

New Haven Free Public Library
Library Board of Directors
Minutes of Meeting
March 23, 2021

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

Staff Present: John Jessen

Welcome

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

Mr. Cruz entered the meeting at 5:34 pm.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes

Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, including the February 2021 Minutes. Ms. Merson moved to approve the Consent Agenda and Minutes, Dr. Garcia-Blocker seconded. Mr. Jessen noted a typo that was corrected on the February Minutes. Without further questions or comments, the Board voted to approve the Consent Agenda and Minutes.

Dr. Anderson entered the meeting at 5:36 pm.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Lamar shared the February financial summary for both the Board and the Foundation accounts. Overall revenues and expenses are as expected at this point in the year. The \$146,000 transfer from the Foundation last month is now on the Foundation balance sheet, and the Foundation budget will correct itself as additional transferred funds come onto the balance sheet.

Endowment

The Endowment took a slight dip this month. Prior to this, it was at its highest level since the spring of 2019.

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

Covid-related Service Updates

Mr. Jessen shared that the Library plans to expand in-building services on Monday, March 29th. This includes opening computer and printer access to Mitchell, Fair Haven and Wilson branches. All locations, except for the Stetson branch, will allow in-person browsing and public access at up to 25% capacity. Appointments for these services are recommended, but walk-ins will be welcome if space is available. Curbside pick-up, WiFi hot spot and laptop lending services will continue.

Yale University donated hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes for all branches to make available for patrons to use. The Library will also be handing out masks to patrons when needed.

Starting Saturday, March 27th, the Wilson branch program room will serve as a COVID-19 vaccination site operated by Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center.

Director's Report

Staffing

Mr. Jessen is optimistic that he will be able to confirm the hiring of a new branch manager at Wilson Library soon. Additional hiring remains on hold as the City is in a hiring freeze.

Programs

The "Books Sandwiched In" program of lunchtime author talks has been very successful. The Library will be partnering with the Yale-China Association to feature author Te-Ping Chen who will discuss her book *Land of Big Numbers: Stories*, and the Library is excited to develop more programming with the Yale-China Association.

Stetson

The IT team will do a walk-through at the new Q House building to help prepare specifications for the technology that will be purchased for the new Stetson Library. Alder Morrison confirms a soft opening is planned for September 2021. The Library Foundation is updating the list of named spaces and will coordinate with donors to submit a list of proposed naming rights to the Library Board for approval.

Russell Fund

The Russell Fund, originally created to assist staff who want to continue their education, has been dormant for some years. This fund is managed by the Community Foundation and has a balance of \$59,000. Mr. Jessen proposed offering scholarships, low-interest loans, or forgivable loans from this fund to staff from underrepresented communities or with financial needs to further their education in Library Science or support other professional development. Mr. Jessen also suggested increasing the fund's balance to support these endeavors in a longer term and sustainable ways. The Board was in full support of exploring these options further and discussed some possibilities for activating the fund that could include external partnerships. A committee consisting of Dr. Anderson, Ms. Merson and Ms. Logan was formed to pursue possible scenarios and develop a timeline for an exploration and implementation plan.

Outdoor Programs/Services Update

Mr. Jessen gave a brief presentation to the board about the Library's outdoor program and services planning. The Library system is fortunate to have green spaces around or near all its buildings, and the Library will be moving some of its traditional programming outside to maximize safety and providing new innovative experiences. There will be a Story Walk for families to walk and read in Edgewood Park in May, and other park areas are under consideration for this experience as well. The Young Minds and Family Learning department is excited by the prospect of running a series of programs on the Green, and staff are creating hybrid events which would be a hybrid of online and in-person.

Other future offerings will be focused on an intergenerational, whole-family learning programs, technology assistance, and job and career assistance.

Budget Advocacy

Ms. Schneider encouraged fellow Directors to give in-person or written testimony at the upcoming Board of Alders Finance Committee Public Budget Hearings and emphasized the importance of advocacy on behalf of the Library as Board members. She thanked Mr. Giering for his testimony at the first budget hearing and recognized Alder Morrison's ongoing efforts as a member of the Financial Committee. The Library still accounts for less than 1% of the general fund budget, and the Mayor's "Crisis Budget" proposes closing Mitchell Library. The next opportunity to advocate for the Library will be March 30th. Mr. Jessen commented that many people in the community have reached out wanting to show support for the library but were unsure of how to give public testimony. He said there was a one sheet with info that was being provided. Dr. Anderson suggested this could also be another opportunity for the Library to serve the community by providing a short "how-to" video for public testimony, and she will follow up with Mr. Jessen regarding this project.

Public Comment

Alder Morrison announced that the Q-House Advisory Board voted to recommend that the City and LEAP enter into an agreement for the facilities, programming and services management at the new Q House.

Ms. Schneider asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Merson moved, Alder Morrison seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 6:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

John Jessen
City Librarian