

New Haven Free Public Library  
Library Board of Directors  
Minutes of Meeting  
April 28, 2020

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

**Staff Present:** John Jessen

Guest: Lauren Bisio (minutes)

**Welcome**

Ms. Schneider called the meeting to order at 5:33pm. A quorum was present.

**Approval of Consent Agenda**

Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, including the March 2020 Minutes and April 2020 Agenda. Ms. Merson moved to approve the Consent Agenda, Mr. Sulpasso seconded, and with no questions or comments the Board voted to approve the Consent Agenda.

**Treasurer's Report**

Mr. Sulpasso delivered the Treasurer's Report.

Board Budget

The financials were distributed in advance, and show a continuing drop in income from fees as all library locations are closed. Mr. Sulpasso directed the Board's attention to the Miscellaneous Sales line and \$10,000 of associated revenue. Rather than sales, the line reflects income from old bank accounts closed and transferred to the Wells Fargo account. The Library had two accounts at local banks that were suspended due to inactivity, and Mr. Jessen worked with the State to claim the money. These accounts were created to assist in the management of individual grants. The Wells Fargo bank account is now the account of note being used by the Library as per the City's banking strategies. One additional account remains open, and is in the process of being closed and transferred. The Board affirmed the goal of streamlined accounts and banking.

Dr. Anderson and Alder Morrison arrived at 5:40pm.

Mr. Sulpasso commended Mr. Jessen for controlling expenses, noting that the Board budget ended the month in a net positive position, entering the fourth quarter in a strong financial position.

Dr. Garcia-Blocker arrived at 5:45pm.

Foundation

The Library Board received a large transfer of \$122,500 in unrestricted funds from the NHFPL Foundation in March. Anticipated expenses against the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) grant were recorded, which include 6 months of Liberty Community Services case management at Ives, Wilson and Fair Haven libraries as well as print and digital health literacy titles.

## Endowment

Mr. Sulpasso reported the endowment has not suffered the same losses as the general market, despite high volatility and uncertainty. The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven has advised there may be short-term losses given the widespread economic uncertainty, but funds are well positioned for strategic growth, with long-term projections still above benchmarks.

Dr. Anderson moved to approve the Treasurer's Report and Mr. Giering seconded. The Board voted to approve with no questions or comments.

## **Report from Nominating Committee and Election of Officers**

Ms. Merson and Dr. Garcia-Blocker delivered the Nominating Committee Report. Mr. Sulpasso is relocating out of New Haven and will therefore be leaving the Library Board, resulting in two vacancies. Ms. Schneider has agreed to continue serving as chair for a final term, and Dr. Anderson has agreed to continue serving as Vice President. There is no internal candidate to fill the role of Treasurer, and the need is immediate given current circumstances.

Ms. Merson put forth a new Board member candidate Susan Lamar for consideration to fill the vacant position and serve as Treasurer. She spoke of her commitment to New Haven and extensive financial experience. Ms. Schneider and Mr. Sulpasso agreed to meet with her as soon as possible and to share their feedback and recommendation along with Lamar's resume with the Board via email.

Ms. Schneider asked for a vote on the slate of officers, and the Board voted unanimously to approve the recommendations of the Executive Nominating Committee.

Ms. Schneider emphasized that filling open positions on the Board is a top priority and asked the Board to submit any recommendations to Mr. Giering by May 4, 2020.

## **Covid-19 Response**

Mr. Jessen reported Covid-19 is bringing numerous challenges to staff. Since all library locations closed on March 13, 2020, staff have watched over 600 webinars from home pursuing professional development topics, department needs, and wellness concerns. The website has gone live with a chat function, and departments are rolling out virtual programming. Ms. Schneider encouraged Library staff to collaborate with partner organizations to create and promote content. City departments are working with nonprofits and other organizations to provide services and resources to people experiencing homelessness who are no longer able to visit library locations.

The Library and Foundation are exploring grant opportunities to address budget shortfalls and the increased demand for e-resources while stay-at-home directives remain in place. The Library is working from the most recently updated State guidance on reopening, and the Admin Team is drawing upon recommendations from both the Library's Safety Committee as well as City guidance. The Board discussed the facilities needs and policy considerations upon reopening, and Mr. Jessen assured the Board that he will work with guidance and recommendations from the American Library Association, the CT Library Association, and various City departments including Human Resources, Labor Relations, Disability Services, and the Health Department.

## **Director's Report**

### Staffing

The City has paused all new hire processing and critical full-time positions including Deputy Director, Mitchell Branch Manager, and Fair Haven Librarian II remain unfilled. The Board discussed the timeline to fill these positions and how best to advocate at City Hall for the Library's staffing needs at a time of fiscal uncertainty and budgetary constraints. The final public budget testimony opportunity is May 11, 2020 and the Foundation will continue to lead advocacy efforts. Ms. Schneider asked Board members to attend and submit testimony or send a letter of support.

### Collections

Since pivoting to digital resources, the Library issued over 200 e-cards and database use has increased significantly. A sign of the current times, lynda.com's most popular class is a tutorial on how to use the Zoom videoconferencing platform.

### Grants

The third year of CTNext funding is concluding with an additional \$40,000 to purchase iPads and laptops in response to Covid-19. The Library will request a fourth year of funding to replicate Ives Squared programming at branches and improve marketing of Library programs and services.

### Great Give

The Great Give is May 5-6, and the Foundation is encouraging stakeholders to hold virtual cocktail hours to increase participation. The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven sponsors a number of prizes throughout the 36-hour online fundraising drive, and the Library is part of the NewAlliance Foundation's Literacy Match and received an anonymous gift of \$15,000 to use as an additional matching incentive.

### **Fine Free Rollout**

The plan to roll out the Library's Fine Free policies in FY21 was distributed to the Board in advance, detailing how the Library will end fines on library-owned materials as long as they are returned. The timing of the rollout will depend on public health developments, and may be postponed pending reopening plans. At this time, while the Library remains closed to the public because of Covid-19, it will continue to provide fine forgiveness and encourage customers to keep materials out until the Library reopens.

### **Public Comment**

Alder Morrison announced that the Cornell Scott Hill Health Center is distributing masks to Dixwell and Newhallville residents. The Board discussed citywide resources for the people experiencing homelessness.

Ms. Schneider thanked Mr. Sulpasso again for his service on the Board. Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Dr. Anderson motioned, Alder Morrison seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 7:02pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lauren Bisio  
Director of Advancement, NHFPL Foundation

