

AUSTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

November 13, 2023; 4:30 p.m.

Board Chairperson Melissa Bonorden called the regular meeting of the Austin Public Library Board to order at 4:30 p.m., on Monday, November 13, 2023, at the Austin Public Library.

PRESENT: Melissa Bonorden, Kristi Beckman, Jwokamer Debock, Sue Grove, Ted Hinchcliffe, Nitaya Jandragholica, Stephanie Postma

ALSO PRESENT: Mower County Rep. to SELCO Valerie Sheedy, City Council Liaison Jeff Austin, Julie Clinefelter, Sara Steinhoff

ABSENT: Gema Alvarado-Guerrero (with notice), Shannon Lysne

AGENDA:

Nitaya Jandragholica moved to approve the agenda; Jwokamer Debock seconded. Motion carried.

PRESENTATION BY TECH COORDINATOR ERIC CHRISTIANS

Eric presented a proposal for funding to lease six laptop computers for a three-year period, from SELCO, using money from the Walter Wienke fund, for the purpose of technology programming. He also provided information on robotics and coding educational program kits that would also be purchased with the funding package (which totaled approximately \$12,326.50. Eric noted the programs would be adaptable for all ages.

Stephanie Postma inquired as to the reason for limiting the programs to five students per class. Eric advised this allows for more supervision and assistance, as well as for increased interaction between the students and the trainer - and each other - in a comfortable environment. Postma also asked if there would be opportunities for partnership with the schools on technology programming. Eric responded that having reviewed the recent community survey, there appear to be a number of gaps in what is being taught in the schools in regards to technology. Specifically, the teachers are not necessarily providing the basic computer skills or digital citizenship skills because they are at capacity on teaching their individual subject matter.

Kristi Beckman advised she is a member of the school system's technology committee as well, and provided additional insight about the needs in the community, especially in terms of assistance for parents, where she believes there is a larger role for the library to play.

Jwokamer Debock noted there are digital literacy classes at the middle school level (one teacher in the Austin school district), but the class focuses more on safe use of technology than on basic use skills (keyboarding, etc.). Nitaya asked whether would there be potential for a "traveling lab" type of class to take the opportunities out into the community? Julie Clinefelter responded this would certainly be considered.

Stephanie Postma emphasized the importance of keeping metrics for the pilot program to show effectiveness. Julie - there is a possibility that additional funds will be available for the program through our SELCO fees budget, but that would not be a certainty until their fiscal year changeover next summer. Stephanie reiterated the important of continuing to update City Council on progress of this new position and the new programs.

A motion was made by Ted Hinchcliffe, seconded by Sue Grove, to approve the request for use of money from the Walter Wienke fund for the technology equipment and programs outlined in the presentation by Eric Christians. Motion carried.

MINUTES:

A motion was made by Stephanie Postma, seconded by Ted Hinchcliffe, to approve the October 9, 2023, meeting minutes as presented. Carried.

EXPENSES AND FINANCE REPORTS:

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

SELCO REPORT:

Julie Clinefelter introduced Valerie Sheedy, who will now serve as Mower County's representative to the SELCO advisory board. Valerie reported on the Advocacy Committee meeting she attended, where she participated in the discussion about SELCO's annual Legislative Day.

Sheedy shared information about her background and her job with Mower County Environmental Services Department. All those present introduced themselves and welcomed Valerie to her new role.

CITY/COUNTY LIAISON REPORTS:

Jeff Austin discussed developments regarding the City's employee survey, advising the consultants who performed the survey, and processed and presented the results, have opted to discontinue their work with the City of Austin. He advised he will keep the board apprised as the Council determines the path forward.

County Liaison was not present.

OPERATIONAL REPORT:

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

Strategic Planning in 2024:

Julie reported she has reached out to Krista Ross for assistance with formulating a new strategic plan, with 2024 being a good time to move ahead, now that construction is completed and the library is fully staffed.

Annual Review of the Library Director:

Julie stated she will provide her notes for the annual evaluation to Melissa Bonorden, chair of the personnel committee, prior to the committee's meeting.

Administration:

Director Clinefelter offered a proposal for expanding open hours to include Sundays, 12:00 to 4:00 p.m., starting January 2, and continuing until Memorial Day Weekend. She stated January-May 2024 would provide the library with a good test run to see what kind of traffic the library would get, and information on what services are most used on that day of the week.

Julie noted the goal is to keep the balance of having open hours versus allowing time for librarians to do programming/outreach. She advised the new schedule for will include having librarians back on the service desk more, and pulling back on programs a bit. Opening on Sundays means the people who work that day are available four hours less during the rest of that week.

Julie advised most other similarly-sized libraries in the SELCO region are not open Sundays. Albert Lea is open Sundays, but closed on Saturdays. Winona is currently open Monday through Saturday.

Board members discussed the proposal, with a general consensus that current community needs are tipping the balance towards having more open hours - and pulling back on programming as needed to facilitate that. Those impressions, along with an apparent need for community space - especially for plant professionals – for Sunday meetings and gatherings, led to a consensus of support for the Sunday hours plan.

Julie stated the staff will go forward with piloting Sunday hours for January through May, tracking numbers for visits and meeting rooms, etc., and then close on Sundays for the summer (as was the practice in previous years when Sunday hours were part of the schedule), which will provide time to analyze the information before making a determination about whether to continue with Sundays in the fall.

OTHER BUSINESS: None.

CITIZEN'S COMMENTS: None.

BOARD COMMENTS:

Kristi Beckman expressed appreciation for the children's programs, stating her kids love the library programming - especially the passive programming options. Sue Grove agreed and noted it is really nice to have the information available about gender identity issues, etc., and shared feedback from an individual who expressed gratitude for the library's welcoming space and materials.

ADJOURNMENT:

Stephanie Postma moved to adjourn at 5:40 p.m.; Sue Grove seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sara Steinhoff, Secretary

NEXT BOARD MEETING – Monday, December 11, 2023, 4:30 p.m.