

Kent County Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of the January 29, 2024 Meeting

Present: Jay Silcox, President; Amy Sine, Treasurer; Erin Counihan, Secretary; Alex Baker, Trustee; Rachel Durso, Trustee; Peggy McKee, Trustee; Arnessa Dowell, Executive Director; Olivia Coleman, Executive Secretary.

Mr. Silcox called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

Ms. Durso moved to approve the minutes of the two previous meetings, Ms. McKee seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Mr. Silcox reviewed the agenda.

Public Comment

The trustees opened for public comment, and there was none.

Officer's Reports

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Sine reviewed the current account balances. The Peoples Bank account balance was \$218,961, PNC Checking was \$143,205 and PNC Savings was \$31,242. Ms. Sine also addressed a fraud attempt in a check to the Eastern Shore Regional Library that PNC caught and was able to prevent. It was a county check with Ms. Sine's signature, but a different name on the payee line where the Eastern Shore Regional Library should have been indicated. She also reminded the trustees that the next board meeting would be the budget meeting.

Secretary's Report

Ms. Counihan reported that she was working with Ms. Coleman, the Executive Secretary, to complete the annual update of board documentation. They would be putting together an online folder that everyone would be able to access containing all of the documentation required of board members in the state of Maryland, as well as important library documents like policies.

Foundation Representative

Mr. Murphy was not present, but sent out an email with his updates that Mr. Silcox reviewed. The Foundation's annual appeal had collected \$18,000 as of the last count, and donations were still being received. These funds would be used to update the book drops at each library location. The Foundation also agreed to store funds for the Rock Hall library project, with the condition that a specific committee or treasurer would be needed for these funds and that they would only collect up to \$50,000 annually. The trustees decided to look at other options, as the project is hoping to raise more than \$50,000 a year.

Friends Representative

Ms. Durso reported that she was in contact with the Friends of the Library, and would be attending their February meeting.

Rock Hall Facility Update

Ms. McKee discussed the current progress on the initiative for the new Rock Hall facility with the trustees. Those involved in the project are currently working on getting an organization with existing trustees to become a Rock Hall community organization, and handle the funding for the library project and future community projects, but this is all still pending. They are also looking to make a list of potential donors. Ms. McKee also mentioned an upcoming meeting with the steering committee. Ms. Dowell added that she was working on a Memorandum of Understanding with the town and county to present to the commissioners for this project. Ms. McKee noted that Ms. Jen Barnes had joined the project as a grant writer. Ms. Dowell said that the Letter of Intent was due on February 25, and the packet would be due at the end of May. Additionally, she noted that a law written in the past year could mean the library had to match less than 50% if they qualified. Ms. Dowell also informed the trustees that she had a meeting with Ms. Barnes to ensure that she had all of the information she needed. Ms. Sine asked what the current budget of the project was, and Ms. Dowell explained that it was about \$3 million with a modular build for a 3,000 square-foot building, down from the original 5,000 square-foot plan.

Librarian's Report

Trustee Education Schedule and Topics

Ms. Dowell said the trustees typically had four meetings for education covering topics including the Maryland Open Meetings Act, the information flow between the director and the trustees, and the work the Eastern Shore Regional Library (ESRL) does for this library, as well as a meeting with the State Librarian. Ms. Dowell suggested that the first two topics be covered in the February meeting. She also noted that the head of ESRL and the State Librarian were both retiring in June. Ms. Counihan added that a presentation by the staff following the Maryland

Library Association convention covering what they learned there would be beneficial. The trustees decided to see if the State Librarian could meet with them in March, with April as a backup option, and they agreed to cover the Open Meetings Act and Executive Director information at the February meeting. May was slated to have staff reports from the convention, and the ESRL presentation was left to be determined, likely in October or November.

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

Ms. Dowell reviewed the Finance Committee discussions and considerations that they had decided upon. These considerations were \$7,000 set aside for the Time to Care act, the salary, wages, and raises for the staff - typically 3% but usually following the county's raises, replacing computers for \$20,000-\$25,000, and an extra \$75 a month for rent for the Rock Hall facility. Ms. Dowell asked if the trustees had any other ideas for budget considerations. She added that Mr. Walmsley, Director of Office Administration, was working on the budget draft. Ms. Baker asked if there were any other staffing considerations. Ms. Dowell noted that she believed Mr. Walmsley needed an assistant to take care of human resource duties. This could even be a part time position. This role could also take up the mantle of Executive Secretary. Mr. Silcox said that there was a line item in the budget for staff positions unfilled, so these funds were allocated. Ms. Dowell added that the branch position was splitting as well, and that the person working in Rock Hall will be leaving in September. Regardless, she believes the library can afford this additional position. Ms. Sine asked whether the new Rock Hall facility would be operating in June of 2025, which Ms. Dowell confirmed was unlikely. She added that the reason the building footprint went down to 3,000 square-feet was so that additional staffing was not needed. Ms. Durso asked if the sound dampening panels needed to be added as a consideration. Ms. Dowell explained that \$15,000 was allocated for this, and that there would be an update under Old Business.

North County Branch Facade Grant Update

Ms. Dowell explained that the library would not be able to get the new sign until August, if approved.

Maryland Heritage Grant Update

There will be a meeting concerning this grant for the Hearse House project on February 8 at 1 pm. This meeting including everyone who received the grant will be detailing procurement and how the grant works. The Finance Committee will go over this meeting at their next assembly. Ms. Dowell added that she would look into getting a private meeting with the granters as well.

Foundation for the Kent County Public Library Book Drop Grant

Ms. Dowell told the trustees that the county is willing to put in a cement pad for the Chestertown book drop. Once the exact amount for the grant is set, the book drops will be ordered and the county will be involved to get the concrete pad put in.

Boys and Girls Club STEM Lab Project Partnership

Ms. Dowell explained that she and Director of Youth Services Honey Raines met with the Boys and Girls club about the space the library has at the Kent County Community Center in Worton, MD. The club wants to put together a STEM lab in that space, and the library is considering it. The trustees and Ms. Dowell discussed how this could benefit the library and its patrons, and how to ensure the computers the library maintains at the community center are still available for use. They also discussed possibilities for transportation for patrons from the main branch or KCMS to Worton. Likely, the Boys and Girls club would only have a program at the community center three times a week, so the computers are still accessible.

Parks and Recreation Story Walk Project Partnership

Kent County Parks and Recreation brought up the idea of doing a story walk with the library over the summer. Ms. Dowell noted that this could be another budget consideration, though Parks and Recreation is going to try to fund it first. This project would use different books, which would be the library's contribution. This project would likely cost around \$2,000. It would be a permanent installation with a replaceable story that could be switched out every so often. Ms. Dowell added that using a book in this way may involve a licensing cost.

Ms. Dowell added Operational Updates under the Librarian's Report at this time.

Operational Updates

Ms. Dowell opened by saying that the public PCs would be down on the Thursday following the board meeting for updates, meaning that only laptops would be accessible for patrons. She added that there was an offer given for the Teen Services Clerk position, at least two individuals with a possible third being interviewed for the Branch Clerk position, and two individuals having a first interview on February 8 for the Director of Branch Services position. February is Love Your Library Month, and the library would be giving patrons punch cards through the month to celebrate, while asking them to write down what they love about the library. Ms. Dowell explained that this was done in a previous year, and the patron statements brought to the commissioners, which had a big impact on their funding. The State Library Resource Center (SLRC) was hoping to avoid budget cuts and asking for written testimony by 6 pm the Tuesday following the meeting before going to legislation on Wednesday. SLRC is important for digital

library resources and works with both academic and public libraries. Lastly, the trustees and Ms. Dowell discussed a coming bill that may affect the budget.

Old Business

Meeting Date for October 2024

Ms. Coleman noted that the date previously selected for the October 2024 board meeting conflicted with early voting in the meeting room. The trustees decided to move both the board and Finance Committee meetings up one week to October 21 and 8 respectively.

Sound Dampening Project Update

Ms. Dowell explained that two firms were contacted, and one had replied with a quote. Their quote was \$7,500 for dampening panels on the wall, but no drop downs, so they were asked to prepare another quote including the drop downs. The other company suggested building a new wall, which is not within budget, so Ms. Raines is discussing more options with them. The quote from the first company expires on February 1. Ms. Baker asked if there were other things that could be added to the room to finish the space more, like furniture or carpet, that would assist in dampening sounds. Ms. Dowell explained that there are complications with this idea, for example previous chairs were ruined, and carpet adds difficulty to cleaning the space. Ms. Dowell and Mr. Silcox explained that this was ultimately a first step in addressing the volume level in the library. More may be needed in the future, but the dampening panels were a place to start. Ms. Dowell added that patrons were no longer allowed to curse, which seemed to be effective in helping with the situation so far.

Ms. Dowell asked if there were any other comments. Ms. Sine asked if there was any way to fix the adult computers, as a concerned patron was using the children's computers because of difficulty using the adult ones. Ms. Baker asked what the typical replacement cycle for the computers is. Ms. Dowell said they are replaced about every five years. The staff and children's computers were able to be updated using grants because they benefit children, but updating the adult computers is harder to do.

Ms. Counihan added that the library, along with Washington College and several other organizations, are sponsoring an African American read-in at Sumner Hall on Monday, February 12. This program has three stages: an all-ages portion at 5 pm, followed by snacks, and an adult portion later. Anyone is welcome to come and listen or read or share a piece of art.

Ms. Sine moved to adjourn, Ms. Counihan seconded the motion, and it was agreed upon unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:44 pm.