Bernhey shared that there are currently five vacancies total including a Children's Librarian position at the Fair Haven Branch and the Librarian IV position to fill the vacancy of Ms. Bernhey. The Human Resources Department has been supporting hiring efforts by actively recruiting candidates specifically for the Librarian II position at the Fair Haven branch. Interviews have been on-going, and hires have been made including to a Library Technical Assistant Position for the Fair Haven Branch.

### Establishing NHFPL as a Book Sanctuary

Ms. Bernhey shared that the Library is pursuing the path of becoming a Book Sanctuary to strengthen the Freedom to Read in the New Haven community and join the efforts of libraries across the country. Ms. Bernhey mentioned the Stamford Library is currently the only library identified as a Book Sanctuary in Connecticut. This work reaffirms the values expressed in Lt. Governor Bysiewicz's October press conference supporting mental health for you and protecting the right to read Banned Books. Ms. Lamar noted that this topic was previously presented by Maureen Sullivan and the Board agreed to move forward as an established sanctuary. Dr. Anderson asked about the engagement of library staff on this topic and Ms. Bernhey commented that staff are already doing work highlighting banned materials and this movement will be favorable.

### Staff Development

Ms. Bernhey invited Mr. Chavez-Brumell to discuss the upcoming Customer Service training for all library staff which will be led by Andrew Sanderbeck from the People's Connect Institute on November 15<sup>th</sup>. The library will be closed to the public for this systemwide staff development. Mr. Sanderbeck is respected in the library field for his customer service and provides training to the CT State Library.

### Updated Collection Development Policy

The CT State Library has provided new guidelines requiring libraries to update their collection development policies on a yearly basis to ensure that there are clear guidelines in place to address any potential book challenges. Library staff have worked diligently to update the existing collection development policy to meet state guidelines. There will be a more robust diversity audit forthcoming. Ms. Lamar motioned to approve with grammatical corrections seconded by Mr. Cruz.

### **Board Member Nomination Subcommittee update**

Mr. Giering shared that he and Ms. Sykes continue to explore the list of potential candidates to share with the Library Board and City Hall. They have reached out to several potential candidates to explore membership consideration for the Board and have received a positive response from two interested community members. The subcommittee will continue its search for a third candidate to recommend for consideration by the Library Board and City Hall.

### **Board Member Nomination Process**

Dr. Anderson discussed the Library Board nomination process and emphasized a shared recommitment to the internal process to ensure diverse representation across New Haven.

Ms. Gambale asked about the process of communication of interested applicants from the City of New Haven Boards and Commissions process and its incorporation into the internal Library Board vetting. Ms. Gambale shared her experience applying through New Haven's Boards and Commissions.

Ms. Merson shared her knowledge of the past process noting that a member of the Mayor's office would refer interested candidates to the President of the Library Board.

Dr. Anderson discussed the appointment process and highlighted the terms for all current board members.

### **Public Comment**

The December meeting of the Library Board will be a joint meeting with the Library Foundation Board on December 12<sup>th</sup> from 5-6pm.

Dr. Anderson called for adjournment at 6:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Luis Chavez-Brumell

Deputy Director