

Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of Regular Library Board Meeting

Via Zoom

Wednesday, January 26, 2022

CALL TO ORDER. The regular meeting of the Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees was held on Wednesday, January 26, 2022, via ZOOM.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. James Roscetti at 3.03 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present

Excused Absent

Ms. Glaser

Mr. Grant

Dr. Foote

Ms. Bailey

Mr. King

Dr. Rahman (left the meeting at 3.50pm)

Also present were Mr. Jim Roscetti, Library Legal Counsel, Ms. Sarah Potwin, Executive Library Director, and Ms. Sara Capien, National Niagara Falls Heritage Foundation (who joined at 3.15 pm)

OPEN HEARING.

Mr. King asked for a moment of silence to honor Noreen Hill, our Treasurer's recent passing. Dr. Rahman spoke of Noreen's memory, her life's work with children, Native issues and the field of education. Dr. Rahman spoke of her dedication to the library running smoothly, of her detailed oversight of the library's finances, and her dedication to the City of Niagara Falls.

Ms. Sharon Bailey then was asked to introduce herself. Sharon Bailey is a Quality Control Specialist at M&T, Niagara Gazette weekly columnist and musician. She lives in DeVeaux with her partner Thomas DeBoy, Niagara Falls Deputy Corporation Counsel. Ms. Bailey was warmly welcomed by fellow board members.

The vote to accept Ms. Sharon Bailey's services as a NFPL Board member was adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Foote was seconded by Mr. King and carried. Mr. Roscetti officially welcomed Ms. Bailey to the board, on behalf of Mr. Carmen Grant, BOT President.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA.

The agenda was adopted upon a motion by Ms. Glaser was seconded by Dr. Foote and carried.

REVIEW OF MINUTES.

A review of the December 15th, 2021 meeting summary was presented. The minutes were adopted upon a motion by Ms. Glaser was seconded by Dr. Foote and carried.

FINANCIAL REPORTS.

Mrs. Potwin explained that November 30, 2021 finances are good: that spending is at 78.5%; the expected threshold of 91.7%. Revenue is recorded at 75.85%. Mrs. Potwin highlighted that next month, the financial reports for the month of November will reflect the substantial income of 96K for Central Library money, as well as Town of Niagara money, 2K. The November 2021 revenue to expenses year to date versus November 2020 ...most lines look good. Payroll is below last year by about \$24 083, library materials are higher this year than last year by about \$49036 with electronic materials for November 2021 is \$ 37 352 higher than last November 2020.

Library operations in total is \$ 97 915 lower than last November due to a local history project last year of \$99 997. And finally, building operation at \$194 199 surpluses vs last year same time of \$109 740.

While we are still attempting to track down bills from the city which are recorded in the AS 400, we have not been notified of.... It is estimated that the City will owe the Library unspent money, possibly 30K - 39K. As of November 30, 2021 expenses are \$470 713 under budget and revenues are \$276 514 under budget so net \$194 199, the Library is doing better than budget. We will not be touching the transfer funds in the budget, but they should be added by the end of the year. That final amount is yet to be determined.

The acceptance of the November 2021 expense / budgetary reports were adopted as presented upon a motion by Ms. Bailey was seconded by Ms. Glaser and carried.

Discussion ensued regarding who will take on treasurer duties as well as check signer duties.

Ms. Glaser has agreed to consider it, though no firm decision has been reached.

The agreed-upon 4 check signers will be Dr. Foote, Ms. Glaser, in addition to already standing Mr. King and Mr. Granto adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Rahman was seconded by Ms. Glaser and carried.

Mrs. Potwin has promised to contact the M and T Bank to arrange for a Docu Sign process to be emailed to all check signers in the coming month, once the Treasurer role has been decided. All banking business can be completed in one process.

Mrs. Potwin shared that a new contract for Mr. Urban's governmental accounting services was attached to the board notes for their review. Mr. Urban will step in to conduct the FY 2021, FY 2022, and FY 2023 audits of the library's accounts. Mrs. Potwin has asked the board to approve this contract as it has been reviewed by Mr. Pat Brown our contracted CPA as well as Mr. Carmen Granto our Board President. Both are in agreement. Mr. Travis of CTBK has recommended Mr. Urban as a replacement. Mr. Travis will no longer be conducting governmental audits, but offered to handle FY 2021, should we be in a bind and without an auditor.

The new audit contract issued by Mr. David Urban was adopted as presented upon a motion by Ms. Glaser was seconded by Dr. Rahman and carried.

Mrs. Potwin discussed her concerns regarding the Library's Maintenance of Effort (MOE). She has attached a copy of the recent formula results and the NFPL has narrowly met the funding formula. Mrs. Potwin has concerns that in the coming years, this narrow margin will not be met. To not meet MOE will result in a loss of Central Library funding (this year 93K) as well as a cess to Central Book Aid money (this year 15K held at Nioga Library System), not to mention the designation of "Central Library" for the Nioga Library System. Mrs. Potwin clearly outlined that while we have saved funds from past budgets, this is entirely different from MOE which measures the amount of local support. Mrs. Potwin pointed out that the City cut the library 42K in 2017, then gave out raises and retro pay as agreed by the union contract. City funding has been flat since 2017 with no increases given. Thus, MOE's narrow cushion is dwindling each year as expenses rise, yet funding is flat.

EXECUTIVE LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

Mrs. Potwin shared some of the items from her written report as part of the board packet.

Mrs. Potwin shared that NYS Bullet Aid money was tracked down and finally given to the Library at the end of December 2021...25K. A letter of thanks was sent to Mr. Morinello.

ALA America Rescue Plan grant of 10K for inventory was awarded on January 24th. Mrs. Potwin shared that a grant for the Humanities NY Action grant was willed in January to cover the cost of digitizing oral histories from the early 90s to early 2000s on the history of Niagara Falls. While we are hopeful for the grant, we have independently begun digitizing Mr. King's collection of oral history interviews on our own.

Discussion ensued about the NYS Trustee Book Club monthly webinars. Mrs. Potwin and Ms. Bailey participated in the January webinar on the topic of library finances. The next webinar is on Feb 22 on the topic of Facilities. Mrs. Potwin reminded all board members that this book club information was shared with everyone in October, November, and December's board meetings and sign-on instructions were part of the flyer included with each month's notes. Ms. Bailey spoke about how easy it is to listen to a webinar while making supper or performing other tasks. Mrs. Potwin spoke about the information she learned and that it was presented in a very digestible fashion to understand.

Mrs. Potwin explained that this can be part of the annual 2-hour training that board members are expected to undergo each year and that it is a question on the annual report. Dr. Rahman explained that Nioga and NYLA both offer many valuable learning sessions and conferences to attend. Mrs. Potwin pointed out that this webinar is sponsored by PLS, a division of NYLA, and secondly that the training required is identified as geared to being a board member specifically. Mr. King suggested that everyone get together to have supper and watch a webinar together. Mrs. Potwin explained that this was the purpose of the webinars, that it is more easily convenient for participants to log on for a 1-hour stint of time, than commit to attending a 6-hour training on a Saturday. Ms. Bailey pointed out that she was making supper while listening to the webinar in the background.

Dr. Rahman left the meeting at 3.50 pm

Mrs. Potwin stressed concern that both the 50K SAM grant, as well as the 160K NYS Library Construction grant, meant for the Main Building's HVAC replacement must be spent by June 30, 2022. No extensions are available. The 166K will need to be paid back if not spent, along with a punishment of not being allowed to apply for construction for 4 years. Ms. Capien, Dr. Foote, and Ms. Glaser have offered to visit Mayor Restaino to share their concerns. Ms. Capien discussed that her NF Heritage organization has an interest in the temperature controls in the building is working properly as they have invested nearly 100K in inventorying the local history collection. Mrs. Potwin has promised to give both Ms. Capien, Ms. Glaser, and Dr. Foote a 'cheat sheet' of talking points to aid them in their meeting.

Mrs. Potwin thanked Ms. Bailey for editing her letter to the editor regarding library funding. The advocacy letter is to be submitted in the Buffalo News as well as the Niagara Gazette.

A thank you note regarding Mr. Brown's retirement gift to the Board from Mr. Brown is located in Mr. Granto's folder.

PERSONNEL REPORT.

Mrs. Potwin pointed out that the vacation time allowance given out to librarians hired after Spring 2017 has not been adhered to by the board's policy and thus both vacation and personal time is still owed to Bridget Baker, Richard Wade, and Tom Poehnelt from FY 2021. Additionally, the time is given in FY 2022 is not in accordance with the policy.

The acceptance of the personnel report was adopted as presented upon a motion by Mr. King was seconded by Ms. Glaser and carried.

PRESIDENT REPORT.

Mr. King asked where Mr. Granto was. Mr. Roscetti stated that he was feeling ill.

OLD BUSINESS.

None to report.

NEW BUSINESS.

Dr. Foote referenced a children's community group that is looking for space to meet each week and asked if the library would be an option. Mrs. Potwin shared that the Board's policy is to allow the same group a meeting room booking twice a month, though if they change the policy, she would be able to accommodate a weekly meeting. Dr. Foote discussed touring various sites in NF to meet, and that the library would be one of the stops. Mrs. Potwin stated she would share the meeting room info and contract info, found on the website with Dr. Foote.

Mr. King discussed offering the library a painting in memory of Ms. Hill. Mrs. Potwin shared that the library will be purchasing a number of books and videos for the lending collection with bookplates memorializing Ms. Hill and her work with the library. The items to be purchased are on the topics of native issues and children, Ms. Hill's interests.

NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT. The next regular meeting of the Library Board is scheduled for 2/23/2022 at 3:00 p.m. via ZOOM. The next Dunlap Meeting is scheduled for 2/23/2022 at 2.30 pm via ZOOM.

Meeting adjourned at 4.01 pm by Mr. Roscetti, seconded by Mr. King, and carried.

Recorded by: _____

Sarah Potwin, Executive Library Director

Approved by: _____

Don King, Secretary