

Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of Regular Board Meeting

Library-Executive Director's Office

1425 Main Street, Niagara Falls, NY 14305

Wednesday, May 25, 2022

CALL TO ORDER. The regular meeting of the Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees was held in person on Wednesday, May 25, 2022, in the Executive Library Director's Office (due to construction) 2nd Floor Main Library.

The meeting was called to order by Board President Carmen Granto at 3.00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present

Absent

Ms. Bailey

Dr. Rahman

Ms. Glaser

Mr. Granto

Dr. Foote (arrived 3:15pm)

Mr. King

Also present were Mr. Jim Roscetti, Library Legal Counsel; Ms. Sarah Potwin, Executive Library Director, Mr. Robert Difrancesco, Friends of the Library; Mr. Pat Brown, PT Account Clerk-Library, Mr. David Urban, CPA EFPR Group.

Mr. Granto moved up from new business draft audit review for December 31, 2021. Ms. Potwin introduced David Urban, CPA Partner with the EFPR Group who served as independent auditors for the Library to present the year end December 31, 2021 audit. Mr. Urban gave a brief introduction of himself and noted that while the draft audit report and financials were in board packet he also had a separate handout titled audit presentation, which includes full audit report and financials, that he will be referring to and will be included with the meeting minutes. The audit presentation had four primary sections:

- EFPR Engagement Team
- Timing of Procedures
- Financial Results
- Report to the Board

Audit fieldwork performed the week of March 28, 2022 with initial draft issued May 4, 2022 but this draft did not include an in kind grant of \$133,260 so final financial statement draft dated May 25, 2022 to be approved. Mr. Urban stated that the audit went well and communication with the city improved significantly since he last did the Library audit four years ago. The Library books agreed with the City's records which was not always the case. There were no issues/problems obtaining information for the audit which was significant improvement from the last time he did audit of the Library.

In reviewing the financial results, Mr. Urban noted:

- Unmodified audit opinion ("clean opinion") will be issued which is the desired and highest form of audit opinion. Basically means they were able to perform all audit procedures and received all documentation, information required and there are no reportable conditions or issues.
- Cash balances increased \$270,990 over 2020 to a balance of \$968,740

- Due from governments represents amount owed the Library by the city for 2021 funding; balance of \$39,800 for 2021 compared to \$91,270 in 2020 for 2019 funding.
- Capital assets increased \$133,260 to a balance of \$351,686 due to in kind grant contribution of 200 chrome books and 200 hot spots from federal grant.
- Total net position of the Library is \$902,654 as of December 31, 2021 compared to \$615,189 as of December 31, 2020.
- Total revenue increased \$17,678 from \$2,158,596 in 2020 to \$2,176,274 in 2021 primarily attributed to:
 - City allocation decreased \$43,319
 - State aid increased \$22,471
 - Donations decreased \$76,738
 - In-kind contributions increased \$133,260 (federal grant for 200 chrome books and 200 hotspots)
- Total expenses decreased \$60,752 from \$1,949,561 in 2020 to \$1,888,809 in 2021.
- Salaries expense and related benefits are approximately 58% of total expenses for 2021 and 2020.
- As pie chart for revenues shows, City allocation of funds were 82% and 85% respectively of total revenues for 2021 and 2020
- Notes 1&2 describe accounting policies of the Library.
- Note 3 discusses amount due from the city of Niagara Falls.
- Note 4 provides detail on capital assets.
- Note 5 provides detail on the summary of significant contingencies.

Report to the Board

- Significant accounting policies were consistently applied.
- Accounting estimates were reasonable and supported.
- No difficulties in performing our audit or disagreements with management over accounting, reporting or auditing matters. From four years ago when Mr. Urban last served as auditor for Library, accounting and timeliness has improved significantly; four years ago there were issues obtaining information, performing audit, reconciling with city records, communication with city etc.
- Adjustments were posted during the audit that were agreed upon between management and the audit team. (four total audit entries for capitalized assets in-kind grant, deferred revenue makerspace grant, depreciation of capital assets and in-kind revenue grant, three of which management proposed/identified). There were no unexpected or unusual audit adjustments.
- Management representation letter to be signed by Library Director upon approval of audit report by the Board.

Mr. Urban thanked the Board for engaging EFPR as independent auditors and asked if there were any questions. No questions on the report.

Mr. Granto thanked Mr. Urban for his asked for a motion to accept/approve the audit report and presentation by EFPR Group for year-end December 31, 2021. The acceptance and approval of the audit report for 2021 was adopted as presented upon a motion by Ms. Glaser, seconded by Ms. Bailey and carried.

OPEN HEARING.

Mr. Granto noted there were no speakers

ADOPTION OF AGENDA.

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

REVIEW OF MINUTES.

A review of the April 27, 2022 regular meeting summary was presented. Ms. Bailey requested a correction be made on page 5, 8th sentence of 3rd paragraph of the minutes which was originally recorded as: Both Mr. Granto and Ms. Bailey suggested that the Library follow existing policy and if city doesn't issue payment the Library would cut check. It was noted that this would have to be further discussed prior to actually doing it. **This section of the minutes should be amended to read as follows: Both Mr. Granto and Ms. Bailey suggested that the Library follow existing policy.** The minutes of April 27, 2022 as amended were adopted upon a motion by Mr. King was seconded by Ms. Glaser and carried, Ms. Glaser abstained due to her absence from April 27, 2022 meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORTS.

Mr. Brown reported on the March 2022, financial reports consisting of operating and special revenue fund balance sheets, income and expense reports with comparison to budget and prior year and Dunlap Trust balance sheet. He shared that the cash and financial position of the Library is strong and being 3rd month of the year expectation would be generally for most revenues and expenses to be about 25% of budget (3/12 of budget). In the interest of time, Mr. Brown gave a brief review and feels the Library is operating within budget for 2022 but obviously still very early in the year. Library in good financial position and as balance sheet shows total cash increased \$142,670 vs 3/31/21, amount due from other governments of \$39,799.05 is remaining 2021 city funding library received May 3rd and there are no unusual accounts payables/liabilities. As to revenues and expenditures for operating fund 3 months into year expect most revenues and expenditures to be about 25% of budget. Most revenues are about at budget/expectations except county and state aid which comes later in year (August/Sept.). On expense side, largest expense is payroll and benefits total payroll of \$153,563 is about 19.5% of budget or approximately \$10,800 savings vs budget for 3 months. Benefits are running at about 21% vs expected 25% of budget.

Mr. King asked if there is anything of concern to the Board, Mr. Brown responded nothing at this time.

The acceptance of the March 2022 financial reports was adopted as presented upon a motion by Mr. King and seconded by Mr. Granto, motion carried.

EXECUTIVE LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

Ms. Potwin shared some of the items from her written report which was included in the agenda packet, with building security and closing procedures/issues the primary focus of her report.

Covid-19 Update

Some staff and much of the public opt to continue wearing masks and patrons are advised it is optional for them to wear a mask. Staff has been reminded to use PPE and practice social distancing and to remain home and get tested if not feeling well.

Holiday Closures and Director time off

Library will be closed Monday May 30 (Memorial Day), July 2nd and July 4th, Saturday Sept. 3rd and Monday the 4th for Labor Day

Ms. Potwin will be off and away from the Library from June 13-June 24th for annual vacation (10 days) and July 18th (1 day). Staff has her contact information.

Ms. Potwin expressed her increased concern with security related issues relating to the main building and evening closing procedures. Staff has been a bit on edge with the recent attack at Tops grocery store in Buffalo and one on one discussions with staff have taken place which have covered:

- if need for more security in Main building
- availability of security staff members to cover shifts clerks want coverage for
- increase in current security patrolling the Main building
- reminding staff of EAP and pamphlets circulated and posted
- public discussion forum relating to healing a community divide
- social media posts listing Niagara County mental health services
- social media posts listing how community members who wish to help can volunteer/donate

Ms. Potwin anticipates staff may be approaching board members for more money to hire security staff and then provided a detailed summary of recent difficulties with securing the Main building by staff on March 2, 2022, April 5, 2022 and most recently May 21, 2022. Various reasons were given by staff as to why building wasn't secured. The staff has a checklist of closing procedures they initial as part of the building closing. While security is responsible for closing the building, all staff is to be involved in sweeping the building to make sure all patrons have left the building. Ms. Potwin reported that with the March 2, 2022 incident, staff had left before closing time and she informed all staff in April that reprimands will occur if early departures happen without permission and/or if patrons are found in the building after building is secured. Terminations also a possibility as all staff has responsibility to work with security personnel to close the building. Proper securing of the building is a safety issue. Ms. Potwin said she will be meeting with the union to discuss these issues.

Ms. Bailey asked:

- how do you delegate areas, are their zones staff is responsible for and is there a schedule to close? Ms. Potwin said there are closing procedures/checklist to follow but there are not zones/specific areas staff to work with security and each shift is different, everyone has responsibility for closing and checklist of procedures to follow for securing the building.
- what support do police provide? Ms. Potwin said they are not part of the securing of building and only called if someone is found in the building during non-business hours

- are additional security cameras needed? Ms. Potwin doesn't feel issues are due to lack of cameras but more so with staff checking/securing the building and problems with doors not locking etc.

Ms. Glaser asked if staff may be reluctant to do walk thru procedures, maybe uncomfortable and don't feel safe approaching people and/or checking various areas of the building and if a time clock was used? Ms. Potwin said procedures call for staff to check areas of building with someone else (not alone) and about half hour before closing time patrons are reminded of closing and no time clock is on site.

Mr. Granto feels the securing of the building is more a matter of diligence in following closing procedures and asked if it would help if closing procedures began a little earlier say 15 minutes before actual closing time-to allow more time to clear and secure the building before actual end of shift and so staff won't feel rushed? Ms. Potwin said we can try this as long as operating hours remain to meet state requirements. She feels the that all doors have to be checked from the outside to make sure they are locked. Ms. Bailey asked if closing 15 minutes would really matter? Ms. Potwin said we can try it out.

Dr. Foote said primary issue seems to be doors not being checked adequately.

Grants

Updates for the following grants was provided:

- NHPRC submitted October 7, 2021, requested \$119,445 cost share is \$10,555 for a total project cost of \$130,000 to begin after July 2022 if Library is awarded grant
- NYS Preservation grant applied for to rehouse oversized material. Funds cannot be used for inventory project; requested maximum amount of \$40,000 with cost share of \$20,750 total project cost would be \$60,750;
- CLIR grant to digitize the Leon Van Patten Collection would begin in June 2022 if awarded;
- American Library Association (ALA) Covid Relief fund 2022 applied for in the amount of \$20,000 for a new microfiche machine, 2 ADA desks for public use and website redesign funding. Ms. Potwin is skeptical of the Library receiving any this year since we received grant last year.
- Digital Inclusion Innovation grant, due June 1, 2022 maximum \$75,000 applying to fund Chrome book vending machines with one at each branch to promote digital connectivity.
- Mother Cabrini Foundation grant for a social worker in our library for one year in conjunction with WNYLRC (letter of intent stage).
- \$500 grant from Walmart received.

Future NYS Library Construction grants

Ms. Potwin asked for board guidance for next round of construction grant funding which begins in July/August 2022. State construction grant fund applications may be submitted annually and in preparation for this year's request quotes are being obtained for new auditorium seating and carpeting, HVAC and the remainder of interior lighting conversion to LED all at Main Library as well as a counter for LaSalle Library.

Trustees Book Club

Some board members have attended and certificates of attendance are in member's folders. Next meeting is June 14 PR & Advocacy each webinar counts for 2 hours of professional development required by NYS. Website to visit is <https://midhudson.org/trusteebookclub/>.

Local History Inventory

The phase 3 contract has been signed and agreed that we have \$100k to fund this project available in special revenue fund and \$30k of Dunlap Trust funds as approved in April. Inventory work for phase 3 will be conducted from July 11-July 31, 2022.

Phase 4 contract was signed the week of May 17, 2022 after review by Mr. Roscetti, discussion with Board President Grant and based on the enthusiastic encouragement by all board members and Dunlap Trust members at the April 2022 meeting. The contract had to be signed/executed prior to formal board approval due to need for planning archival staff and resources. Under new business approval of contract and direction on funding for phase 4 will require action and discussion. Phase 4 contract will not cost more than \$192k and will run concurrently with Phase 3 work from Aug. 1 to Sept. 30, 2022; at which time the Local History Inventory Project will be completed.

The \$25,000 check from Sara Capien's organization has been received for 2022 funding and thank you note was sent.

Long Island University Course

A check is being prepared for September course tuition fee of \$1,550 for Ms. Potwin's next course for her Post Master's certificate program-Libraries and Human Resources which is the third of five courses required; past two courses GPA is 4.0. Ms. Potwin is grateful for the support of the library board.

Desktop Computer Leasing

Computer lease was signed in early May and onboarding or "mirroring" of adult and children's public computers is underway. New computer tables for Main Adult and Main Children's will arrive May 26 and it is anticipated that all new HP computers for staff and the public will be in place by end of June.

Study Pods

Funded through a National Library of Medicine Grant, Pods were installed May 12, Ms. Potwin was not fully happy with installation process. Some of the deficiencies were corrected by the manufacturer on May 18, manufacturer blaming installers, installers blaming manufacturer. Discount is being discussed, grant reimbursement paperwork was submitted May 19, 2022 to grantor.

Other Grants/programs

- Mission Ignite/WNYLRC/Lockport Library-Digital Navigator Grant is underway but Ms. Potwin has not been able to attend last three weekly webinars. Discussion has focused on the promotion of the program as well as interviewing candidates including our own Frankie Destino.
- New refrigerator courtesy of the FOL for staff lounge-thank you Bobby D and FOL.
- Summer newsletter and Community Annual Report are being worked on.
- FCC phase 2 application is pending and we are awaiting final approval;
- SAM and NYS Construction Grants
 - o SAM Grant of \$50,000 was for new vehicle, LH 1st floor shelving, LaSalle drop box and furniture. Due to supply chain issues, shelving could not be obtained so two bike repair stations have been purchased and will be part of the grant. Shelving will be purchased later out of operating funds during the summer. Ms. Potwin thanked City DPW, carpenters and

mason for all their efforts. Grant paperwork and receipts will be submitted in June for reimbursement of \$50,000.

- o NYS Library Construction Grant of approximately \$166K from state and City contribution of approximately \$74K for total of approximately \$240K project. The City funding of the remainder (estimated originally at \$74K) will come from already existing capital line for the Library which has approximately \$128K.

Project is progressing well, and weekly updates have been provided via e-mail to the building committee.

- 8 ADA drinking fountains have been installed by DV Brown, special thanks to city mason for his work. One problem discovered is that the backflow valve has failed and needs replacement which the city plumber is aware of and has not gotten back to Ms. Potwin. Possible asbestos issue has to be resolved and city plumber is being less than cooperative. Also possibility of union issue/grievance regarding drinking fountain installation even though City Plumber was given opportunity to provide the service and declined.
- Outdoor parking lot lighting replacement to LED is ongoing with work by city electricians. New lighting should reduce energy cost.
- LED indoor lighting was completed May 18th. Entire main library building lighting was replaced and converted to LED with exception of admin offices, 2nd floor conference room and 1st floor display cases. Motion detectors installed in bathrooms for additional energy savings. Estimate is for electric bill to be lowered by nearly half for Main Library, potential \$20,000 savings compared to last year's bill.
- 17 window glass inserts being manufactured and should be installed week of May 31st.
- Carpeting on second floor public hallway, conference room and vinyl planks for flag room to be installed May 23-26.
- Employee entrance electronic door lock are to be installed

- o Plan is to meet with the Mayor in July 2022 to discuss what projects he would be interested in seeing completed in the City owned library buildings.

Vacation Policy

A document signed in the 1970's by the Library board and Steelworkers union agreeing to Librarian vacation as well as the policy dating back to 1938 was presented to the City HR. Librarians are receiving their allotted 22 days yet they are still receiving their time in January for the year. While this is not in adherence with the library's policy, nothing is being acted upon with payroll dept. claiming that I am imposing my contract of vacation days upon the staff which I am not.

Kinder Camp

Has been cancelled out of concern it appears competitive with the NF School district.

Library Vehicles

The new 2022 Equinox (SAM grant) title has been sent to city Hall with copy kept at NFPL. The 2006 minivan's title has been sorted out and reflects ownership by NFPL.

NF City Document Shredding

Records management working with DPW to prepare 100 boxes of older records for shredding

Employee on Workers Comp

Part time employee has claimed being hurt at work after the fact. There is no evidence on our security camera of an injury. Working with City Risk Management to handle this.

Noreen Hill Memorial

Met with Kim Hill on May 17 and discussed a newly created collection of native culture titles and the need for the family to make suggestions. Scholarship for high school students was also discussed and provided her Judie Glaser contact information.

NIOGA Board

Individual who lives in NF has been approached to sit on NIOGA board of trustees with plan to meet in July to further discuss. Attempts made to contact Tom Binderman and explain and will be writing to NIOGA Board President.

Other

- A list of meetings attended or to be attended by the Library Director was provided.
- Interviews have been conducted to increase staffing levels for PT Library Trainee, PT Library clerk and PT Library Page and names of hires should be available for next meeting.
- Met with civil service on May 19 for approval to make current full time Business Manager position part time. It was tabled and directive was given to re-design the duties to be more reflective of a part time position and will be considered again at June meeting.
- a number of links relating to library articles on a number of library industry issues for board members' interest along with next board meeting dates.
- Library statistics for meeting room, adult services and children's/teens programs for April 2022.
- Dates to remember, next regular board meeting is 3 pm Weds. June 29 and next Dunlap Board meeting is 2:30pm Weds. July 27 both at the Main Library.

Questions on Directors Report:

Mr. Granto asked about the business manager position and impact on budget and the nature of injury to part time clerk filing workers compensation. Ms. Potwin explained regarding the part time business manager budget should be fine and the workers comp filing is a back injury but we have little detail regarding it as employee has been less than communicative.

Ms. Bailey asked if the vacation issue with Librarians has been rectified Ms. Potwin and Mr. Roscetti said generally yes it is, they get the 22 days so issue is kind of a moot point now. Ms. Potwin added they get their vacation time all up front. Mr. Granto added that the vacation policy developed by the board years ago as it was kind of loose and some issues with retirees coming back to work and receiving vacation time. Policy was developed to clarify this.

With no further questions the Executive Library Director's report was received and filed.

PERSONNEL REPORT.

- 1) Creation of part time business manager without benefits, confidential exempt job description being reviewed by civil service. Several years ago, the Library had this position as full time. Pay scale \$41.21/hr. for fiscal year 2022, \$42.45/hr. for fiscal year 2023, \$43.72/hr. for fiscal year 2024, \$45.03/hr. for fiscal year 2025. Board for the approval of creation of this position, related pay scale and authorization for establishment of payroll code for part time business manager position.
- 2) New Hires:
 - Library Trainee(s)
 - PT Library clerk(s)
 - Summer Student(s)
- 3) Volunteer Separation:
 - Kerwin Cox, PT Library Clerk, effective May 6, 2022

Questions of personnel report:

Mr. King asked if there are enough security people? Ms. Potwin said the Library contracts with security company to provide the security and at times are short but generally yes we have enough. Security personnel are not Library employees.

Mr. Granto asked about budget impact of business manager position and if there were any issues with the volunteer separation, Ms. Potwin said budget will be fine and that separation was due to employee family matters.

Mr. Granto asked why no names, rates of pay, Ms. Potwin said interviews being conducted now, will have names and rates of pay next meeting.

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

PRESIDENT REPORT.

Mr. Granto discussed the construction grant and thanked Ms. Potwin for her efforts in getting the contractors in place and work completed to meet the June 30, 2022 deadline for the state grant. He asked if anything on the to do list was missed or if any issues/concerns and for Ms. Potwin to provide update. Ms. Potwin explained that the construction projects overall went well and nothing has been missed or won't be completed by June 30th. One concern is possibility of grievance by City plumber/union over drinking fountains but she spoke with them twice and it is documented the city was given the opportunity

to do the work and declined. While very pleased with the inside LED lighting, the outside lighting is not as bright as she thought it would be. 90% of the inside lighting has been replaced and our energy costs should be reduced. Instead of shelving, which was an issue getting due to supply chain problems, bike repair stand was done instead of shelving. Shelving will be completed later from operating funds as Home Depot may have shelving that will work per Mr. Grant. Dr. Foote asked if Greenway funding might be available for bike stands/other projects, Mr. Roscetti said it is a possibility but usually those funds are for more permanent fixtures like buildings and parks.

Ms. Potwin reported she is preparing for next construction grant "season" which starts in July and asked for any suggestions from the board. She has identified HVAC and auditorium seating as projects.

Mr. Grant asked about the frequency/timing of state construction grant program, Ms. Potwin said once a year with paperwork due in to NIOGA by August. According to State budget \$34 million is available statewide for Libraries.

Mr. Grant asked members if they know anyone who may be interested in serving as a NIOGA board member to give Sarah name(s) and contact information as we need to fill this vacancy. Dr. Foote asked how often and where the NIOGA meetings are. Monthly evening meetings at NIOGA headquarters in Newfane (Wrights Corners).

Mr. Grant also reminded board members that there is a vacancy on the Library board, has to be a city resident again any recommendation(s) please give to Sarah.

Mr. Grant asked if there were any questions. Ms. Bailey reminded board members about their financial disclosures and conflict of interest and professional development requirements.

OLD BUSINESS.

None

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion took place regarding approval and funding of Phase 4 of the Local History Inventory Project. Ms. Potwin explained while Phase 3 funding is in place and contract signed but the board needs to approve the contract with HIA and identify funding source(s) for the work as it will be done in conjunction with Phase 3 work which begins in July. The Phase 3 work will cost \$100,000 and the expected cost for Phase 4 work is not to exceed \$192,000. Mr. Grant said this work is necessary to complete the history inventory project. Funding could come from Dunlap Trust and/or grants and other sources. Mr. Brown asked the board to specifically identify the funding source prior to approval of Phase 4 contract due to the large amount of the contract. Ms. Bailey suggested it may be best to approve the contract and funding source together in one resolution.

Resolution:

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to approve the contract with HIA for Phase 4 not to exceed \$192,000 with funding for project from Dunlap Trust funds as outlined was adopted as presented upon a motion by Ms. Glaser seconded by Ms. Bailey and carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT.

The next regular meeting of the Library Board is scheduled for June 29, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. in-person Main Library Conference Room

The next Dunlap Meeting is scheduled for July 27, 2022 at 2.30 pm in person, Main Library Conference Room

Meeting adjourned at 3:59 pm on a motion by Ms. Bailey, seconded by Dr. Foote, and carried.

Recorded by: Thaite
Patrick D. Brown, P.T Account Clerk-Library
Approved by: Don King
Don King, Secretary