

Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of Regular Board Meeting

Library-Conference Room

1425 Main Street, Niagara Falls, NY 14305

Wednesday, August 31, 2022

CALL TO ORDER. The regular meeting of the Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees was held in person on Wednesday, August 31, 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

Ms. Glaser

Mr. Granto

Mr. King

Dr. Rahman (left approx. 3:07 p.m returned 3:31 p.m.)

Also present were Mr. Robert DiFrancesco, Friends of the Library, Ms. Sarah Potwin, Executive Library Director, Mr. Pat Brown, PT Finance Manager-Library, Mr. James Roscetti, Library Attorney, Ms. Cecilia Driscoll, Librarian I and union steward.

OPEN HEARING.

Mr. Granto noted there were no other guests or speakers.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES.

The July 27, 2022 regular meeting minute's summary was presented and reviewed. Adopted upon a motion by Dr. Foote, seconded by Mr. King and carried unanimously.

FINANCIAL REPORTS.

Mr. Brown reported on the June 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 and there are no unusual accounts payables or liabilities. Being the 6th month of the year expectation would be generally for most revenues and expenses to be about 50.0% of budget (6/12 of budget). The Library is operating within budget for 2022 but still early in the year and he will be taking a very close look at the revenues and expenses over next couple of months to get a better estimate/forecast for year end. Most revenues are about at budget/expectations except county and state aid which comes later in year (Sept./Oct.); total actual revenues

are about 46% of budget excluding budgeted rent income and fund balance neither of which will have any actual revenue. Total expenses of \$1,005,923 or about 46.5% of budget after adjusting out rent expense; the largest expense is payroll and benefits total payroll is about 45% of budget with full time at 50.3% and part time at 34.7% of budget respectively. Health insurance benefits for employees and retirees are both within budget (retiree health benefits is about \$21k under budget), library and office supplies, operational, maintenance and utilities combined are all under budget for the first six months by about \$74K. As in past years, spending for books and materials has been cut back in May-July and is being evaluated to meet the purchasing needs for the fall and winter.

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 well within this amount by year end. The operating deficit as of June 30, 2022 is \$42,710 and on an annualized basis estimate would be about \$85,420. Revenues from the state and county of \$186k are not reflected in this amount since they are received later in the year but based on current trends they should more than offset the deficit by year end. He also added that for the first six months of 2022 total revenue are \$51,976 higher than same time in 2021 with city and grant revenues \$24,866 and \$22,935 respectively higher than 2021 due to timing of city and grant funding requests and expenses are \$59,370 higher than 2021 including grant expenses of \$35,794 not incurred in 2021. Without grant expenses in 2022, total expenses as of June 30, 2022 vs June 30, 2021 would be \$23,576 higher for first six months. 2021 ended the year with a surplus of \$200,490 while budgeting to use \$84,681 of fund balance. The Library budgeted to use \$120,823 of fund balance (operate in the red) for 2022 and is operating within budget; revenues and expenses will be reviewed over next couple of months to get a better estimate/forecast for year-end but does expect to operate within budget given the current trends. Mr. Brown said he does not see any major areas of concern as of June 30, 2022.

The acceptance of the June 30, 2022 financial reports was adopted unanimously as presented upon a motion by Dr. Foote and seconded by Ms. Glaser.

EXECUTIVE LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

Ms. Potwin shared some of the items from her written report which was included in the agenda packet.

Holiday Closures and Director time off

Library will be closed Saturday Sept. 3rd and Monday the 4th for Labor Day

Grants

- NYS Arts Council grant to purchase ukuleles and cover the cost of an instructor applied for June 22, requested amount \$5,000; \$2,500 was awarded.
- Second Walmart grant for \$500 was awarded August 4, 2022 to be applied to Local History Inventory project costs. Walmart awards grants by location hence several applications were extended to locations in/around Niagara Falls.

Community Annual Report

Mignon Freeman assumed the position of Library Specialist on August 1, 2022 is finalizing the annual report and it should be ready in the beginning of September. She has also been briefed about working with board members on the annual appeal.

- Mr. King asked if the Library received/was awarded large endowment funds recently as he heard it was. Ms. Potwin and Mr. Brown said they were not aware of any and will follow up on this.

Meetings attended and upcoming

- A list of meetings attended or to be attended by the Library Director from July 26-Nov. 5 was provided.

FY 2023 Budget

Plan is to present the budget proposal to the Library board during the September 2022 meeting and said she would appreciate board members lobbying to city government in support of the budget which reflects an increase in city funding of \$175,261. The City is still waiting on GHI & Delta dental, Forever Blue rates for 2023 so those numbers are estimated. Ms. Potwin provided a copy of the 2023 budget in July agenda package. State mandated maintenance of effort (MOE) and impact on Library's funding has to be emphasized with the City.

Angelo Morinello photo op

The Assemblyman visited the LaSalle Library on August 11th as part of the summer reading story time program, but also to publicly thank him for his generous support of state funding to make improvements to both branches. A letter to the editor was sent the following day after verification from the City Administrator.

FY-LLSA money

The Library received the remaining 10% of LLSA 2021 money (\$2,100) via check on August 16th and have been told by NIOGA that FY 2022 LLSA funds are not yet available.

Mayor Restaino photo op

Ms. Potwin has reached out to the Mayor's Office for possible visit and photo op this Fall once the local history project is completed to view the items found, catalogued and made available for researchers. Other invited guests may include Sara Capien, Assemblyman Morinello and/or Senator Ortt.

Noreen Hill memorial

Ms. Potwin said Kim Thomas has been put in contact with the president of NFHS Scholarship Foundation (Niagara Falls Educational Foundation) and thanked Judie Glaser and Bobby DiFrancesco for this. Brief e-mails have been exchanged with general understanding of selecting scholarship applicants by tribal association is being worked through and it has been communicated to Ms. Thomas that there is an interest for some board members wishing to contribute.

- Mr. DiFrancesco said that this memorial scholarship will be discussed at next Foundation meeting and more information will be forthcoming.

NFPL Lighting Main Branch

Additional LED lighting conversion, to be paid by the City, is complete so the entire Main Library is converted to LED lighting. Funding request to the City has been made.

The parking lot lighting remains on throughout the day, burning 24/7. Initially City electricians said the new light bulbs would consume less power. A second request was met with a colorful response; DPW Head John Kinney was contacted on August 9th and I was told he would have to ask the city electrician. Ms. Potwin reported that she could get the work done by LED energy without cost and thus lower our consumption bill.

- Ms. Glaser said she would like to hear about the "colorful response", Ms. Potwin didn't get into detail but said language wasn't appropriate in her opinion, maybe it was just a bad day and that some of the new computers need new wiring and outlet/plug.
- Mr. Granto asked if the city is responsible for the new electric outlet, Ms. Potwin said they are.

SAM Grant \$50,000

Paperwork has been submitted for reimbursement to DASNY; thank you to Mr. Roscetti for his letter explaining the library's usage of the city owned building, and thank you to Mr. Brown for signing the financial control form. SHPO letter of support was granted on August 16th.

NYS Library Construction grants

NIOGA has \$905,000 in grant funding allotted to them out of the State total of \$34 million for all libraries during this cycle (2022 year). Originally the project plan was to replace the HVAC for Main and LaSalle but the City Administrator has instructed Ms. Potwin to hang back on the HVAC for Main and LaSalle as it is now being rolled into the American Rescue plan funding along with the flooring and roofing work-thus it is now a City project.

Application for grant funds for 2022 now will be for the following projects (90/10 match usually it is 50/50):

- Main Library refurbishment of Auditorium seating and flooring
- LaSalle ADA openers

The application requires submission of a resolution of support from the Board so board motion is required to approve the projects and grant application submission. Mr. Granto suggested doing the resolution now.

Resolution:

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to approve the projects of the Main Library Auditorium seating and flooring and the LaSalle ADA openers and related grant application for 2022 state construction grant.

The motion was adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Foote, seconded by Ms. Bailey and unanimously approved.

Policy Creation

The agenda includes a resolution for adopting a contingency fund policy to help us maintain a healthy "rainy day" fund. It may be edited/modified as the board deems necessary.

Computers

Public computers have been installed in the Main Library, both the adult and children's sections beginning August 2nd. Terminals to be installed at LaSalle on August 9th.

Other Items

- Thank you cards received:
 - Ms. Glaser in appreciation of the flowers sent for her father's passing
 - Librarian Bridget Baker marriage gift
- Various Library industry issues and links provided for reading pleasure
- Dates to mark-next board meeting Wed. Sept. 28, 2022 @ 3:00pm Conf. room Main Library and next Dunlap meeting Wed. October 26, 2022 @ 2:30pm Conf. room Main Library
- Reports for July 2022 adult services, childrens/youth programs and meeting room attendance provided

Comments and Questions on Directors Report:

- Mr. Granto asked how the staff closing of the Library building is going? Ms. Potwin explained that the 15-minute early closing time discussed a few meetings ago has not been put in place yet, maybe the early closing time will be in September so for now the closing time remains unchanged and is going well. Mr. Granto said as long as everything is alright and the Ms. Potwin is happy he is fine with it. Mr. Granto added he asked because he went by the Library on Saturday at 4:45 and there was a closed sign on the door.
- Mr. Granto asked when the city electricians were supposed to have the outlet put in for the computers, Ms. Potwin said end of June.

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions or comments for the Director. With no further comments or questions the Executive Library Director's report was received and filed

PERSONNEL REPORT.

The report provided the names, positions, term of employment of four-part time employees; the report was amended to reflect last date of employment for Ms. Battle of 8/26/22. The acceptance of the personnel report was adopted as amended and presented upon a motion by Ms. Glaser, seconded by Dr. Foote and carried unanimously.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Granto began by asking Cecilia Driscoll, Librarian I and union steward, if she had any union issues or anything she would like to discuss; Ms. Driscoll did not have anything at this time. Mr. Granto discussed the local history inventory project; expectations are from the archivists' work is we will have a list of the items and be able to decide what to keep and dispose of. Mr. Granto asked what the next step is and what is the difference between the inventory and cataloging; Ms. Potwin explained that the next step is cataloging of the items which will be completed by staff while the inventory is being completed by the archivists from History Associates. The inventory will provide a complete listing of items while cataloging sorts/groups the information providing data base for use by researchers and the public and should be completed by Christmas. Mr. Granto added that five or six years ago a committee consisting of council members and others from the community was formed to develop a plan/process of the local history project since there were many items but no one really knew for sure what we had; by end of this year, all items will be inventoried/listed and cataloged

and inventory project completed. Mr. Grant asked board members to begin thinking about what the next step(s) are as it is time to move and decide what to do with the history department, where it should be located etc. This is difficult to do with a large group and reaching a consensus such as the one that existed previously. While seeking input from the community, Mr. Grant feels the Library Board should have some ideas and options to present. Dr. Foote said we should seek community viewpoints and agrees not having a large group is more efficient but any plan should be presented to the public as a community project. Mr. Grant agreed that it is a community project and added that everyone who served on the previous committee had good intentions and ideas but it was hard to get agreement/consensus on specific direction and final decisions. He feels it is more effective for the board members to decide on direction and then present it to the community.

OLD BUSINESS

- a) Local History Inventory Project Phase 3 work is completed and the bill paid was received and filed.
- b) Oakwood Cemetery use of Annie image for T-shirt project permission for use of images documents paperwork was reviewed and discussed. (This had been tabled at the July 27, 2022 Dunlap Trust meeting) Mr. Roscetti was consulted, use of the image for project on application is permitted. Application and related paperwork to be completed and submitted to the Library. Applicant information form to be amended upon request of Judie Glaser to remove her as name on the form since she serves on both boards. Ms. Glaser to change the application form with correct name of the individual representing Oakwood Cemetery.

Resolution:

Mr. Grant asked for a motion to approve Oakwood Cemetery's use of the Annie image for their T-shirt project. The motion was adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Foote, seconded by Mr. Grant and approved with Ms. Glaser abstaining as she serves on the board of Oakwood.

- c) Noreen Kim Hill Scholarship request to establish criteria was reviewed. Mr. DiFrancesco said more information is required and this will be discussed at the next meeting of the NF Educational Foundation and he will report back.

- **No action taken item tabled.**

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Budget amendment for computer leasing 7/30/22-7/29/23 annual lease Hewlett Packard increasing budget line amount for computer maintenance/repair account by \$12,000 and decreasing budget line amount for professional fees computers account by \$12,000. Mr. Brown explained this just moves budgeted funds from one account to the other with no net change in total budget. When budget was prepared, leasing of computers was not in effect being approved March 30, 2022.

Resolution:

Mr. Grant asked for a motion to approve the budget amendment. The motion was adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Rahman, seconded by Ms. Bailey and carried unanimously.

- b) Fund Balance Policy-Establishment of Contingency Fund Policy was reviewed and discussed. Mr. Granto asked what this is for and why it is needed as he generally is not in favor of restricting funds. Mr. Brown and Ms. Potwin recommend approval and explained the purpose of the policy is to set aside/assign/reserve a minimum of approximately ten percent (10%) of the overall budget or minimum balance of \$235,000 for operational continuance and reserve for future unbudgeted needs such as repairs and maintenance of a capital nature not ordinarily budgeted for. Mr. Brown referenced some excerpts from the state comptroller's office included in the agenda and said that this just sets aside or assigns/designates funds for said uses and may be changed or removed anytime by the Board. The funds are not being spent and not in a separate bank account but is allocating a portion of unreserved fund balance; these funds remain part of the total fund balance. Dr. Rahman asked if it has to be ten percent or can it be five percent. Mr. Brown said it can be five percent of any amount/percentage the board decides and again may be completely eliminated by the board at any time. Dr. Rahman said the board should go with the recommendation of our finance person. Dr. Foote discussed possibly changing the language in the last paragraph of the policy as to percentage/amount to be more flexible. Mr. Granto asked what the fund balance is, Mr. Brown said as of December 31, 2021 it was approximately \$903k with \$120K restricted (Dimit funds) and \$180k in capital assets leaving approximately \$602 unrestricted. This policy would allocate \$235K out of the \$602K.

Resolution:

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to approve the fund balance policy. The motion was adopted as presented upon a motion by Mr. Granto, seconded by Dr. Foote and carried unanimously.

- c) Library membership minimum age/maximum items allowed

Minimum age

- Ms. Potwin explained that the present age range for membership/library card is five years old and up and is requesting approval to change the existing policy and remove the age limit of five as requested by one of the librarians as we are trying to encourage/promote reading at earlier ages. Such a change would allow library card to be issued as early as birth. There was much discussion, Dr. Foote feels receipt of a library card is important and a person should be of age to understand, respect and appreciate obtaining a library card and is reluctant to lower the age below five; leave it as is so they remember. Ms. Bailey said she doesn't see the value in lowering the age from five and that is when most begin school and there is a responsibility to having a card. Ms. Glaser said she could go with age four and Dr. Rahman said he is open to younger ages, possible three and up. Mr. Granto suggested working with the school district. Ms. Potwin explained in order for a parent or adult to open card in child's name they to have a zero balance and clean record.
 - Consensus was to leave it age five and up for now.

Maximum items allowed

- Ms. Potwin said presently an individual with a library card may take out up to forty (40) items at a time and lowering the maximum amount is being considered as often items go missing and unreturned. There was much discussion, Mr. Granto asked what is the scope of the problem, how many items are lost or unreturned. Ms. Bailey asked what items are posing the most problem not being returned. Ms. Potwin said DVD's. Dr. Foote asked if the forty item maximum is per household, family or individual; Ms. Potwin said the maximum amount applies per individual, not family or household. Members asked who established the present maximum of forty items, Ms. Driscoll said she thinks it might be a NIOGA policy but isn't sure of that. Dr. Foote suggested that more information is required, specifically if the maximum number of items is a NIOGA policy or may be set by the library, number of lost items by type and need to have idea of how much is getting to collection stage. Ms. Bailey and Ms. Glaser asked what the book fine was, Ms. Potwin said 10 cents/day. It was suggested that this fine should be raised. Mr. Granto asked how many titles the library had, Ms. Potwin said she will check on it but thinks approximately 175k. Mr. Granto said in summary that Ms. Potwin will gather information and details as requested and report back to the board.

Mr. Granto went around the table asking all in attendance individually if they had any additional comments, questions on the agenda or other issues/matters they wished to discuss. None noted.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT.

The next regular meeting of the Library Board is scheduled for Wednesday September 28, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. in-person Main Library Conference Room, 2nd floor. The next Dunlap Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday October 26, 2022 at 2.30 pm in person, Main Library Conference Room, 2nd floor.

Meeting adjourned at 4:03 pm on a motion by Mr. Granto, seconded by Mr. King, and carried unanimously.

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