

LAKE FOREST LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

360 East Deerpath Road, Lake Forest, IL 60045

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

Regular Meeting Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

President Jim Clifton welcomed all and called the meeting to order on November 14, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. in the Kasian Room, Lake Forest Library.

ROLL CALL

Trustees present: Jim Clifton, JoAnn Desmond, Josh Jackson, John F. Johnson, Bob Shaw, Sue Shattock, Heather Strong, Emily Van Bel. Eight Trustees in attendance; a quorum was present.

Library Staff present: Ishwar Laxminarayan, Executive Director, Heidi Krueger, Director of Patron Services, Jim Lee, Facilities Manager, Bledian Ajroja, Assistant Facilities Manager, Lori Rohrer, Head of Youth Services, Kate Buckardt, Head of Adult Services.

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE BOARD

Gareth Pearson of the Lake Forest Caucus (Ward 2) introduced himself and announced he will be the Caucus liaison with the Library Board and will continue to attend the monthly meetings.

CALL FOR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

President Clifton thanked the public for completing the recent city survey, which provided good input for near- and long-term planning for the Library. He also thanked the Friends for organizing the Night at the Library event on November 3 to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Library.

STAFF PRESENTATION: EBOOKS BEHIND THE SCENES –Lydia Frank Adult Services Librarian

Ebooks are offered through three different platforms, Libby, Hoopla and the Cloud Library, and represent 21% of borrowings which has been consistent for some time. What makes this service challenging for the Library is the price, often several times what the same book would cost for a patron to buy outright, compared to regular books which are still discounted by publishers. Depending on the platform, the price could be licensed for a year or a fixed number of checkouts, and then disappears and must be repurchased. Publishers fear cannibalization of book sales so have made Ebooks at first entirely unavailable to libraries, and then finally available but expensive. We have Ebooks available on Libby, where books are purchased through a consortium like the Digital Library of IL; Hoopla, where we pay for an entire catalog which is instantly available and is paid per checkout, and Cloud Library, which is bought just for our patrons and as such, is a smaller collection. Libby is most popular and can have long queues for a popular title. The Library ensures that our patrons have priority by not only participating in the consortium but also buying some copies ourselves so our users jump to the head of the queue for popular titles. One of the findings from the community survey was the

head of the queue for popular titles. One of the findings from the community survey was the number of comments requesting Ebooks and audiobooks, which is surprising considering the Library's large offering. More needs to be communicated to the public on this front.

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

Trustee Desmond made a motion, seconded by Trustee Johnson, to approve the Consent Agenda (omnibus vote of matters 7(a)-7(c))

- a. Approve November 14, 2023 Agenda
- b. Approve October 10, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes
- c. Approve October 2023 Financial Report

NIGHT AT THE LIBRARY

Trustee Desmond, a member of the Friends, shared that the Night at the Library sold 128 tickets and generated proceeds of \$10,000 for the Library. More than 100 residents and supporters attended this festive event, and all agreed this festive evening should happen again.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Trustee Shaw reviewed the results of the recent Lake Forest Community Survey as they pertained to the Library only. This presentation was prepared by the provider, ETC Institute, and reviewed in depth by Trustee Shaw, Shattock and ED Laxminarayan. The same presentation was shared with Library staff.

Response to mailed surveys (7,000 were mailed to all addresses in August), was robust, with 1,450 completed, a high response rate of nearly 21%. Respondents represented all wards, demographics, and longevity in the community. Usage of the Library was not asked as this was not an in-depth Library study, but satisfaction with Library programs and services (how the Library was described in the questionnaire), is among the highest the city offers with 61% citing they are very satisfied. By comparison with other recreational offerings, 59% said they were very satisfied with city parks and trails, and 51% were very satisfied with CROYA youth programs. Critical city services such as fire and emergency medical services and police had higher levels of "very satisfied" at 79% and 70% respectively. (The full presentation can be accessed on the Library's website within the November 14 Board packet).

In terms of broad areas for improvement, what respondents want from the Library is overwhelmingly books and other material (81%), compared to 56% for online resources for research for example. Where the Library is not quite meeting needs is in the area of parking, which we have heard from the public directly, and has become more acute with the loss of spaces to the north.

The staff reviewed the materials on November 6, and used the information for brainstorming around 4 key questions:

1. What do the Survey findings tell us about our Community and our Library?
2. What is the unique role of the Library in a community that has such a wealth of other resources (Gorton, Ragdale, Dickinson Hall, Elawa Farm, History Center, etc.?)
3. What are some quick wins that we can implement to address the Survey findings?

4. What is holding us back? What additional resources do you need to be successful?

ED Laxminarayan noted that the staff generated a wealth of ideas around five key areas: collections, technology, accessibility and parking, user experience and facilities. The next step will be identifying priorities within each of these areas and discussing them with the Board in the Dec or Jan meeting. Importantly, the staff universally noted that one of the primary obstacles to implementing many ideas was staff shortage, which has been an issue for some time. Apparently, this has been an issue across Libraries post-Covid. A further obstacle to recruiting is the Library's lack of space for staff, which in most cases must be shared and can be unappealing to potential hires. Trustee Desmond suggested that addressing this shortage should be evaluated on a broader level in terms of absolute level, pay, and recruitment. ED Laxminarayan pointed out that staffing needs to be developed in the context of the larger strategic plan, which will have implications for organizational structure.

AUDIT REPORT FY 2023

The Board voted unanimously to accept the Audit Committee's report.

BUILDING COMMITTEE

Trustee Strong presented a discussion document listing building projects the Library could address in FY2024/205 to meet long-standing patron and staff needs. These range from disabled access and elevator renovation which would involve construction, to repurposing existing underutilized spaces like the audiobook, reference and business rooms to accommodate staff space or create break-out rooms for collaborative work. Also on the list is working with the city to secure dedicated parking spaces in the lot across the street, or installing lights at the crosswalk so families with children can cross safely. This was an unmet need in the recent Survey.

One of the projects listed is to install HVAC controls in order to move to full system automation. This has been identified as an urgent need, is not yet budgeted, and is estimated to cost approximately \$200K. The Board gave Jim Lee approval to draft an RFP for this project. Trustee Johnson noted that there are unused funds available that can be applied to this purchase within the existing budget.

As to the other projects, Trustee Strong has worked with Trustee Van Bel, ED Laxminarayan and Facilities Manager Jim Lee to identify key areas within the building, and also walked the building with architect Ken Itle of Wiss Janney Elstner who just managed the dome repair project. The purpose of the discussion was not to make decisions on any projects. ED Laxminarayan suggested the staff review this list along with ideas arising from the Survey brainstorm, prioritize them, work with the Building Committee to attach rough costs and then figure out the best way to incorporate public input. Timing can then be planned for execution.

MURAL REPAIR AND RESTORATION

Pre-bid meetings occurred on November 3, and 4-5 bids are expected by the submission deadline of November 17. The committee on this project includes Trustees Strong and Van Bel, Liz Jacob, President of the Friends, Jan Gibson of the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation, Jim Lee, ED Laxminarayan, and former library employee and art expert Patricia Kreisler.

LIBRARY OPERATIONS REPORT

ED Laxminarayan shared that the recent Lake Forest Reads events at the Library, Gorton and Lake Forest College around the book The Seed Keeper was a success. He also noted the Library now has a scanner for printing old photos and helping to restore them to their original vibrancy, and there is a new world language collection for fiction and non-fiction.

WINTER BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

There is a great deal going on at the Library at the moment, which may necessitate a January meeting. ED Laxminarayan suggested that this decision should be made at the December meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Trustee Johnson, head of the Finance Committee announced that discussion around budget priorities will take place at the February meeting. President Clifton announced that Josh Jackson had agreed to join the Finance Committee. A new trustee should be appointed by the Caucus by January.

ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Shaw made a motion, seconded by Trustee Desmond, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 9:12pm.



Sue Shattock, Secretary

Minutes submitted for approval by the Board on December 12, 2023

Next meeting: December 12, 2023