

AUSTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

July 12, 2021; 4:30 p.m.

Vice Chairperson Stephanie Postma called the regular meeting of the Austin Public Library Board to order at 4:30 p.m., on Monday, July 12, 2021, at the Austin Public Library. The meeting was conducted by videoconference via Zoom Meeting, as permitted by Minn. Stat. 13D.021 during the condition of a current health pandemic (COVID-19).

PRESENT: Jwokamer Debock, Sue Grove, Ted Hinchcliffe, Nitaya Jandragholica, Jodi Krueger, Shannon Lysne, Alex Mayfield, Stephanie Postma

ALSO PRESENT: Joyce Poshusta (City Council liaison), Jeff Baldus (County Commissioner), Julie Clinefelter, Jess Lind, Eleanor Hinchcliffe

ABSENT: Melissa Bonorden

AGENDA: Ted Hinchcliffe moved to approve the agenda as presented; Sue Grove seconded. Motion carried.

MINUTES:

A motion was made by Jodi Krueger, seconded by Shannon Lysne, to approve the June 14, 2021, meeting minutes as presented. Carried.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Julie Clinefelter introduced Youth Services Librarian Jess Lind and summer AmeriCorps intern, Eleanor Hinchcliffe, who provided an update on the 2021 Summer Reading Program. Jess noted that numbers are up from 2020, but still lower than in previous (pre-COVID) years. Most of the programs are being held outdoors, which has required adaptations to traditional activities. Jess noted that feedback has been positive, and families appreciate having the programs running. Eleanor shared information on her activities with the library, including assisting with summer reading programs, providing one-on-one assistance with reading, and recording video storytimes for the library website.

EXPENSES AND FINANCE REPORTS:

A motion made by Ted Hinchcliffe was seconded by Nitaya Jandragholica to approve expenditures and accept the finance reports for June 2021. Motion carried by unanimous roll-call vote.

SELCO REPORT:

Sue Grove reported the SELCO's advocacy committee has completed work on profiles of Minnesota legislators to help target advocacy efforts to specific areas of interest for the individual lawmakers, and that information will be available soon. Jeff Baldus congratulated Sue Grove on being named as a Pillar of Austin.

LIAISON REPORTS:

Jeff Baldus noted completion of several road projects and a lot of staff turnover over the summer.

OPERATIONAL REPORT:

Julie Clinefelter provided a written operational report to the board and presented additional information regarding several of the topics covered.

Clinefelter noted a significant increase over previous months in circulation statistics, new card registrations and patron visits for June.

Director Clinefelter also provided an update on current networking efforts, including her work with the community broadband initiative group, noting the schools are increasing the number of hotspot devices they will have available, which will likely result in a decreased reliance on the library's program, allowing for a scaled-back approach in 2022.

Julie noted the upcoming preview in August for the Reading for Life book group, podcast and discussion series that will take place during the 2021-22 program year.

Julie thanked board members for supporting and attending the 25th Anniversary celebration June 30.

Clinefelter reminded board members of her upcoming vacation dates in August and confirmed the next board meeting will take place in September, unless an issue arises that requires the immediate attention of the board. She also confirmed the meetings will return to in-person only, rather than taking place via Zoom or other digital means.

Julie noted she is working on preliminary tasks to formally accept and publicize receipt of the State of Minnesota Construction Grant, which will provide funding towards the project room expansion and other elements of Project 25.

Clinefelter provided an update on curbside service, stating there has been a significant decrease in use of this option. She advised the current plan is to pull back to providing curbside on a call-in basis only. This will allow elimination of the curbside desk station, which will be necessary in order to reopen the hallway to the meeting rooms, so they can be available for public use again this fall.

Lastly, Clinefelter informed the board she has been contacted by the individuals sponsoring the annual donation of a piece of artwork from the annual Austin Artworks Festival to advise they would like the art to be displayed at the library. She will bring information on the suggested piece to the September meeting for board approval and formal acceptance of the artwork.

PROPOSED 2022 LIBRARY BUDGET:

Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair Nitaya Jandragholica presented the Proposed 2022 Library Budget for review and discussion by the board. Julie Clinefelter noted the proposed amounts in non-staff expenses have not change from 2021, and the 2.6% increase in the overall budget request reflects the increase for salaries and benefits according to employee contracts with the City of Austin.

Jodi Krueger moved, and Jwokamer Debock seconded, that the board approve the Proposed 2022 Library Budget request for submission to City Council. Motion carried.

Julie also advised City Council requested all of the department heads to provide Council with details of how unfilled/eliminated staff positions from 2020-2021 have affected operations. Julie noted her response was framed in terms of the successes made possible by the library's previous status of being fully staffed. Both examples she provided to Council reflected the ability of the community to respond to urgent situations (distance-learning necessitated by the pandemic and social unrest in response to the killing of George Floyd) due to groundwork laid and relationships established by the library. She emphasized the library's ability to do the things that keep the library (and by extension, the community) on the cutting edge of technology, as well as maintaining and building relationships among community organizations, is hampered by reducing staff to a level that only allows maintenance of basic services and programs. She also noted the correlation between the number of regular library staff to the number of open hours that can be provided to the community.

Ted Hinchcliffe commented on the importance of having dedicated, professional technology support for the purposes of programming, as well as assuring digital security for the public and staff. Nitaya noted the need for library staff to be able to keep up on awareness of current social circumstances, so that the library can provide the services and programs the community needs to its fullest potential.

Julie concluded by stating her first priority in filling the vacant positions is the library assistant, so that basic services and programs can continue, while giving the best chance for staff to supplement those basics to the fullest extent possible. She noted the second FTE position would be more critical going

into 2022-23, especially as the upcoming construction project nears completion. Board members expressed support for the proposed staffing requests outlined by Director Clinefelter.

OTHER BUSINESS: None.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: None.

BOARD COMMENTS:

Stephanie Postma thanked Jess and Eleanor for attending the board meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Sue Grove moved to adjourn at 5:30 p.m.; Jodi Krueger seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sara Steinhoff, Recording Secretary

NEXT BOARD MEETING – Monday, Sept. 13, 2021, 4:30 p.m.