

Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees

**Minutes of Regular Board Meeting**

**Library-Conference Room**

**1425 Main Street, Niagara Falls, NY 14305**

**Wednesday, October 26, 2022**

**CALL TO ORDER.** The regular meeting of the Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees was held in person on Wednesday, October 26th, 2022, in the Conference Room 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Main Library. The meeting was called to order by Board President Carmen Grant at 3:10 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:**

Present

Absent

Ms. Bailey

Dr. Foote

Ms. Glaser

Mr. Grant

Mr. King

Dr. Rahman

Also present were Ms. Sarah Potwin, Executive Library Director, Mr. Pat Brown, PT Finance Manager-Library, Mr. James Roscetti, Library Attorney, Ms. Cecilia Driscoll, Librarian 1/union steward and Mr. Robert DiFrancesco, Friends of the Library.

**OPEN HEARING.**

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

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA.**

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES.**

The September 28th, 2022 regular meeting minutes were presented and reviewed. Adopted upon a motion by Ms. Glaser, seconded by Ms. Bailey, and carried unanimously.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS.**

Mr. Brown reported on the August 31, 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 8th month of the year expectation would be generally for most revenues and expenses to be about 66.67% of budget (8/12 of budget) if budget evenly spread over the year but noted some items in both revenue and expenses come in once and not evenly throughout the year. The Library is operating within budget for 2022 and he doesn't see any major issues or problem areas.



Actual total revenues are about 61.5% of budget (vs expected 66.7%) excluding unbudgeted grant revenue and budgeted rent income and fund balance neither of which will have any actual revenue. City revenue funding is within expectations for 8 months, transfer of \$18k from Dunlap trust is recorded as revenue but actual cash transfer has not yet been made, county aide came in September so no actual amount as of August and state funding comes in later in the year so no actual amount for it either as of August. Library charges, passport fees, Friends of the Library and annual appeal are not meeting budget expectations but annual appeal begins in November so expect that variance to improve. Total expenses as of August 31 were \$1,294,411 or about 60.0% of budget (vs expected 66.7%) or about \$147,752 under budget for 8 months after adjusting out rent expense. Excluding the \$35,794 of unbudgeted grant expenses, total expenses were \$1,258,617 or 58% of budget (vs expected 66.7%) and \$183,546 savings for 8 months. The largest expenses are payroll and benefits; total payroll of \$475,510 is about 60.3% of budget with full time at 66.3% and part time at 48.7% of budget respectively or about \$50k under budget for 8 months all in part time but this savings will be reduced some with planned hiring of 2 part-time employees in coming months. Health insurance benefits for employees and retirees are both within budget (retiree health benefits is about \$35k under budget partially due to medicare charges billed in Sept. of about \$9k so still about \$26k under budget). Other benefits are right on budget. Library and office supplies, operational, maintenance and utilities combined are under budget \$87k for 8 months excluding unbudgeted grant expenses of \$36k. Utilities are about 50.3% of budget showing a savings of \$19k over 8 months. 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 and expects that the Library should be well within this amount by year end excluding any bequests or unusual contributions. The operating deficit as of August 31, 2022 is \$13,356 and on an annualized basis estimate would be about \$20k. Revenues from the state and county of \$186k is 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. County aid received in September of \$59,596 was \$7,404 or 11% less than budget. He also added that for the first 8 months of 2022 total revenue was \$37,188 higher than same time in 2021 primarily due to city revenue \$8k, Dunlap Trust transfer \$18k and grants/other revenue \$26k higher and system grants \$20k lower respectively than 2021. Expenses are \$57k higher than 2021 primarily due to grant expenses of \$36k and computer leasing not incurred in 2021. Without grant expenses in 2022, total expenses as of August 31, 2022 vs August 31, 2021 would be approx. \$21k higher for 8 months mostly due to computer leasing. 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. While revenues and expenses will be reviewed over next couple of months to get a better estimate/forecast for year-end, Mr. Brown said due to receipt of \$676k Rebello bequest the Library will certainly end with a large surplus. Even without the bequest, Mr. Brown does expect to operate within budget given the current trends. Mr. Brown said he does not see any major areas of concern as of August 31, 2022 and mentioned that financial report for November meeting may not be available due to scheduled date of the meeting being early in the month.



Mr. Grant asked if there were any questions on the financial report. Dr. Foote pointed out that actual expenses for furniture/equipment is quite a bit under budget and she noticed carpeting in some areas of the library could use replacement/updating. Ms. Potwin explained that she will be reporting on some possible uses of these funds in her directors report and there will be some purchases before year end that will use up much of the budget line, carpeting not planned at this time. Dr. Rahman said furniture may need updating.

The acceptance of the August 31, 2022 financial reports was adopted unanimously as presented upon a motion by Dr. Rahman and seconded by Mr. Grant.

#### **EXECUTIVE LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT.**

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

#### **Upcoming Holiday Closures and Director time off**

The Library will be closed:

- Friday November 11-Veteran's Day
- Wednesday November 23-Main to close at noon for Thanksgiving
- Thursday November 24-Thanksgiving
- Saturday December 24-Christmas Eve
- Monday December 26-Christmas Day (observed)
- Saturday December 31-New Year's Eve Main to close at noon
- Monday January 2, 2023-New Year's Day (observed)

Ms. Potwin was off Friday October 28<sup>th</sup>, staff has contact information and encouraged to reach out to me if needed.

#### **Meetings attended and upcoming**

- A list of meetings attended or to be attended by the Library Director from Oct. 7-Nov. 5 was provided.

#### **FY 2023 Budget**

As of October 12<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Potwin learned the City will be granting an increase of \$135k in funding for fiscal year 2023 budget bringing the City funding to \$1,921,947, although not final yet. A copy of the 2023 proposed budget was provided in the agenda packet. Ms. Potwin said she is very grateful for the City support as it will allow for a number of planned projects to happen during 2023 such as a new website, covering costs of anticipated retirement and vacation buyout, computer infrastructure upgrades, support of Hoopla and downloadable ebook based on demand, increased security, purchasing of much needed furniture and seeding the front lawn of the Main Library.

#### **Financial Audit**

Engagement letter with EFPR Group for year end 2022 financial audit was signed Oct. 17, 2022 by Mr. Grant. Audit will be during the Spring 2023.

#### **Annual Appeal**

Ms. Potwin thanked Sharon Bailey and Judie Glaser for working with Mignon Freeman composing the appeal letter; goal is to have it hit mailboxes the first week of November. Compu-Mail handles the mailing, postage has been paid, Ms. Bailey added that the letters would be going out in the next few days.



### Newsletter

Mignon Freeman has produced the Fall newsletter in-house a copy is included in Trustees folders. The deadline for the Winter newsletter is Dec. 1 for any submissions, board members who wish to have anything added please e-mail information to mfreeman@nioga.org.

### Grant Applied

WNYLRC Diversity Internship Grant-5K

- Anticipated 12.5 hours/week, 20 weeks @ \$19/hour
- Candidates must identify as Black, Indigenous or People/Person of Color (BIPOC)
- Must be eligible to work within New York State, a high school graduate or a current university student seeking experience in the information and library science field and cannot be currently enrolled in library school
- Must seek to gain greater understanding of the roles of libraries and librarians in their communities

### Rebello Bequest

Ms. Potwin thanked library attorney Roscetti for his assistance in working with her to obtain monies left to the library as part of the last will and testament of Mr. Noel Rebello, a Niagara Falls citizen who passed away in February 2020. Mr. Boniello, the attorney for the estate, was invited to attend the November meeting but is not able to. The check was picked up on September 30, 2022 at Mr. Boniello's office and required paperwork to release the funds was signed. Ms. Potwin learned a bit more about Mr. Rebello, who was a Chemical Engineer and financial manager and lived an austere lifestyle. **Mr. Boniello clarified that there are not any restrictions on the money;** Ms. Potwin asked if there was any way we could honor Mr. Rebello and was told a plaque would be kind. Mr. Boniello said he would like to see the money used in a fashion that moves the library services forward in our community. Mr. Rebello's obituary is included in the agenda packet. Mr. Boniello expressed appreciation that the Library was the only organization to send him a letter of thanks when the probate notification was issued in 2021. A letter of thanks was again sent on Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> to document the deposit of the donation and thank Mr. Boniello for his time. The funds totaling approx. \$675K was deposited in the Library's savings account on Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Potwin suggested consideration be given to using some of these funds to purchase furniture in memory of Mr. Rebello possibly in the children's room at both branches. The possibility of a computer table for parents to use (picture of computer station for Main & LaSalle was provided) was suggested; pricing of units is being worked on.

- Mr. Grant asked if Mr. Rebello had a niece/nephew or other family in the area, Ms. Potwin said he has a niece and nephew in London England that are barristers. Mr. Grant suggested a note of thanks be sent to them.
- Ms. Bailey suggested that the Library should do something to publicly recognize large donors such as Mr. Rebello and L. Rawnye similar to that which was done for the Dunlap donation. Consideration should be given to having an area/wall space with photo and brief write up in recognition and thanking them.
- Mr. Brown added that these funds were assigned as committed fund balance at the Sept. 28, 2022 meeting.

### Mayor Restaino photo op

An event to mark the occasion of the Local History inventory project completion took place Wed. Oct. 12 @ 1pm with the Mayor, Senator Ort representative, Assemblyman Morinello, Congressman Higgins and the local press to show items found in our collection and discuss historical value. It was highlighted that the library now can offer better customer service by upgrading the search catalog with the entirety of the collection.



The inventory was completed at a cost of approx. \$408k entirely paid for with grant money and no city tax payer money was used.

### **Computer Deployment**

AIS has been working on installing staff terminals at LaSalle as well as a handful left at Main. 2 laptops for librarians office to aid in ordering and to conduct zoom calls. Three surface tablets, 1 for main/1 for LaSalle/1 for main children's room will allow patron browsing of the library collection and will be secured to floor to prevent theft. Work continues to update IP addresses on the new faster internet service and server closet wiring is being cleaned up.

### **Future furniture purchases/Study Pods-ADA**

ADA furniture for the pod was delivered on Oct. 14. In fiscal year 2023, Ms. Potwin would like to look at purchasing a handful of much needed office desk chairs as well as pricing out stackable/wipeable public programming tables and chairs for the flag room.

### **History Associates (HIA)**

The HIA archivists' inventory report is included in agenda packet and shared with the board via e-mail and reviewed at the Dunlap meeting preceding this meeting.

- Librarian trainee Joe Malek has been kept on from summer months to aid in cataloging the inventory 10 hours/week from Sept. 1-Dec. 31)
- Elise Lia has been offered temporary employment for 17 hours/week to also assist in cataloging

Courtney will have additional help as follows to complete the inventory project:

- PT Library Trainee Malek- 10 hours/week until Oct. 31
- PT Library Trainee Lia-17 hours/week Oct. 11-Dec. 31
- Contractor Kennedy-10 hours/week Oct. 11-Dec. 31

Ms. Potwin said her goal is to have a web-based searchable Past Perfect catalog with the entire local history inventory collection available throughout the website, stored securely in the cloud, by December 31, 2022.

### **Noreen Hill Scholarship**

Ms. Potwin had a discussion with Bobby DiFrancesco to move the scholarship creation process ahead and after reaching out to Noreen's friend Kim Thomas the following criteria was agreed to:

- Idea of merging the two scholarships is not a positive move and should not happen
- One prize of \$1,000
- Money to support higher education goals
- Awardee must be a Native American student pursuing a degree in Education, Health or Community Services
- Awardee must be able to produce verification of Tribal affiliation or ancestry with priority to applicants affiliated with the six Nations Grand River community (Ms. Thomas or the family know the process to confirm this)

There should be no other criteria as not to shrink the pool of applicants further and it was agreed that we would like to get this started by the end of the year.



### **Tool Library**

Librarian Richard has been working on setting up a tool library with our partners at Niagara University and Habitat for Humanity with the goal of having a "handful" of hand tools (rakes, spades, gloves etc) available for borrowing to those with a valid Nioga Library card and free of fines by Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>. Available at both library branches and insurance has been obtained with library named under coverage policy.

### **2023 Meeting Dates**

List of the planned 2023 regular and Dunlap board meetings was provided.

### **Dunlap Money**

Ms. Potwin thanked Dr. Foote and Ms. Glaser for visiting Bank on Buffalo to sign paperwork authorizing them as check signors; Mr. Granto and Mr. King are the other two check signors and have to visit the bank to sign paperwork.

As discussed and acted on at the Sept.28th board meeting this account is a holding account for the funds until the board decides where/how to invest and/or possible uses of the funds. These funds are presently in a checking account with Northwest Bank.

### **Library Closures**

Beginning October 1<sup>st</sup>, both branches began closing their doors 15 minutes earlier to allow for adequate time to close down the buildings by the scheduled closing time. For example, Main branch is scheduled to close at 5pm the doors will be locked at 4:45pm. City administration is aware of the new procedure, information is posted at every entry, on our telephone service as well as computer tables in the buildings. Staff has been clearly given directive that they are not to leave at 4:45pm (the 15 minutes before scheduled closing time) but have time to clear the buildings, wipe down telephones and counters and finish any other work. This was all discussed at a staff meeting as well as in memo issued Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>. Goal is to ensure that the buildings are closed down properly and that no one is left in the building after closing.

### **Other Items:**

Monthly reports for September adult, youth/childrens departments activity and meeting room use were not provided by the librarians so they are not included in the directors report.

Library industry issues website references provided for ones reading pleasure.

### **Comments and Questions on Directors Report:**

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions or comments for the Director. Dr. Rahman asked how the Makerspace room is doing, Ms. Potwin said it has been well received. 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 one-part time employee for circulation department (Kate Wilson) and 1 contractor (Lilly Kennedy) for Local History, the end of employment term for 1 part time librarian trainee (Noah Grover) and return to work of 1 MW-3 (Tammy McGarvey).



The acceptance of the personnel report was adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Ramhan, seconded by Ms. Bailey and carried unanimously.

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. Granto said he will be asking for executive session, nothing to report at this time.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **a) Noreen Kim Hill Scholarship Update**

Mr. DiFrancesco referred to the Executive Library Director's report he and the Director had met, criteria has been developed, the Niagara Falls Educational Foundation will handle the donations and administration of the scholarship process based on the criteria outlined in Ms. Potwins' directors report.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- a) Resolution to close the Northwest Bank checking account for Orrin E Dunlap Collection Trust and transfer all funds to the new checking account with Bank on Buffalo (same account name) as recommended by the 9/28/22 board approved committee. Check signors approved 9/28/22.

### **Resolution:**

Mr. Granto asked for a motion to approve the closing of the Northwest Bank checking account for Dunlap funds and transfer all funds to the new checking account with Bank on Buffalo (same account name). The motion was adopted as presented upon a motion by Dr. Rahman, seconded by Dr. Foote and carried unanimously.

Mr. Granto asked Ms. Driscoll as union steward if she had anything she wanted to discuss, Ms. Driscoll said no. 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.

- Mr. DiFrancesco said he found someone who will takeaway the old copier just needs to have it at loading dock for 10/27/22 am pickup may cost \$75. Ms. Potwin thanked him for his efforts.
- Ms. Bailey asked the board to think of names of potential donors to send letters to for annual appeal especially trying to increase business/corporate contributions.
- Ms. Glaser noted that the Library meeting minutes and policies are not on the website and proposes that they be put on line as soon as possible so Library is in compliance with state requirements.
  - Mr. Granto asked Ms. Potwin to look into getting this completed
  - Ms. Bailey said library policies should be reviewed and revised annually at least
- Ms. Potwin said in the 2023 budget are funds for website development/improvement and adding board members names, board minutes and library policies would all be part of this use of funds. She added that 2 new computer kiosks to be used for public use/cataloging are in her office if any board member wants to see them before they are installed.


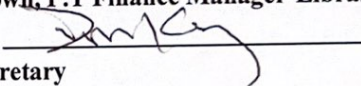
### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Granto moved for executive session at 3:33 seconded by Mr. King. The executive session ended at 3:59 pm and the regular meeting resumed.

### **NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT.**

The next regular meeting of the Library Board originally scheduled for November 16, 2022 changed to November 30, 2022 at 3:00 p.m.in-person Main Library Conference Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The next Dunlap Meeting (First Quarterly meeting 2023) is scheduled for Wednesday February 22, 2023 at 2.30 pm in person, Main Library Conference Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm on a motion by Ms. Bailey, seconded by Dr. Foote, and carried unanimously.

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