

AUSTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

June 12, 2023; 4:30 p.m.

Chairperson Melissa Bonorden called the regular meeting of the Austin Public Library Board to order at 4:30 p.m., on Monday, June 12, 2023, at the Austin Public Library.

PRESENT: Melissa Bonorden, Gema Alvarado-Guerrero, Kristi Beckman, Sue Grove, Ted Hinchcliffe, Shannon Lysne, Stephanie Postma

ALSO PRESENT: Julie Clinefelter, Sara Steinhoff, Jeff Austin

ABSENT: Jwokamer Debock, Nitaya Jandragholica

AGENDA:

Chair Melissa Bonorden proposed the agenda be amended to move item X, Citizen's Comments, to immediately follow item III, Review of Citizen Comments from the May Library Board Meeting. Sue Grove moved to approve the agenda with the proposed changes; Ted Hinchcliffe seconded. Motion carried.

MINUTES:

A motion was made by Ted Hinchcliffe, seconded by Shannon Lysne, to approve the May 8, 2023, meeting minutes as presented. Carried.

REVIEW OF CITIZEN COMMENTS FROM MAY 8, 2023, LIBRARY BOARD MEETING:

Library Director Julie Clinefelter and members of the board responded to questions posed by members of the public at the board's May 8 meeting:

Question: Why present a Drag Queen Story Time?

Response by the Library Director: The library's mission is "connecting people with resources to foster literacy, equity and community in a safe, comfortable space." The Drag Queen Story Time speaks to all three parts of the mission. The program is also in keeping with the City of Austin's status as part of the Welcome America network, which it joined in 2016 to demonstrate its commitment to build bridge between micro-communities. The Drag Queen Story Time is in keeping with that commitment.

In addition, the program is in accordance with the *Library Bill of Rights*, which states "...library resources selected should be provided for the interest, information and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation." Further, the library should provide affirming spaces for all people in our community, and Drag Queen Story Time is part of that. Finally, the Austin Public Library's Programming Policy states, "Decisions to provide programs will not be made on the basis of any anticipated approval or disapproval, but solely on the merits of the program in serving the interests of library users."

Clinefelter concluded her response by saying the performer is a vetted, trusted professional, and the content of the program is the same as for any other library story time, with songs, stories and a message of acceptance and community.

Question: How is the program funded?

Response from board member Ted Hinchcliffe: This particular program is funded by donations, as are many of the library's program and services.

Additional board comments:

The board expressed support with how programming and materials selection are performed by the library director and staff, noted the importance of highlighting local artists and talent, as well as supporting all kids in the community through the wide variety of programming offered. They also stated an awareness the program is not for everyone, and emphasized the importance of parental responsibility in making the right choices for what their children read and see.

CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

The following citizens were present at the meeting and the following persons spoke in opposition to the planned Drag Queen Story Time program:

- Barry Magnusen, 5375 295th St, Austin, MN
- Sam Brunton, 2206 14th St SW, Austin, MN
- Connie Rose, 1916 6th Ave SE, Austin, MN

The following citizens spoke in support of the library's decision to hold the planned Drag Queen Story Time:

- Catherine Haslag, 401 14th St NW, Austin, MN
- George Favell, 301 3rd Ave NW, Austin, MN
- Darya Gemmel, 4232 Salem Ave, St. Louis Park, MN
- Jennifer Kittelson, 2104 5th Ave NE, Austin, MN

The following citizen thanked the board and recited a prayer:

- Alec Franck, 53663 180th St, Austin, MN

EXPENSES AND FINANCE REPORTS:

A motion was made by Stephanie Postma to approve expenditures and accept the finance reports for May 2023. Kristi Beckman seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous roll-call vote.

SELCO REPORT:

Sue Grove advised of possible changes coming for the Legacy Grant applications process, including a requirement for libraries that had not received a grant to be given priority, and a requirement for collaborations for cooperative grants. She also noted her term as the Mower County representative on the SELCO Board has ended, and concluded by noting how other board attendees always had good things to say about Austin and the innovative programs at the library.

CITY/COUNTY LIAISON REPORTS:

City Council Liaison Jeff Austin noted the 2024 budget process will start soon, with a goal to keep the levy increase down to a reasonable amount.

The County Board of Commissioners liaison was not present.

REVIEW AND APPROVE LIBRARY'S PROGRAMMING POLICY:

Ted Hinchcliffe proposed revising the library's Materials Reconsideration form to specifically include reference to library programs. Director Clinefelter advised she would put together a proposed revision and bring it to the June meeting. The discussion was tabled until then.

OPERATIONAL REPORT:

Julie Clinefelter provided a written report prior to the board meeting, and discussed the following items:

Project 25 Update:

Julie advised she has had several conversations relating to funding for the Kitchen Cart equipment, which will enable the library to host cooking and nutrition classes in the library's new Workshop room, and hopes to get approval soon. She also noted the cart would help the library's contribution to work on local issues of food insecurity, which also includes aspect of the seed library project, headed by Librarian Courtney Schmitt.

Clinefelter noted the May 10 fundraising event went well, despite low attendance, bringing in approximately \$10,000, putting the total progress at about 80% of the revised goal of \$90,000.

Administration:

Director Clinefelter provided a summary sheet for the recently-submitted 2022 APL Annual Report, noting that circulation numbers have somewhat stabilized over the last few years, following several years of decline. She also commented on the growth of library programming and increased use of library space.

Julie also shared information on the passage of the Regional Library Basic Systems Support funding in the Minnesota Legislature, which will increase support for SELCO and local libraries.

Construction Update:

Julie advised the outdoor work is in progress, and final punch list items are being addressed, with hopes that a "grand opening" event could be held on June 30, which is the library building's 26th anniversary.

Request for use of library fund balance:

Director Clinefelter provided cost estimates for updating and centralizing the library's security cameras, and updating the lighting throughout the building to utilize LED fixtures and reduce energy use and expense. She requested use of money from the library's existing fund balance to pay for these two projects.

Kristi Beckman moved to authorize use of library fund balance to pay for the projects as requested; Stephanie Postma seconded. Motion carried.

2024 Budget Process:

Julie noted the 2024 budget process would begin soon. Treasurer Ted Hinchcliffe advised he will organize a meeting of the Finance Committee to prepare a budget proposal for the July board meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Julie Clinefelter noted two of the library's student pages participated in the Mower County CEO program and did a great job on their projects.

BOARD COMMENTS:

Stephanie Postma commended Julie Clinefelter for her ability to handle new and difficult situations by doing appropriate research and following established policies, and showing respect for everyone. Sue Grove also thanked Julie for her work in regards to the construction project. Julie Clinefelter acknowledged the past months have been stressful for the library staff, and expressed her appreciation for their dedication.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ted Hinchcliffe moved to adjourn at 5:30 p.m.; Shannon Lysne seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sara Steinhoff, Recording Secretary

NEXT BOARD MEETING – Monday, July 10, 2023, 4:30 p.m.