

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

Niagara Falls Public Library 1425 Main Street, Niagara Falls, NY  
Wednesday, September 27, 2023 @ 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, September 27, 2023, in the Conference Room, 2nd floor, Main Library. The meeting was called to order by Board President Carmen Grant at 2:57 pm.

**ROLL CALL:**

Present

Absent/Excused

Ms. Bailey  
Dr. Carter  
Dr. Foote (left 3:36)  
Ms. Glaser  
Mr. Grant  
Mr. King (left 3:41)  
Dr. Rahman (left 3:51)

Also present were Ms. Sarah Potwin, Executive Library Director, Mr. Pat Brown, Finance Manager, Mr. James Roscetti, Library Attorney, Ms. Cecilia Driscoll Librarian 1 / union steward, Ms. Marilyn Lojek, President, Mr. Robert DiFrancesco both from the Friends of the Library.

**OPEN HEARING**

No speakers or comments.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA.**

The agenda was adopted upon a motion by Mr. King seconded by Dr. Foote and carried.

**REVIEW OF MINUTES.**

The minutes of August 30, 2023 were reviewed and adopted upon a motion by Ms. Glaser seconded by Ms. Bailey, approved unanimously.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

Mr. Brown referred to the July 31, 2023 financial summary narrative and detailed financial reports in their packet explaining variances and highlighted the following:

- Given seven months of the year has passed expectations on an evenly incurred budgetary basis is that actual revenues/expenditures would be 58.33%.
- Total revenues are 58.44% of budget or .11% higher than expectation and 61.78% or 3.45% higher than expectation after removing unbudgeted grant revenues and adding seven months of state/county funding that comes all at once later in the year. So revenues are doing well compared to budget.
- Total expenditures are 53.6% of budget or 4.73% below expectation of 58.33%; after adjusting total expenditures for grant, furniture of \$31k not yet expensed and seven months of computer lease and workers compensation total expenditures would be \$1,207,573 or 51.97% of budget and under expectation by 6.36% so expenditures are doing well and should be under budget for the year. All major expense lines at or below the 58.33% expectation except for office & library supplies at 60.83% (2.5% over expectation) primarily due to annual computer lease payment, building operation & maintenance is 81.54% primarily due to unbudgeted grant expenditures and city insurance. Mr. Brown's report explained the reasons for the variances.
  - Mr. Brown noted that based on July 2023 expenditures it is estimated that total actual expenditures thru year end would be about \$253k under budget. Mr. Grant asked what



are the major categories of expenditures showing savings, Mr. Brown said part time payroll, library materials, utilities, retiree benefits and contingency

- Operating surplus (deficit) is \$19,652 or \$112,171 better than expected budget operating deficit for seven months of the year. Taking into account \$31k furniture to be expensed and seven months of state/county aid and adjusting annual computer lease expense for seven months the operating surplus would be \$93,434 for seven months compared to budgeted deficit of \$92,519 or \$185,953 better than budget for seven months of the year. Budget expectation was to operate at a deficit for 2023 of \$158,604.

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, one change 10/5 pm & 10/6 instead of 10/27.
- Children's library desk and stools purchased with Rebello funds were delivered July 17<sup>th</sup>, waiting for DPW to assemble.
- DPW building repairs/issues
  - Air conditioning emergency repair reported at last meeting was completed by Johnson Controls but stopped working again due to a valve that was partially closed; cost for them to come out and adjust the valve was \$440. Mr. Granto asked if our maintenance people could handle it, Ms. Potwin said no it is beyond their scope of work.
  - D.V. Brown was out last week to assess boiler system and are to return next week to "fire it up", City HVAC staff have told us that the boiler is beyond repair and nothing more they can do with it.
- Trustee training resources and upcoming courses/dates; the annual state report asks if trustees have completed training. Trustees with certificates of completion in their folders are Bailey, Foote, Granto, Glaser & Carter. Ms. Potwin is available to assist anyone access webinars.
- Library website looks beautiful and is coming along nicely with work being done by Revize and final rollout likely early December. It will have many work efficiency elements benefitting the public and staff.
- NIOGA trustee rep is needed, any suggestions please let Ms. Potwin know as she is frequently reminded that the City representation is lacking. Ms. Potwin said she has one person to follow up with.
- NIOGA funding-on Sept. 14<sup>th</sup> we received 10% balance of LLSA money from 2022 of \$2,188. Also have received County funding of approximately \$55k (budgeted \$59k) and 90% of 2023 LLSA funding of approximately \$19k.
- Local history speakers series to be held at LaSalle, first one was Sept. 18 with Luella Kenny, former Love Canal resident/activist was well received with about 35 attendees. Other dates:
  - October 16<sup>th</sup> NYS Parks, History of State Parks in Niagara Falls
  - November 13<sup>th</sup> Underground Railroad history in Niagara Falls (Underground Railroad Heritage Center)
  - December 4<sup>th</sup> Armenian traditions & community in Niagara Falls (Ed Millar, Castellani Art Museum)

All are from 6:30-7:30pm and prior to each event a oral history video is presented to engage the audience and promote the treasures we have in our local history department.

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions or comments on the directors report.

- Mr. King asked if there are any family members of Mr. Rebello in the area so that we can do something with/for them in recognition of his significant donation to the library; Ms. Potwin said all his family is in England, none local that she is aware of.



- Mr. Granto asked about possible use of conference center to have a physical presence there with the local history department as he discussed last meeting. Ms. Potwin said she and Ms. Geerhart met with Mr. Vilardo and there is no available space there for our use, the room that is used for storage is utilized by the conference center for various events. The library will be able to hang some banners to display and Mr. Vilardo agreed to portable video screening kiosks; Ms. Geerhart applied for a grant to fund such kiosks. Ms. Potwin and Ms. Geerhart plan on meeting with John Percy Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> about possibly having some presence of the local history department at the visitors center.

The directors report was received and filed.

## **PERSONNEL REPORT**

New hire:

- Ricardo Ayala, PT Library Clerk, begin date Sept. 18, 2023, rate \$14.38/hour, 17 hours/week

FMLA

- Tom Poehnelt, FT Librarian 1 July 27, 2023-October 19, 2023 most likely will be off longer

Non Union Hourly Pay Schedule

- Ms. Potwin explained that under new business, the non union hourly pay schedule is revised to reflect new minimum wage rates per the state effective 1/1/2024 and adjusting hourly rates accordingly with clerks (job code 1553) to receive \$1/hr. more than minimum wage as discussed at the August 30, 2023 meeting as the clerk position is most pressing and difficult to recruit for, the higher rate of pay hopefully will help in attracting and keeping candidates for clerk job. The revised pay schedule replaces the previous one of 1/18/2017.

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions or comments on the personnel report, hearing none he noted that the non union hourly pay schedule presented under new business on pages Xa and asked that it be considered and approved with the personnel report.

The acceptance of the personnel report and the non union hourly pay schedule was adopted as presented upon a motion by Ms. Glaser, seconded by Dr. Carter and approved unanimously.

## **BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. Granto didn't have a formal report, referring to his report of last month in finding a location for the history department he asked if anyone knew the Executive Director of the NACC as that may be a possible location to consider. Ms. Bailey said she thinks that all the space is rented and there isn't any room. Mr. Granto referenced the \$500k grant the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area secured for digitization of the history department items discussed at the last meeting and the related contract the library had to sign as party to the grant project. The total collection referenced under service is \$610,500 but the fee estimate for work is \$500,000 leaving \$110,500 in question. There are some larger items in the collection not included in the \$500k fee estimate for digitization from History Associates, Inc. which they estimate would cost about \$110k to do work. Mr. Granto asked attorney James Roscetti to address the contract between the vendor, History Associates, Inc. the Library and Heritage Center. Mr. Roscetti reviewed the contract, which includes the proposal of work, between History Associates, Inc. as vendor/contractor, Niagara Falls National Heritage Area as the client and the library as the owner of the collection. Mr. Roscetti normally doesn't like this kind of contract but recommends approval of it as it gives our (library) permission to allow the heritage area to digitize the collection. Any/all costs are the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. Mr. Granto asked if there are any questions or comments.



- Ms. Bailey asked if there is a plan on what is to be digitized and when items are to go out, Ms. Potwin said she doesn't have answers to this as the project is under the direction of the Heritage Area and we have not had a meeting yet to go over who does what, timing etc.
- Mr. Grant asked who makes the call as to what gets digitized, Ms. Potwin said Courtney Geerhart has a policy to follow. Ms. Bailey said the board should get full list of items.

Mr. Grant asked for a motion to approve the contract to be signed with History Associates, Inc. and the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area (NFNHA) as reviewed by attorney Roscetti.

Resolution:

Upon a motion by Ms. Glaser, seconded by Dr. Foote to approve and sign the contract between History Associates, Inc., NFNHA and the Library the motion was approved unanimously.

#### **OLD BUSINESS.**

NONE

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Xa. Non union hourly pay schedule through 2026 was discussed/approved with personnel report. Mr. Grant asked if the new rates per the pay plan are being incorporated in the 2024 budget, Ms. Potwin said they are.

Xb. Annual appeal, no action required, Ms. Potwin thanked Ms. Bailey for agreeing to take the lead and be involved with it again this year. Ms. Bailey said we will use last year template and she will be working with Mignon Freeman.

Xc. New computer server and Agati table (approximately \$18k and \$16k respectively)  
Ms. Potwin said the new server is required to combine the Main & LAS library systems which presently operate separately and are older systems. The Agati table is a worktable with eight plugs to accommodate electronic devices (computers, cell phones etc) in main library reading area. The table needs to be ordered now to receive by year end; funding for both items is available in other expenditure lines that are running well below budget.

- Mr. Grant asked who handles our IT issues will we have support for these items, Ms. Potwin said AIS handles such computer/IT needs.

Mr. Grant asked if there were any other questions or comments, hearing none he made a motion to approve the purchase of the server and Agati table as presented, seconded by Ms. Bailey and approved unanimously.

Mr. Grant went around the room asking each in attendance if they had anything else to discuss, none.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Grant requested to go into executive session at 3:25, said motion was made by Dr. Rahman and seconded by Ms. Bailey carried unanimously. The Board came out of executive session at 3:53 and resumed the regular meeting.

**NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT.** The next regular meeting of the Library Board is scheduled for 10/25/2023 at 3:00 p.m. in the conference room. The next Dunlap-NF Library Collective Trust meeting is scheduled for 10/25/2023 at 2.30 pm in the conference room.

The meeting adjourned at 3:54 pm by Mr. Grant, seconded by Ms. Glaser, and carried.

Recorded by: Patrick D. Brown  
Patrick D. Brown, PT Finance Manager  
Approved by: Don King  
Don King, Secretary