

AUSTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING
September 30, 2022; 4:00 p.m.

Chairperson Melissa Bonorden called a special meeting of the Austin Public Library Board to order at 4:15 p.m., on Friday, September 30, 2022, at the Austin Public Library, for the purpose of discussing bids received for the Project 25 addition and remodel construction proposal, as well as addressing concerns regarding staffing of the library's hotspot lending program.

PRESENT: Melissa Bonorden, Kristi Beckman, Sue Grove, Ted Hinchcliffe, Stephanie Postma

ABSENT: Jwokamer Debock, Nitaya Jandragholica, Shannon Lysne, Alex Mayfield

ALSO PRESENT: Library Director Julie Clinefelter, City Engineer Steven Lang, City Council Member Mike Postma, Friends of the Library President Bethie Carlton, Sara Steinhoff

CONSTRUCTION BIDS FOR REMODEL AND ADDITION (PROJECT 25):

Library Director Julie Clinefelter and City Engineer Steven Lang presented the four bids received for the construction project, with totals ranging from \$1,619,770 to \$2,012,500. The anticipated total from the original estimates received has ranged from around \$680,000 to \$1,000,000, presenting a sizeable shortfall in funds earmarked for the project.

The board discussed a number of options, including postponing the project indefinitely, completing only some portions of the project at this time. It was concluded both of these options were problematic due to continuously increasing costs, restrictions related to the bidding process, and the need to move forward with some portions of the project regardless because of building maintenance issues and programming needs. Steven Lang advised the bids were only valid for 45 days and would need to be accepted at the November 7, 2022, City Council meeting if the project is to move forward.

MOTIONS:

Stephanie Postma moved to approve use of up to \$100,000 of expendable funds from the library's Walter Wienke Fund towards the costs of the construction. Ted Hinchcliffe seconded the motion, and the motion was approved. Kristi Beckman moved to approve use of a to-be-determined portion of the library's fund balance toward construction costs to allow the project to move forward. Sue Grove seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Director Clinefelter agreed to approach City administrators and the City Council at the work session on Monday, October 3, 2022, to explore available options to increase funding for the project, in order to avoid delays that would result in overall increased costs and would be detrimental to provision of library services.

HOTSPOT PROGRAM:

Director Clinefelter advised the board of the need to reconsider expansion of the hotspot program for 2023, due in part to the denial by City Council of the request for a new Technology Coordinator position in 2023. She noted the negative effect on general library programs and services caused by having one of the two primary program librarians taking on the 15-20 hours per week required to manage the hotspot device program, as well as the increased need for digital access in light of termination of the school district's hotspot lending program.

The board explored available options, including termination of the hotspot program and working with the community to address the digital divide in other ways, scaling back the program (which would increase the waiting list for devices that is already averaging 50-80 people at any given time), and approaching City administration and City Council to address these issues.

Julie Clinefelter will present the new information about the loss of the schools' hotspot program, provide clarification of the previous request for the technology coordinator position, work to secure additional outside funding for the position and ask City Council to reconsider approving the position.

OTHER BUSINESS: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ted Hinchcliffe moved to adjourn at approximately 5:30 p.m.; Sue Grove seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristi Beckman, Board Secretary