

New Haven Free Public Library
Library Board of Directors
Minutes of Meeting
September 22, 2020

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

Staff Present: John Jessen

Welcome

Ms. Schneider called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. A quorum was present.

Update on Board Members

Ms. Schneider shared that Irene Logan's nomination process has concluded and she has been officially approved to join the Board.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes

Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, including the August 2020 Minutes. Dr. Anderson moved to approve the Consent Agenda, Ms. Lamar seconded, and with no questions or comments the Board voted to approve the Consent Agenda.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Jessen and Ms. Lamar delivered the Treasurer's Report, reviewing the August 2020 financial reports.

Board Budget

Mr. Jessen reported that the board budget for August 2020 continues to be as expected due to the Library's response to Covid-19. Copier rentals are an ongoing expense that will more than likely not see the revenue generated from use due to the Library closures. Mr. Jessen stated that he is exploring ways for the Library to find alternative sources of revenue to close projected gaps.

Foundation

On the Unrestricted income side of the Foundation budget, the Library added \$100,000 from a transfer from the Library Foundation. These monies will be dispersed throughout the unrestricted expenses portion of the budget as Mr. Jessen addresses needs. He informed the board that CT Next will be making a grant payment shortly. CT Next grant expenses thus far this year have been spent mainly on select databases, supplies for Ives Squared and virtual events. Expenses for the Library's Summer Learning program were down this year. Mr. Jessen commented that Young Minds and Family Learning staff will be making adjustments to their virtual events after analyzing what worked and did not work over the summer.

Endowment

The Endowment has had a small increase. After slipping in value at the beginning of the fiscal year, the endowment continues to regain it's former levels.

August 2020 Summary

Ms. Lamar introduced a Summary document of the financials for the Library Board, the Foundation and specific budgets from the City budget. The goal with this new additional report is to give the board a high-level view of the entire fiscal picture of all budgets combined. Mr. Giering commented that having information about employee salary budgets, from the City budget, would be something he would like to have shared with the Board as it would be helpful with advocacy. General board discussion followed regarding this new report. Ms. Lamar stated that she was working with Mr. Jessen to fine tune this report. The board asked that next month the Summary lead off the Treasurer's Report.

After a call for more questions or comments, Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to accept the August 2020 financials, Ms. Merson moved, Dr. Anderson seconded, and the Board voted to approve the August 2020 financials.

Reopen Updates

The Library system continues to move forward with its reopening plans in accordance with state and City recommendations and guidelines Mr. Jessen reported that curbside service continues to be popular at all branches. The Ives Branch will be opening a Study Center on October 5th. Protocols for this area will be the same as the Technology Center. Board members asked how the Library was utilizing the Readmobile. Mr. Jessen said that because the Library is still discouraging browsing, and staffing levels are low, the Readmobile is not being activated at this time. The Library is researching a possible partnership with a New Haven organization to launch a Technology Van using an existing Library van. Mr. Jessen stated he will update the board as developments occur with this possible new initiative.

Director's Report

Staffing

The Library is currently interviewing for numerous positions. The amount of vacant positions is due to an unofficial hiring freeze, retirements and life changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Positions include: two Librarian IV's, a Deputy Director, two Librarian II's and nine part-time staffers.

Community Learning Hubs

At the request of the Mayor, the Library will be committing spaces at branch locations to create Community Learning Hubs. Details are still being finalized. There will be 10-12 children at each branch location and possibly 20-35 at the Ives Main Library. Branch sites, embedded in their communities, are more ideal due to proximity of the students. Parks and Recreation will be supplying a staff member to run the Hubs. There is no official start date, but the City Youth Department plans on park recreational centers kicking off their Community Learning Hubs the first week of October. Clifford Beers has taken the lead in organizing community efforts to establish these sites.

Outreach

Managers and their staffs are revisiting their outreach sites. An internal document was expanded to update and collect all schools, food distribution sites, social support agencies, religious organizations, health centers, special events, and much more. Though staff will eventually visit all the sites on a

rotating basis, this fall the emphasis will be on reaching out to school lunch sites and food distributions centers.

Dr. Anderson questioned how the Book Mobile might be used in the outreach efforts to children, noting previous concerns about contact with books and safety with COVID. Mr. Jessen confirmed that at this time that the expense to bring out the book mobile, when safety protocols will not allow browsing, is not economically feasible. General discussion occurred with board members about how the Library was communicating and sharing information with teachers and the community.

Fine Free

The NHFPL has gone Fine Free! Mr. Jessen shared that the press conference with the Mayor and both board presidents on the step of the Ives Main Library was a great success. He offered thanks to Ms. Schneider and Mr. Giering for attending the event. Board members offered up congratulations to Mr. Jessen and the staff of the Library for this historic event. Ms. Schneider mentioned that the NHFPL is the first of its size to go fine free for all patrons, hopefully leading the way for others to join.

Public Comment

Mr. Cruz mentioned that the City's Arts, Cultural, and Tourism department recently hosted the creation of the first Black Lives Matter mural in New Haven. It was completed under the guidance of local artist Kwadwo Adae. He said it was a great community building event and urged board members to check out the mural on Bassett Street. Dr. Garcia-Blocker asked about the size of the Black Lives Matter mural on Bassett Street.

Ms. Schneider and Dr. Anderson commented that they love curbside pick-up and what a great resource it is for the community, especially now as the library is fine free.

Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Anderson moved, Ms. Merson seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 6:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John Jessen
City Librarian and Director