

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, June 29, 2022

CALL TO ORDER. The regular meeting of the Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees was held in person on Wednesday, June 29, 2022, in the Conference Room 2nd Floor Main Library.

The meeting was called to order by Board President Carmen Granto at 3.05 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present

Absent

Ms. Bailey

Dr. Foote (excused)

Ms. Glaser (via phone)

Mr. Granto

Mr. King

Dr. Rahman

Also present were Mr. Jim Roscetti, Library Legal Counsel; Ms. Sarah Potwin, Executive Library Director, Mr. Pat Brown, PT Account Clerk-Library in staff roles and one guest, Ms. Cecilia Driscoll, Librarian I and union steward.

OPEN HEARING.

Mr. Granto noted there were no speakers and welcomed one guest, Ms. Cecilia Driscoll. Ms. Driscoll introduced herself, she has been with the Library for about eight years having worked in all departments and is attending the meeting as union steward.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA.

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

REVIEW OF MINUTES.

The May 25, 2022 regular meeting minute's summary was presented and adopted upon a motion by Dr. Rahman, seconded by Ms. Bailey and carried.

FINANCIAL REPORTS.

Mr. Brown reported on the April 30, 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 provided a detailed narrative analysis to supplement the financial reports, which was included in agenda packet, explaining balance sheet amounts, revenues and expenditures for operating fund and shared that the cash and financial position of the Library is good. Being the 4th month of the year expectation would be generally for most revenues and expenses to be about 33% of budget (4/12 of budget). The Library is operating within budget for 2022 but obviously still very early in the year. Most revenues are about at budget/expectations except county and state aid which comes later in year (August/Sept.); total actual revenues are about 28.9% of budget after adjusting for rent income. Total expenses are about 31.2% of budget after adjusting out rent expense; the largest expense is payroll and benefits total payroll is about

30.6% of budget with full time at 33.9% and part time at 24.3% of budget respectively. Payroll and related taxes most likely will require a budget amendment. Benefits, except for social taxes, are within budget. Taxes may be about \$5,000 over budget by year end, budget amendment may be required. Mr. Brown explained that the 2022 budget called for the use of \$120,823 of fund balance which means the budget was developed with the understanding that expenses may exceed revenues or operate in the red by this amount. While it is too early to estimate, it appears that the Library should be within this amount by year end. He also added that 2022 expenses are very comparable to 2021 and 2021 ended the year with a surplus.

- Mr. King asked if the Library is staffed adequately and Dr. Rahman asked how many librarians there are. Ms. Potwin said she feels staffing is about right but is always being reviewed and that there are seven librarians.
- Mr. Granto commented that it appears as that the Library is operating within budget and it is good that there are no major areas of concern based on the report.

The acceptance of the April 2022 financial reports was adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Rahman and seconded by Mr. King, 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.

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 July 2nd and July 4th, Saturday Sept. 3rd and Monday the 4th for Labor Day

Ms. Potwin will be off July 18th (1 day). Staff has her contact information.

Grants

Updates for the following grants was provided:

- NYS Library Construction grant work for windows, flooring, lighting, ADA drinking fountains and electronic employee door opener completed and June 30, 2022 deadline met so funds received will not have to be returned. Project completion and payment vouchers for grant reimbursement to state will be submitted for remaining grant funds by the June 30, 2022 deadline.
- SAM grant \$50K (new vehicle, furniture bike stands and book drop) completed and required paperwork submitted for reimbursement.
- 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).
- NYS Arts Council grant to purchase ukuleles and cover the cost of an instructor applies for June 22, decision expected end of August 2022 requested amount \$5,000

Future NYS Library Construction grants

Ms. Potwin asked for board guidance with 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 and HVAC at the Main Library. NIOGA Library system's allowance is \$905K out of the total NYS Library Construction budget of \$34 million state wide.

Lighting

Included in agenda packet and under new business is a request to undertake the remainder of the LED lighting conversion (most of the lighting conversion completed with state construction grant) at a cost of \$10K-20K to be paid for by the City out of existing funds capital line for the Library. This will complete the indoor lighting conversion to LED which should yield energy cost savings.

Local History Inventory

Hotel plans with tax exempt arrangements for hotel costs are in place for July 10-Sept 16th to house archivists who will be working July 11-Sept. 15th. Phase III work is to be undertaken from July 11-July 30; phase IV is to be completed from August 1 to Sept. 15th.

Long Island University Course

\$1,550 tuition for Ms. Potwin's next course for her Post Master's certificate program-Libraries and Human Resources has been paid. Course begins mid-Sept and runs through mid-Nov. 2022. Ms. Potwin thanked the board for their support.

Juneteenth Holiday

Ms. Potwin has received requests from NFPL employees to have the newest Federal Holiday off as a holiday and the Library be closed. She explained that union contract rules determine days off and the contract runs from 2017-2024 and this is a negotiation item between the union and City administration. Ms. Potwin told employees they may request a personal/vacation day off with approval on first come first serve basis and has notified City Administrator of this interaction.

Desktop Computer Leasing

Computer lease was signed in early May and onboarding or "mirroring" of 55 leased computers is ongoing, though slowed down as the project leader has been called to grand jury duty. Project originally was to be completed 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. Credit of \$800 was issued for items they couldn't correct.

Other Grants/programs

- Mission Ignite/WNYLRC/Lockport Library-Digital Navigator Grant was to begin July 1 but no suitable candidate to teach the course has been located as of June 16, 2022. Interviews are continuing.
- Summer newsletter and Community Annual Report are being worked on.

Other Items

- A list of meetings attended or to be attended by the Library Director was provided.
- 2023 fiscal year budget is being prepared and anticipated meeting with City Administration to review budget in mid-late July. Budget will include increase in security budget line to address

security/Library closing practices addressed at May meeting. Ms. Potwin has written a letter to the Mayor and City Administrator regarding the increase in security costs (copy of letter in agenda packet). Plans is to have budget presented to the Library Board at August 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 was again tabled at June meeting. Ms. Potwin will continue to work on getting this position approved.
- New hires in personnel report (PT Library Trainees, PT Library Page and PT Library Clerk plus a Niagara County sponsored summer student to assist with summer and local history projects and programs.
- NIOGA Library System Board Member –Mr. Ken Hamilton has been approached to fill this role as NF representative and has accepted. Required forms have been sent to him, Mr. Binderman has been notified.
- 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 May 2022.
- Dates to remember, next regular and Dunlap Board meeting is 2:30pm and 3:00 pm respectively Weds. July 27 at the Main Library.

Comments and Questions on Directors Report:

- Dr. Rahman said he is very pleased with the grant work/number of grants the Library has received and/or applied for and commended staff for their efforts. He added that the windows that were replaced as part of the state construction grant look good and it is nice not to see boarded up/broken windows.
- Ms. Bailey asked if the short table legs (SAM Grant item) have been replaced. Ms. Potwin explained to the board that the table legs originally sent were in error and have been replaced/corrected.
- Mr. Granto requested Ms. Potwin to begin developing next steps for local history project since Phase III and Phase IV will be completed by end of July and mid Sept. respectively and this completes/ends the project inventory project.

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

PERSONNEL REPORT.

The report provided the names, positions and term of employment of four part time positions as well as detail for stipends for Carol Brewer and Patrick Brown. It was suggested that instead of referring to stipends, the amounts should be referred to as pay adjustments. Language was changed from stipend to pay adjustment.

The acceptance of the personnel report with amended language was adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Rahman seconded by Ms. Glaser and carried.

PRESIDENT REPORT.

Mr. Granto said he didn't have anything to report on but is very glad that the history inventory project will be finishing up. Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions for him. (none)

OLD BUSINESS.

Ms. Potwin said she was pleased with the construction grant project and thanked all staff for their efforts and also explained that she has been using the new vehicle and it has been at her home as all the Library garage bays were being used with construction materials and no inside space available to park it (didn't want it parked outside overnight at the Library). Once the bays are cleared, the new vehicle will be at the Library parked inside.

Mr. Granto asked about the status of the old vehicle-what plans are for it. Ms. Potwin said it is valued at about \$1,500, has approx. 54K mileage and is looking at options to either sell or donate it. She approached the Gospel Mission as they were in need of a van but ours doesn't meet their needs and one employee may be interested in buying it. Mr. Granto asked Mr. Roscetti what if any legal issues their might be if Library sells/donates it. Mr. Roscetti asked if it is registered to Library, Ms. Potwin said it was, so Mr. Roscetti said it is Library property so we can do what we want with it as long as board approves it. Ms. Bailey suggested donating it to WNED. Mr. Granto suggested possibly donating it to the Boys & Girls Club. General feeling was it is best to either sell or donate it; Ms. Potwin said she will continue looking into these and other options and obtain board approval prior to any action.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) LED indoor lighting-Ms. Potwin explained that while the majority of indoor lighting was converted to more efficient LED with state construction grant funding, the admin offices, 2nd floor conference room and 1st floor display cases were not due to lack of grant funds. Funds to complete the indoor lighting conversion has estimated cost not to exceed \$20,000 and funding is available from City capital project funds designated for the Library. Ms. Potwin asked the board for their approval.

Resolution:

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to approve the LED indoor lighting conversion project for the admin offices, 2nd floor conference room and 1st floor display cases with funding from the City's capital account for the Library as outlined was adopted as presented upon a motion by Ms. Bailey seconded by Dr. Rahman and carried.

- b) Ms. Potwin and Mr. Brown explained that they have been working on having the proper authorized signors on the Dunlap Trust LPL Investment account changed to reflect the Board's authorized signors and having the names of former signors/contacts removed from account. The authorized signors are Mr. Granto, Mr. King, Dr. Foote and Ms. Glaser. This has not been an easy or smooth process. Mr. Roscetti has become involved to assist in getting LPL the documentation they require to make these changes as there has been some difficulty with it. Mr. Brown said that LPL has the board minutes and authorized signor forms showing the authorized signors for the account. Dr. Rahman suggested that a resolution be prepared for the next meeting with both the names of the authorized signors and those to be removed from the account so board can approve. Mr. Brown said the board has already approved the signors at previous meeting and LPL has those minutes but will prepare resolution as suggested.

Mr. Brown requested that the LPL Investment account be closed and all funds be transferred to the Dunlap Trust checking bank account that presently exists with Northwest Bank. The reason for this is that all of the funds are in the form of cash right now with LPL and some will be required for phase 4 of the local history project (previously approved by the board). This will make it easier to access those funds while not tying up the funds in investments while the board decides what to do with remaining trust funds.

Resolution:

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to approve the closing of the Dunlap Trust LPL Investment account with all of the funds transferred to Dunlap Trust checking account with Northwest Bank. The motion was adopted as presented upon a motion by Ms. Bailey, seconded by Mr. King and carried.

- c) M&T Bank Account update was provided by Mr. Brown. The Library has three bank accounts and is in process of moving to online banking with M&T Treasury. The authorized signors on the accounts are Mr. Granto, Mr. King, Dr. Foote and Ms. Glaser and Ms. Glaser and Ms. Potwin are the dual administrators. One of the benefits of online banking is the ability to monitor/manage accounts in real time instead of waiting for a paper bank statement. Such monitoring of the accounts in real time is very important to safeguard Library funds and timely identify unusual and/or unauthorized transactions. M&T and other banks face daily claims of fraudulent activity with customer accounts. Presently, only the authorized signors and administrators are able to monitor the bank accounts online. The board is being asked to approve having account viewing authorization granted to Patrick Brown, PT Library Account Clerk. His access would be limited only to monitor account activity, no check signing/other authority). He has the day to day knowledge of expected activity for each bank account and the signors and administrators may not have time daily to do this. Ms. Bailey said M&T online is secure from what she understands of it. Dr. Rahman asked Mr. Brown if he wants to have this access, Mr. Brown said yes as it would help greatly in managing funds and monitoring bank account activity timely.

Resolution:

Mr. Granto asked for a motion authorizing on line account viewing access (no check signing authorization) to Patrick Brown for the M&T Bank accounts as outlined. The motion was adopted as presented upon motion by Dr. Rahman seconded by Mr. King and carried.

Mr. Granto asked if any board members had any comments or questions on the agenda or other matters.

- Ms. Bailey asked what has to be done to get DPW (Department of Public Works) to repair the potholes in the parking lot as it is in bad condition. Ms. Potwin said she would contact the DPW director.
- Ms. Bailey pointed out that a sewer grate in the parking lot appears to pose a danger as the paving/concrete around it has deteriorated leaving a hole around the grate. Mr. Granto said that may be a water board issue, Ms. Potwin said she will follow up on this.

- Mr. Granto asked Ms. Potwin about employees leaving early and if the disciplinary process is being followed. Ms. Potwin said there are some instances of this and she does put the employee on notice. Mr. Granto said this can't be allowed and wants to be fair about it but the proper disciplinary process must be followed, employees be written up etc. It isn't fair to employees who work their entire shift to have others leave early and suggested Ms. Potwin work with Cecilia Driscoll (union steward) on this to be fair to all employees. Mr. King asked who the previous union steward was prior to Ms. Driscoll. Ms. Potwin said it was John Payne.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to move into executive session at 3:49pm to discuss personnel matters, motion to approve made by Dr. Rahman seconded by Mr. King and carried. All guests were asked to leave the meeting.

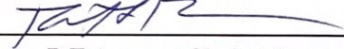

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to end the executive session at 4:01pm which was moved by Mr. King seconded by Dr. Rahman and carried.

The regular board meeting resumed at 4:01pm

NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT.

The next regular meeting of the Library Board is scheduled for July 27, 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 4:02 pm on a motion by Ms. Bailey, seconded by Ms. Glaser, and carried.

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