

**NIAGARA FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
REGULAR LIBRARY BOARD MEETING**

Niagara Falls Public Library 1425 Main Street, Niagara Falls, NY  
Wednesday, January 31, 2024 @ 3.00 p.m

**Meeting minutes**

**CALL TO ORDER.** The regular meeting of the Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees was held in person on Wednesday, January 31, 2024 in the Flag Room (Conference Room not available), 2nd floor, Main Library. The meeting was called to order by Board President Carmen Granto at 3:02 pm in honor and recognition of Mr. King's 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

**ROLL CALL:**

Present

Ms. Bailey  
Dr. Carter  
Ms. Glaser  
Mr. Granto  
Mr. King

Absent/Excused

Dr. Foote (Excused)  
Dr. Rahman (Absent)

Also present were Ms. Sarah Potwin, Executive Library Director, Mr. Pat Brown, Finance Manager, Mr. Robert DiFrancesco from the Friends of the Library, Ms. Cecilia Driscoll, Librarian I (Union), Ms. Courtney Geerhart, Librarian I and Ms. Grace Croop, Archivist Consultant both from Local History Dept. Mr. James Roscetti, Library Attorney, Mr. Robert DiFrancesco, Friends of the Library and Ms. Tammy Kinan, Friends of the NF Library/Library representative on the NIOGA board.

**OPEN HEARING**

Mr. Granto noted there were no speakers or members from the public present for comment.

Discussion took place regarding Central Aid funds due the Library from NIOGA. Mr. Granto referenced correspondence he received in the mail from NIOGA dated January 16, 2024 addressed to Ms. Potwin referencing a \$100,000 check along with other information NIOGA was asking about noting that Ms. Kinan was also copied on it. Neither Ms. Potwin or Mr. Brown were aware of the correspondence although both have been expecting the check and have made inquiry to NIOGA regarding it several times over the past several months. Concern was expressed that the check of \$100,000 may be lost in the mail since the Library did not receive it. It was decided that Ms. Potwin would call and e-mail Mr. Tom Binderman of NIOGA to let him know the check has not been received. Mr. Brown said NIOGA does not inform the Library and there is no set schedule as to when they are issuing checks so there is no way for the Library to know or expect a check has been issued and to watch for it. Ms. Potwin added that we only know about checks when they are received as no "heads up" is given; if a check like this doesn't get delivered to us we have no way of knowing it is out there. Mr. Granto asked Mr. Roscetti if there is anything more we should do like a letter or resolution of the Board to be on record, Mr. Roscetti said at this time he didn't think either was needed as it has been discussed and Ms. Potwin will be communicating with NIOGA about it.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions/comments on the agenda as presented, hearing none the agenda was adopted upon a motion by Mr. King seconded by Mr. Granto, approved unanimously.

**REVIEW OF MINUTES**

Minutes of the December 13, 2023 regular board meeting were reviewed and adopted upon a motion by Dr. Carter seconded by Ms. Bailey, approved unanimously.



## FINANCIAL REPORTS

Mr. Brown referred to the November 30, 2023 financial summary narrative and detailed financial reports in the agenda packet explaining variances and highlighting the following:

- Bank account balance of \$777,786 includes \$112,410 restricted for state construction grant expenditures for Main branch auditorium and ADA door at LaSalle, in good financial position, the reduction in cash balance vs 11/22 mainly due to Rebello bequest received last year and since transferred to trust funds; all unpaid bills are normal accounts payable.
- Eleven months of the year has passed expectations on an evenly incurred budgetary basis is that actual revenues/expenditures would be 91.67%.
  - Total revenues are 91.23% of budget or 0.44% lower than 91.67% expectation and 92.87% or 1.20% higher than expectation after making adjustments for unbudgeted and other revenues not evenly received during the year like removing unbudgeted grant revenues and adding eleven months of state funding that comes all at once later in the year making revenues \$2,010,648. So revenues are doing well compared to budget.
  - Total expenditures are 84.34% of budget or 7.33% below expectation of 91.67%. All expenditures are not evenly incurred during the year so after adjusting total expenditures for grant, eleven months of computer lease, retirement and workers compensation total expenditures would be \$1,880,054 or 81.40% of budget and under expectation by 10.27% so expenditures are doing well and should be under budget for the year at present trend by about 11% but likely less as additional expenditures for digital printer/service and other items incurred by year end will increase expenditures and reduce budget percent of savings but still well under budget. All major expense lines at or below 91.67% expectation except for equipment which is 197.50% resulting from board approved purchase of server & conference room furniture not budgeted in this line at the request of management but funding available from other budget lines (budgeted expenditure line not adjusted), building operation & maintenance is 138.88% primarily due to unbudgeted grant expenditures of \$73,620 along with budgeted building maintenance & repairs, city insurance & security; without unbudgeted grant expenditures of \$73,620 the expense category would be \$151,764 or 93.35% of budget and 1.68% above expectation of 91.67%. Mr. Brown's report explained the reasons for the variances of all expense categories for current year vs budget & compared to prior year.
  - Based on above, it is/has been anticipated that actual expenditures will exceed budget amounts by year end in the equipment/furniture, grants, travel/training admin and security lines but available funding to cover these overages exist in other budget lines to permit budget transfers. In total, actual expenditures will be less than budget so this was not unexpected.
- Operating surplus (deficit) is \$15,355 or \$160,742 better than expected budget operating deficit for eleven months of \$145,387. Taking into account eleven months of state aid of \$91,667 operating surplus would be \$107,032 compared to budgeted operating deficit of \$145,387 for eleven months or \$252,419 better than budget for eleven months of the year. Mr. Brown said this operating surplus will be reduced quite a bit in last quarter of the year with additional planned expenditures but expects to end the year with an operating surplus of approximately \$77k as of now vs the budgeted operating deficit which was \$158,604 so we will be adding to surplus fund balance not using any of it.
- Mr. Brown also provided financial report for the Trust funds.
- 2024 budget to be approved under old business.

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions on the financial report, hearing none it was received and filed.



### **EXECUTIVE LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mrs. Potwin referred to her written report in the agenda packet highlighting:

- Upcoming library closures, meetings she has attended noting days she has scheduled off.
- Agati table at Main Library on 1<sup>st</sup> floor delivered and assembled Dec. 18, 2023 and City Electrician wired it on Dec. 21, 2023. Very pleased with it, all working properly and patrons are using it.
- ADA door opener at LaSalle work was completed by Imperial Door on Dec. 18, 2023 (funding from NYS Construction grant) so the ADA issue at LaSalle is corrected.
- Looking into grant for LaSalle WiFi
- Construction grant project with the State is underway, auditorium seating/carpeting retrofit is planned for 2024. Vendor pricing quote estimate for seating came in on Jan. 19, 2024 at \$139k, the grant amount for seating and carpeting totals \$138k so seating cost estimate alone exceeds total grant. Vendor notified that this is not possible to do and alternatives are being looked at to reduce cost of seating. NIOGA and State Librarian are aware of this, it is being worked on and some reductions may have to be made and/or may have to do project in two phases.
- Trustee training resources (Online Trustee handbook) and upcoming courses/dates, self reporting form is enclosed on page VI f and in Trustee folders
- CBA funds update and reporting on monthly basis from NIOGA was requested no definitive response received to date
- Central Library services to NIOGA member libraries was reported on and include:
  - Ref Link services, sharing of staff as needed
  - Ordering, processing and cataloging CBA materials
  - Hosting CBA meetings for member input
  - E-Newsletter biweekly (NIOGA Central e-newsletter)
  - Offering selection of book clubs in a bag by July 2024
  - WIFI hotspots to be shared with member libraries by Spring 2024
  - NIOGA Passport Program involvement with planning process for summer program encouraging citizens of each library to visit others in our system. This would dovetail with the summer reading program theme of reading adventures. NFPL children's dept. assisting.
- 2024 budget is enclosed in agenda under old business to be approved. Mr. Brown has assisted with the budget making suggestions for improvements and Ms. Potwin is very appreciative of Brown's assistance..
- Statistic reports for adult, children/youth programs, makerspace and meeting room for month of December '23 along with news article on library funding and the self assurance form.

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions/comments on directors report hearing none the directors report was received and filed.

### **PERSONNEL REPORT**

#### **Classification Change**

- Remi Nation from PT Library Clerk to PT Librarian Trainee effective Feb. 4, 2024
- Elise Lia from FT Librarian I to PT Librarian I effective Jan. 1, 2024

#### **Voluntary Separation**

- Ricardo Ayala, PT Library Clerk resigned effective Dec. 16, 2023 personal reasons.
- Elise Lia, PT Librarian I resigned effective Feb. 1, 2024 for other employment.

Mr. Granto asked if Ms. Lia will be replaced, Ms. Potwin said position is in the 2024 budget. Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions or comments on the personnel report, hearing none he congratulated Ms. Lia on her new job, thanked her for her service and wished her well in her new job.

Acceptance of the personnel report was adopted as presented upon a motion by Ms. Glaser, seconded by Dr. Carter and approved unanimously.



## **BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. Granto asked Ms. Tammy Kinan, Treasurer of the Friends of the Library who serves as the Library's representative on the NIOGA Board to give a report on NIOGA meeting. Ms. Kinan said her first meeting was the Jan. 2024 one and the following items were discussed:

- \$12k grant to NIOGA for technology, she wasn't sure if actual funds pass thru to member libraries from NIOGA or if it is a cost savings amounting to approximately \$600/library
- Discussion and announced formation of a central library committee; Ms. Kinan asked NIOGA if Ms. Potwin and/or Mr. Granto are aware of it. Neither Mr. Granto or Ms. Potwin are aware of it
  - Plan of service discussed
- Discussion about resuming the practice of having board members visit other libraries in the system
- Referring to central aid money and NIOGA's request for a report on use of funds, Ms. Kinan asked Mr. Binderman for a copy of a previous report he received from previous Director of the Central Library as an example of format and what information is required to be provided (noting that Ms. Potwin had previously asked for this). She said one would be provided by Mr. Binderman.
  - Ms. Kinan noted that she received a copy of the Jan. 16, 2024 correspondence that included a copy of the 2023 central aid check of \$100,000

Mr. Granto thanked Ms. Kinan for her report and for serving on the NIOGA board asking her if the plan of service referenced above is the same as the six year plan, Ms. Potwin said it was. Mr. Granto asked when the next NIOGA board meeting is, Ms. Kinan said March 9<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Granto asked that the board be kept informed as to when the annual meeting will be held for NIOGA and reiterated that he wants NIOGA notified that the central aid correspondence dated Jan. 16, 2024 addressed to Ms. Potwin and copy of the check that he and Ms. Kinan received was not received by the library so the \$100k check is somewhere in the mail. He also noted that NIOGA is requesting the report on central aid use of funds and how we are fulfilling the six year plan of service by February 16, 2024.

Mr. King asked about the new form for training courses, Ms. Potwin said it is a Self-Certifying form to keep record of trustee training courses and copy of it is in each trustee's folder and on page VI f.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **IX a. Digitization update for Local History Collection**

Ms. Grace Croop, Archivist consultant for local history digitization project provided a detailed report titled Deaccession and Digitization Report (January 2024)

- Deaccession list of 57 items for this meeting to be voted on under new business reviewed and more items to follow as project progresses
- Hotel registers shipped out for digitization on 12/22/23 received 1/4/24 at destination (Crowley Company partnering with HAI)
- Love Canal collection to be digitized next but an exact date and details not yet confirmed due to collection size and concerns with the Court exhibit poster boards.
  - Size and condition not sure if they can be shipped out, may have to be done onsite at the library.
- HAI and Crowley Co. neither have confirmed an exact as to when members of the team will be visiting here to assess the Love Canal and General Photography collections
  - Possibly in February or early spring
  - Next meeting with HAI, Crowley is Feb. 12, 2024
- Fed Ex Critical Care handles shipping
- Any questions or concerns can be directed to me [gcroop@nioga.org](mailto:gcroop@nioga.org)



Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions or comments:

- Ms. Bailey:
  - asked if samples for all items will be sent, Ms. Croop wasn't sure.
  - asked if duplicates will be returned, Ms. Croop said yes. Ms. Bailey would like to have duplicates offered to schools for their use and possibly items deaccessioned.
- Mr. King asked about the Carborundum collection, Ms. Geerhart said it is very large taking up an entire room with many multiple copies of 1974 reports. The collection will have to be assessed as to what gets digitized and when/where.
- Mr. Granto:
  - asked for clarification as to the Love Canal collection, is it part of the scope of the project contract. Ms. Potwin said it was and Ms. Croop said the size and condition of many items may prevent them from being shipped out for digitization-for example there are 134 boards most too big to be able to scan for digitization so details being worked out as to how/when to proceed.
  - said the end date for project is the end of August 2024 and wants to make sure all are aware of this deadline. Ms. Croop said she is not aware of any issues that would prevent meeting the deadline date. History Associates is aware of the August 2024 deadline date.
  - asked if all is going well with Niagara Falls Heritage Area Foundation and how things were going in Local History. Ms. Geerhart said it is busy but going great.

The archivist report on digitization was received and filed.

#### IX b 2024 Budget Adoption

2024 budget was reviewed by Mr. Brown and has been modified a bit from the proposed budget presented at the October 25, 2023 meeting. The 2024 budget is approximately \$56k higher than 2023 and includes two new full time librarians. The amount of fund balance to be used is \$170,575 which is \$11,970 higher than 2023. The total budget is \$110,866 and fund balance to be used is \$89,566 lower than the amount used in the proposed budget of Oct. 25, 2023 respectively which was a result of reducing several expense lines to reduce the fund balance amount to be used. Mr. Brown said the amount of fund balance to be used is not sustainable and no doubt for fiscal year 2025 city funding will have to increase by \$100-\$150k and union labor contracts expire at the end of 2024 so impact of new contract and pay rate/benefit cost changes is unknown.

Mr. Granto asked if there will be unrestricted fund balance remaining if the entire fund balance of \$170,575 is used, Mr. Brown said there would be but we can't operate at that level very long and impact of new union contracts is unknown so reserves are needed so as in the past every attempt will be made to operate under budgeted expenditures and at a surplus but we have cut expenditures pretty much as far as possible.

Mr. King asked if funds are budgeted for the digitization and/or deaccessioning project of Local History Dept. Ms. Potwin said are no funds in operating budget for this as it is being funded by Wilson grant and trust funds.

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions or comments on the 2024 budget, hearing none he asked for a motion to approve it.

2024 budget was adopted as presented upon a motion by Ms. Glaser, seconded by Mr. King and approved unanimously.



## NEW BUSINESS

### Xa Change of board meeting time and day of meetings

Ms. Bailey suggested changing the time of the meetings from 3:00pm to 4:00pm to better accommodate schedules for those who work and should be more appealing for those who work and want to serve on the board as discussed at previous meeting and possibly changing the day of the week. There were no objections to the time change but no agreement as to changing the day of the week for meetings.

Mr. Granto suggested that the board further discuss the day of week for meetings at the next meeting but for now he asked for a motion to approve the time change of board meetings as follows:

- Regular monthly board meeting time will be 4:00pm except on Trust meeting dates
- Trust meetings held quarterly time will be 4:00pm on same day as regular board meeting and regular meeting will be 4:15pm
- Wednesday remains meeting day for now but to be further discussed March meeting

Motion to approve time for regular board meetings as outlined above was made by Ms. Bailey, seconded by Dr. Carter and approved unanimously.

Mr. Granto went around the room asking each in attendance if they had anything else to discuss or need for executive session.

- Ms. Bailey:
  - Encouraged all to attend the speaker event on Feb. 10 at 1:00pm on Blacks in Niagara Falls with speaker Michael Boston, which she will be moderator.
  - Canvas Trustees as to which day of week works best for board meetings
- Ms. Glaser thanked everyone for the flowers in memory of her brother

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

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**XT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT.** The next regular meeting of the Library Board is scheduled 2/28/24 at 4:15 p.m. in the conference room. The next Dunlap-NF Library Collective Trust meeting is scheduled for 2/24/24 at 4:00 pm in the conference room.

meeting to adjourn at 4:02pm was made by Ms. Bailey, seconded by Dr. Carter, and carried.

Recorded by: Patrick D. Brown  
Patrick D. Brown, PT Finance Manager

Approved by: Don King  
Don King, Secretary