

**NIAGARA FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR LIBRARY BOARD MEETING**

Niagara Falls Public Library 1425 Main Street, Niagara Falls, NY
Wednesday, February 28, 2024 @ 4:15 p.m.

Meeting minutes

CALL TO ORDER. The regular meeting of the Niagara Falls Public Library Board of Trustees was held in person on Wednesday, February 28, 2024 in the Conference Room, 2nd floor, Main Library. The meeting was called to order by Board President Carmen Granto at 4:15 pm.

ROLL CALL:

Present

Ms. Bailey
Dr. Carter
Mr. Granto
Mr. King
Mr. Vilardo

Absent/Excused

Ms. Glaser (Excused)
Dr. Foote (Excused)

Also present were Ms. Sarah Potwin, Executive Library Director, Mr. Pat Brown, Finance Manager, Mr. Robert DiFrancesco from the Friends of the Library, Ms. Courtney Geerhart, Librarian I and Ms. Grace Croop, Archivist Consultant both from Local History Dept., Ms. Bridget Baker & Mr. Gabriel Fox both Librarian I's, Mr. James Roscetti, Library Attorney, Mr. Robert DiFrancesco, Friends of the Library and Ms. Tammy Kinan, Friends of the NF Library/Library representative on the NIOGA board.

OPEN HEARING

Mr. Granto noted there were no speakers or members from the public present for comment and introduced Mr. Nick Vilardo who was appointed a Trustee by Mayor Restaino replacing Dr. Rahman whose term expired. Mr. Granto and all Trustees welcomed Mr. Vilardo and thanked Dr. Rahman for his dedication and service to the Library. Ms. Potwin introduced Librarians Bridget Baker & Gabriel Fox who will be providing information on the solar eclipse plans and website demonstration respectively under new business. Mr. Granto welcomed Ms. Baker and Mr. Fox (both staff Librarian I) and asked them to do their presentations now instead of waiting until new and old business noting that Ms. Croop did her presentation during the Trust meeting although her report is in the agenda packet.

Ms. Baker's highlights regarding the solar eclipse on April 8, 2024 and the Library's role/programs:

- Partnering with several community organizations to team up with NASA's Kennedy Space Center we are distributing glasses, hosting speakers and sharing NASA educational resources on the eclipse to the public. Weekly meetings are including all organizations to coordinate and keep all up to date with the various programs and events.
- Wednesday, April 3rd from 7:00pm-8:30pm Samantha Doxtator will be giving a presentation on Haudenosavnee or Indigenous Astronomy in the auditorium at the Main Library.
- April 4th through the eclipse on April 8th, we will have various NASA subject matter experts and special guests. The initial version of this schedule is available on our website.
- Through our NASA partnership, the SEAL program, NIOGA and the Friends of the Library we will be distributing over 14,000 pairs of eclipse glasses including 7,500 to the N.F. School district for students. Glasses are available to the public beginning March 1st.

Questions/comments from Trustees on the eclipse:

Mr. Grant asked:

- 1) if any of the presentations will be made with the school district students.
 - o Ms. Baker said she is meeting with the district on Feb. 29 to provide 7,500 pairs of glasses but no specific presentations/programs scheduled as school is out on break during that time
 - Mr. Grant suggested if the presentations are not proprietary in nature they should be filmed/taped for later presentation to schools at a later date.
- 2) when the final schedule of programs will be out/made public.
 - o Ms. Baker said by the end of March
- 3) if there is a steering committee in place or anyone person primarily responsible to address changes or issues that may arise. He feels there should be one or two people as main points of contact with an event such as this.
 - o Ms. Baker said she is not aware of a person or group with such role but Destination Niagara will be having all the information on their website, Ms. Potwin added NASA is the primary organization coordinating/directing events. City public safety, DPW and other officials are all addressing issues for the City.

Mr. King asked:

- 1) if it is weather dependent and what time is it taking place on the April 8th.
 - Ms. Baker said it was largely weather dependent on the date though NASA will be live streaming it as a backup, other programs/presentations are not. The peak time is 3:20pm and lasts about an hour. Ms. Baker said we are expecting approximately 44 people from NASA.
- 2) if there are any plans for a reception or hospitality accommodations for these people from NASA. Ms. Potwin said there are no plans to provide food etc as a reception but Library facilities will be available. Mr. King feels we should provide some refreshments or hold a reception of some sort for these 44 people at the Library.
- 3) which library the speaking programs will take place; Ms. Baker said April 5th & 6th at LAS and April 5th, 6th & 7th at the Main Library.

Mr. Grant thanked Ms. Baker for her presentation and then welcomed Mr. Gabriel Fox for the website presentation.

Mr. Fox provided background information on himself, he is a newly hired full time Librarian but worked part time at the Library as a clerk in circulation, on the website and mostly with Ms. Baker in the makerspace department. He then provided a detailed demonstration on the Library's new website planned to go live March 1st which is very user friendly and easy to navigate. The demonstration included review of the various tabs/links including program calendars, policies and Trustee along with the new wireless/online printing option.

Questions/comments from Trustees on the website:

- 1) Ms. Bailey asked if most changes/updates to the website can be done locally, Mr. Fox said yes. Ms. Bailey noted that the Trustees names have to be changed to reflect Mr. Vilardo replacing Dr. Rahman.
- 2) Mr. Grant asked how people pay using the wireless printing option, Ms. Potwin said coins, credit card or electronically.
- 3) Dr. Carter asked if the wireless printing is available at both branches, Ms. Potwin said yes.
- 4) Dr. King asked if there was any information regarding the Ralph Wilson Foundation digitization project grant for local history, Ms. Potwin said there is not as such a release by the foundation has not been made yet.

Ms. Potwin added that she is very pleased with the website and proud of the staff's contributions and input as it will serve as a marketing tool, increase communication for patrons with the library. Ms. Croop said digital files of the local history department will be available on the website. Mr. Granto said excellent work on the website asking if anyone else like NIOGA have one like it, Ms. Potwin said no.

Mr. Granto thanked Mr. Fox for his website demonstration and work and is very pleased with the excellent work of Ms. Baker, Mr. Fox and Ms. Croop.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions/comments on the agenda as presented, hearing none the agenda was adopted upon a motion by Mr. King seconded by Mr. Granto, approved unanimously.

REVIEW OF MINUTES

Minutes of the January 31, 2024 regular board meeting were reviewed and adopted upon a motion by Ms. Bailey seconded by Dr. Carter, approved unanimously.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Mr. Brown referred to the December 31, 2023 financial summary narrative and detailed financial reports in the agenda packet noting that these are the year-end figures to be audited and explaining variances and highlighting the following:

- Bank account balance of \$746,170 includes \$109,150 deferred revenue restricted for state construction grant expenditures for Main branch auditorium, in good financial position, the increase in cash balance vs 12/22 due to state construction grant funds received in October 2023 and normal results of operations, unpaid bills are normal accounts payable. All accounts are reconciled, as of year-end funds owed to the Library consist of \$11,073 due from the City, \$100,000 due from NIOGA and \$20,000 of bullet aid. The central aid money was received 2/1/24.
- Twelve months of the year has passed expectations on an evenly incurred budgetary basis is that actual revenues/expenditures would be 100.00%.
 - Total revenues are 103.60% of budget or 3.60% higher than 100.00% expectation and 100.20% or 0.20% higher than expectation after making adjustments removing unbudgeted grant revenues and bullet aid of \$20k making revenues \$2,169,362. So revenues did well compared to budget. Central aid of \$100k and bullet aid of \$20k are receivables as of 12/31/23.
 - Total expenditures are 93.40% of budget or 6.60% below expectation of 100.00% (\$153,466 under budget). Reducing total expenditures for unbudgeted grant expenditures of \$77,032 total expenditures would \$2,093,228 or 90.09% of budget and under expectation by 9.91% or \$230,498. All major expense lines at or below 100.00% expectation except for equipment which is 383.07% resulting from board approved purchase of server, conference room furniture and digital printer not budgeted in this line at the request of management but funding available from other budget lines (budgeted expenditure line not adjusted), building operation & maintenance is 150.25% primarily due to grant expenditures that are not budgeted for of \$77,032, building maintenance & repairs & security; without unbudgeted grant expenditures of \$77,032 the expense category would be \$166,791 or 102.78% of budget and 2.78% above expectation of 100.00%. Mr. Brown's report explained the reasons for the variances of all expense categories for current year vs budget & compared to prior year.
 - It has been anticipated that actual expenditures will exceed budget amounts by year end in the equipment/furniture, grants, travel/training admin and security lines but available funding to cover these overages exist in other budget lines to permit budget transfers. In total, actual expenditures are \$153,466 less than budget so this was not unexpected.

- Operating surplus (deficit) is \$72,767 or \$231,371 better than expected budget operating deficit of \$158,604 so we will be adding \$72,767 fund balance not using any of fund balance as budgeted. Mr. Brown did note that included in the operating surplus is \$20k receivable for bullet aid not yet received as of this meeting so the auditors may make an adjustment reducing the \$72,767 to \$52,767 but that is up to them. We have been told via e-mail that the library will receive \$20k for 2023 bullet aid. The auditors will make other adjustments for financial statement purposes to capitalize certain expenditures, depreciation and lease liability none of which effect the library's finances on a budgetary basis. These are normal year end audit adjustments.
- Mr. Brown also provided financial report for the Trust funds which was reviewed during the Trust meeting preceding the regular board meeting.

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions on the financial report, hearing none it was received and filed.

EXECUTIVE LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mrs. Potwin referred to her written report in the agenda packet highlighting:

- Upcoming library closures, meetings she has attended noting days she has scheduled off.
- Newsletter for July-August 2024 deadline for adding any items is May 1, 2024. Please e-mail Mfreeman@nioga.org.
- Construction grant project with the State is underway, auditorium seating/carpeting retrofit and details shortly will have to be completed in two phases over two grants due to costs as reported at last meeting.
- Trustee training resources (Online Trustee handbook) –Book club sessions planned for 2024, dates TBA. Please let her know if you need help registering for this webinar or any series so she can help you. Certificates need to be provided for reporting as fiscal year 2024 training has to be reported to DLD via NIOGA in mid-January 2025.
 - Ms. Bailey asked if all Trustees completed their required training for 2023, Ms. Potwin said no.
- State Bullet Aid money for 2023 has not been received yet, Assemblyman Morinello's office has been notified. A letter outlining Central Library activities has been sent to NIOGA with a copy of the Central Library Plan of Service and my responses/activities to each point. Trustees asked to approve the Central Library Plan of Service FY 2022-2026.
- NIOGA System Annual Dinner Thursday, May 23 info regarding tickets/details TBA
- Town of Niagara/Fashion Outlet charity funding was not received last year we received \$1,500, letter was sent to the Town Supervisor asking for reconsideration.
- ALA Grant-Transforming Community grant of \$2k was applied for by Ms. Baker & Mr. Fox decision expected in Spring 2024.
- New website was demonstrated earlier in the meeting by Mr. Fox. Planned to go live March 1st and very proud of staff's contributions and input. It will be a marketing tool and increase communication for patrons with the library in addition to being a tool to learn about our diverse services and fulfill many of the Central Library Plan of Service points.
- State Report has been completed, needs to be approved at the March meeting.
- NIOGA meeting was cancelled by Mr. Binderman.
- NIOGA Board President term is expiring this year; any nominations should be brought forward.
 - Mr. Granto asked who appoints the individual, Ms. Potwin to find out.
- Statistic reports for adult, children/youth programs, makerspace and meeting room for month of January 2024.

Mr. Granto said he has been a Trustee for a long time noting that based on the presentations made we have very talented and skilled staff and can see the progress being made, the Library has come a long way and improving. He asked if there were any questions/comments on director's report hearing none the directors report was received and filed.

PERSONNEL REPORT

Classification Change

- Gabe Fox, hired 1/3/23 as a PT Clerk then to PT Librarian Trainee has completed UB's Library School and began as a Full time Librarian 1 (grade 17A, job class 9217) February 20, 2024 rate \$22.38/hr., 35 hrs./wk. eligible for full benefits.

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions or comments on the personnel report, hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the personnel report.

Acceptance of the personnel report was adopted as presented upon a motion by Ms. Bailey, seconded by Dr. Carter and approved unanimously.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT

NONE

OLD BUSINESS

IX a. Grace Croop-Digitization update for Local History Collection

Ms. Grace Croop, Archivist consultant for local history digitization project provided a detailed report titled Deaccession and Digitization Report (February 2024) was reviewed during the Dunlap-Niagara Falls Library Collective Trust meeting.

The archivist report on digitization was received and filed.

NEW BUSINESS

Xa Central Library Plan of Service FY 2022-2026

Ms. Potwin said this was given out last month for review.

Motion to approve the Central Library Plan of Service FY 2022-2026 was made by Ms. Bailey, seconded by Mr. Granto and approved unanimously.

Xb. Credit Card Resolution (Page X-1)

Mr. Granto explained that he received a call from the credit card company about a purchase being made that he wasn't familiar with or aware of so the credit cards for the Library were cancelled. We now have to reapply to M&T Bank to have new credit cards issued. The resolution authorizes issuance of Library credit cards to Sarah Potwin & Carol Brewer.

Mr. Granto asked if there were any questions or concerns, hearing none he asked for a motion to approve the resolution.

Motion to approve the credit card resolution as presented was made by Ms. Bailey, seconded by Mr. Granto and approved unanimously.

Xc. Solar Eclipse Plans

Presentation was completed under Open hearing section of the meeting.

Xd. Website demonstration

Presentation was completed under Open hearing section of the meeting.

Xe. Town of Niagara funding

Ms. Potwin reported that last year we received \$1,500 and this year we were not on the list to receive any funding. She has sent a letter to the Town Supervisor and Mr. Granto to follow up with Town Supervisor.

Xf. Discussion regarding meeting days

It was agreed at the January 31, 2024 meeting that 4:00pm (4:15pm when Trust meeting same day) would be the new time for Trustee meetings presently on Wednesday. The new time seems to work best for all but the day of the week does not and Monday or Tuesday would work better. Further discussion and action as to the day of the week for Trustee meetings to take place at March 27, 2024 meeting.

Mr. Granto went around the room asking each in attendance if they had anything else to discuss or need for executive session.

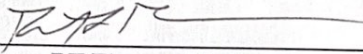
- Ms. Bailey said security was not covered 2 shifts during the day last week (2/20 & 2/21)
- Ms. Kinan said there was not a NIOGA meeting during the month so she didn't have anything to report
- Mr. Vilardo thanked everyone for welcoming him on to the Board and hopes to be an asset
- Mr. King
 - referred to the problems reported on in the media with Newfane Library and asked if there was any help our Library could provide; Ms. Potwin said we were asked if we had a book drop they could use and there really isn't anything we can do, NIOGA staff is assisting them.
 - Consider reception at the Library for eclipse day for guests
- Mr. Granto said he will be absent from the next meeting and asked Ms. Bailey if she would conduct it, Ms. Bailey agreed.

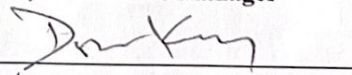
EXECUTIVE SESSION

NONE

NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT. The next regular meeting of the Library Board is scheduled for 3/27/24 at 4:00 p.m. in the conference room. The next Dunlap-NF Library Collective Trust meeting is scheduled for 4/24/24 at 4:00 pm in the conference room.

The meeting to adjourn at 5:07pm was made by Mr. King, seconded by Mr. Vilardo, and carried.

Recorded by: 
Patrick D. Brown, PT Finance Manager

Approved by: 
Don King, Secretary