

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
JANUARY 03, 2024**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on January 04, 2024 at the C. Burr Artz Library – Community Room.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: J. D’Agostino, T. Lancaster, G. Mayfield, M. O’Leary, S. Sheppard, K. Spertzel, S. White, and J. Donald, County Liaison.

STAFF PRESENT: J. Kelly, Director; C. Hall, Associate Director; S. McDuff, Associate Director; B. McDermott, Finance Manager; B. Hissong, Community Engagement Manager; J. El-Zeftawy, Development Officer; M. Currens, Library Collections Manager; D. Frank-Rice, IT Coordinator; K. Cambrel, Communications Manager; C. Brohawn, Project Coordinator; R. Bowers, Branch Administrator - Walkersville Library; J. Diaz, Branch Administrator – Brunswick Library; B. Heltebridle, Branch Administrator – C. Burr Artz Library; A. Knight, Branch Administrator – Middletown Library; R. Cox-Steib, Branch Administrator – Myersville Library; A. Whitney, Branch Administrator – Thurmont Regional Library and Emmitsburg Library; S. Yates, Branch Administrator – Urbana Regional Library and Point of Rocks Library; C. Krogh, Facilities Coordinator; B. Watts, Staff Development Coordinator – Admin Coordinator; L. Tankut, Library Associate; S. Weyman, Social Media and Marketing Specialist; S. Daley, Library Associate; S. Weishampel, Library Associate; J. Spiegel, Special Project Manager – Frederick County Government; and M. Fowle, Technical Services Coordinator (Acting as Recording Secretary).

CITIZEN REMARKS: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: G. Mayfield made a motion to approve the Minutes of November 15, 2023; seconded by S. Sheppard. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly welcomed everyone to the January meeting, the first of a new year.

Mr. Kelly acknowledged that Linda Tibbs has retired and called attention to those individuals who have stepped up to assist with logistics for the Board meeting. The CBA team handled room set-up and Megan Fowle is handling minutes. When she’s not pinch hitting at Board meetings, Megan serves as our Technical Services Coordinator in the Collections department, overseeing workflow

to ensure that books and other materials are accessible and readily findable in the catalog and on the shelves.

Next, Mr. Kelly introduced two of the newest members of the FCPL team. First, Mr. Kelly introduced Chris Krogh, who has joined FCPL in the new position of Facilities Coordinator. He will be providing support for maintenance projects and new building projects, as well as managing the fleet of vehicles. He comes to FCPL from County Parks and Rec, where he served for 19 years. When not working, he enjoys running— in fact, he has completed 5 marathons. Chris also enjoys watching sports with his son. With a total of 25 years in the field of parks & rec, Chris is looking forward to applying his experience here at FCPL.

Next, Mr. Kelly introduced Sandra Weyman, FCPL's Social Media and Marketing Specialist. Like Chris, Sandra's is a brand-new position for FCPL. In her role, Sandra will create original content in Spanish for all FCPL channels including social media, the web site, press materials, and print materials. Sandra will also support translation services for FCPL's branch staff and administration. Additionally, Sandra will help FCPL build bridges by assisting with outreach efforts and relationship building in the Spanish-speaking communities that FCPL is trying to better serve.

Mr. Kelly thereafter shared a few of the ways the FCPL team has been working in service of our strategic priorities -- expanding access, building bridges, and sparking excitement:

Expanding Access

- Expanding Access for ALICE families in Frederick County is an important part of our work. ALICE is a United Way designation, an acronym that stands for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed. These are families that, in the event of an emergency, would find themselves a check away from financial hardship due to the high cost of living in Frederick County. Over 30% of families in Frederick County qualify as ALICE families, but there are pockets of the County -- like Brunswick and Emmitsburg -- where the percentage runs higher.
 - In November, Brunswick staff took the Library Rover to an apartment complex in their local community. All 55 units qualified as ALICE households. The apartment manager reached out to the Brunswick team to find out if FCPL offered technology assistance, since many of their residents recently received new Chromebooks from the United Way's distribution, but did not know how to use them. The Brunswick team hosted a Tech Help Session at the apartment complex, providing one-on-one assistance to residents as they physically set-up their new computers and some created email accounts for the first time. Afterward, the residents visited the Rover's Mobile Street Lab & checked out physical library books and received information about upcoming library programs.

Building Bridges

- Community Engagement staff attended the Asian American Center of Frederick's ribbon cutting for the new Family Support Services Center along the Golden Mile. The FCPL team provided support to this important community partner and also connected with

representatives from scores of non-profits and service organizations, as well as with elected officials, including Gov. Moore. The CBA team is already providing programming at this new center.

- Staff also heard some very impactful messages from customers late in 2023 – “I just want to let you know that libraries and librarians like you are on the front lines changing people’s lives. By allowing me to use this meeting room today, I was able to prevent a suicide. The work you do is meaningful and makes a real difference in people’s lives.”
- Staff also helped a parent in a custody dispute who was unable to attend our Ask a Lawyer program by finding him additional free resources available in the County to assist with family law.
- At Thurmont, staff worked with a woman who was experiencing an unsafe housing situation by arranging a study room where the customer could work on paperwork and helping her scan the paperwork to the appropriate agency so that she could get a safe place to stay. The customer was thankful for FCPL’s operating hours -- that staff would be here to help her even if it was later in the evening.

These are great examples of building bridges and meeting people where they are at any service point.

Finally, Mr. Kelly noted that the FCPL team is Sparking Excitement, with plans already underway for an exciting event during the upcoming April 8th solar eclipse. FCPL will partner with the Earth and Space Science Lab of FCPS for an exciting partner event. The FCPL Rover and Street lab will also be there.

Turning to statistics, Mr. Kelly provided two months of statistics, as the Board did not meet in December.

The usage trends in October and November -- for visits, circulation, and wi-fi use -- all followed the usual pattern; however, the program and outreach attendance numbers continued to exceed expectations in both months.

Heading into the end of the calendar year, Circulation is 30% higher than the average. As FCPL looks at year-to-date numbers, the split between physical versus digital circulation is still roughly 60/40; however, C. Brohawn took a closer look at these numbers. While physical circulation totals are growing thanks in part to the implementation of autorenewals a year ago, it is worth noting that growth of digital circulation to which autorenewals do not apply is keeping pace with the increases seen in physical circulation. Mr. Kelly expressed confidence that FCPL will surpass FY23’s record breaking circulation total.

BUDGET/CIP UPDATE: On the Capital side of things, Mr. Kelly confirmed that S. McDuff will provide an update on Middletown construction shortly. Mr. Kelly then addressed a rumor

that was published in the Frederick News Post regarding Middletown's Opening Day. The reporter -- quoting a non-library source -- stated that the building would be opening in early February. FCPL has announced no opening date, because of ongoing construction delays.

Mr. Kelly assured the Board that they, along with the Friends groups who contacted FCPL after the article came out and the elected officials who are wondering, would not hear about the library's opening date by reading it in the newspaper. This information will come directly from FCPL staff. Staff are currently fielding questions due to the reporting error and Mr. Kelly apologized for any confusion this may have caused.

Regarding other capital budget news, staff have a meeting with the CIP committee next Wednesday. This is the group who prioritizes all County Capital projects and puts forward a proposal for the County Executive to consider as she develops her FY25 CIP budget.

As a reminder, future FCPL building projects include West Frederick, East County Regional, Northwest Frederick city, and a remodel of the C. Burr Artz library.

On the Operating Side of things, S. Sheppard and Mr. Kelly attended the County Executive's first public hearing on the FY25 budget in early December. Mr. Kelly thanked Ms. Sheppard for advocating on behalf of the community and the Board. Mr. Kelly and Ms. Sheppard thanked the County for its support of the library and shared high level details for two planned appeals – first, a new position in Administration overseeing branches, the first to be added in over 30 years, and an adjustment to the per capita funding formula for collections to help the library better meet community demand. The next steps for the Board with regard to the budget will be the upcoming Budget refresher, the presentation to the Board's Finance committee, and finally a presentation to the full board. Here are the full details for those meetings:

- Thursday, Jan 11th at Noon – the annual Board budget refresher will be offered via Zoom. This training is for the Finance Committee, but all members of the Board are invited. The session will be recorded and can be shared with anyone interested who is unable to attend. Mr. Kelly will email details.
- Wednesday, Jan 17th at 7pm in the Administrative Conference Room – FCPL will present our FY25 draft operating budget to the Board's Finance Committee for consideration.
- Wednesday, February 7th, FCPL will present the budget to the full board for a vote.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly highlighted one final, important date. The Maryland General Assembly convenes Wednesday, January 10, 2024. Mr. Kelly will be tracking a few bills in the upcoming session that would have implications for libraries and will report out on those as the session unfolds.

Mr. Mayfield requested clarification regarding the per capita funding formula, and what factors went into FCPL asking for an increase. Mr. Kelly clarified that before the per capita funding formula was introduced, the library received no funding support from the County for our collections. With the current funding formula, FCPL receives about 1/3 of the total budget for the collections budget. While knowing that the entire budget cannot be covered in this funding,

FCPL would like to have the number increased. With the proposed increase, collections can better meet the demand for digital, though it will still not meet full demand. FCPL thought it best to advocate for the collection, and to ask for more help with regard to that funding.

Mr. Mayfield questioned further if there is a similar process at the State level. Mr. Kelly clarified that the state does per capita funding by putting forward legislation that accounts for several years in a row. Adjustments are then made by vote.

Ms. D'Agostino questioned if there has been any movement in terms of more national legislation regarding the digital format. Ms. D'Agostino acknowledged that in the past there was talk about consortiums that would ban together. Mr. Kelly confirmed that there was some legislation in Maryland that was ultimately beaten back. He does not know whether there is revised legislation in Maryland, though there is in other states such as Connecticut, but will share if it happens.

Ms. D'Agostino asked what other library systems are doing about this issue. Mr. Kelly confirmed that everyone is in the same boat in trying to meet demand. While there is a national increase in people using libraries, the funding is still challenging. Adjustment to the funding formula would help reduce wait times for materials, which is the goal.

Ms. D'Agostino asked if the funding formula was purely for collections, and questioned where the budget comes from for other services that the library provides. Mr. Kelly confirmed that much of the non-collections budget is County and State funded, with the remainder coming from many streams of revenue, including donations and endowments, book sales and lost books, or passports.

Ms. Spertzel questioned if Mr. Kelly is seeing anything in the upcoming legislative term that might impact the libraries. Mr. Kelly answered in the affirmative. There is a bill right now that would increase per capita funding support for the State library (Enoch Pratt, Baltimore). Many services FCPL uses are supported by the State library, including ILL and databases. FCPL will be advocating with elected officials to support that increased per capita.

Ms. D'Agostino shared that it is impactful to hear stories from people that FCPL serve.

NEW BUSINESS

Recognition of LATI Graduates: The Library Associate Training Institute is a 90-hour program that all Library Associates in the state of Maryland must complete. Through this program, staff gain a greater understanding of the principles and value of public libraries and about the profession in general. They learn about print and online resources, the reference interview and excellent customer service. The program involves online learning sessions, independent work, and coaching sessions. It is an intense program and they balance 90-hours of coursework with their day-to-day responsibilities. Library Associates are critical to our operation, providing so much of our reference assistance to the community. They, along with our Circulation staff, are the backbone of public service.

Mr. Kelly acknowledged the two current LATI students, who as part of their program are attending a Board meeting. Additionally, Mr. Kelly acknowledged the two LATI graduates receiving their certificates tonight: Laura Tankut and Bethany Watts. Ms. Watts worked at our North County branches, but she recently accepted a new position as FCPL's Staff Development Coordinator.

In conclusion, Mr. Kelly shared that Sheila McDuff has served on the LATI's Oversight Committee for the past three years. The Maryland State Library has appointed her chair of that statewide committee.

Members of the FCPL Board of Trustees congratulated the recent graduates as well, expressing their admiration of this achievement and their thanks for the graduates' dedication to service.

Financial Report: Ms. McDermott reviewed the monthly Financial Report for FY2024. She noted that the data is tentative as of November 30, 2023, and the data was pulled December 15, 2023.

Revenues collected are at 22%, which is a 2% increase from the previous board meeting. FCPL received a transfer from the Maryland State Education Grant of \$317K. The County posted in-kind revenue of \$123K. There was an increase in passport revenue of \$10K and Misc Operating revenue of \$13K.

As FCPL moves through the second quarter of FY24, revenue collected is 6% lower compared to FY23, mostly due to the timing of the quarterly transfer from the County General Fund and In-Kind County Revenue to be posted to the general ledger.

FCPL's expenditures are at 32%, which is an 11% increase from the previous board meeting. County Finance posted the personnel, security, and telephone expenses, which reflect the most significant percentage change of those three expenditures by 36% for the month. There was a 5% increase in In-Kind County Appropriations. There was a 22% increase in the equipment line to purchase technology supported by the Emergency Connectivity Grant, a 6% increase in contract services for misc. technology services and supply items, an 11% increase in the Library Material purchases, and a 10% increase to the other operating expenditures for monthly programming expenses.

Next month, as the second quarter of the fiscal year closes, revenue and expenditure should be more reflective of 40% or higher due to the quarterly County In-Kind expenditures, and transfers will be posted to the general ledger.

Grants Awarded are at \$640,540. Grants Submitted are at \$0. There were no changes to the grants awarded and submitted from the previous month. Staff continue to work on purchasing/training supported by each grant.

Donations are at \$82,547. Donations increased by \$48K from the previous month. This includes several generous donations received for Greatest Need, Summer Challenge, MD Room, Youth Services, and the Branches.

Other endowment revenues are at \$78,141. There was an increase of \$7 from the previous board meeting. The interest earned of \$7 was received from the Churney CD. These funds are restricted to the purchase of large print materials.

This brings the total to \$801,227.

Thurmont/Emmitsburg Library Update: A. Whitney, Branch Administrator at the Thurmont and Emmitsburg Libraries provided an update on the past year, through a slideshow of photos. Ms. Whitney stated that Thurmont and Emmitsburg have now had two full years during which all of the services and in-branch programming were available, so staff could really see the growth both in number of services offered and in customers using library services from 2022 to 2023.

During the cold winter months, most activities took place indoors. Staff try to incorporate lots of movement activities into storytimes and special programs. North County staff do their best to provide engaging and fun special programming, including a Kitchen Science and a Valentine's Card making program that the adults enjoyed as much as the kids.

Local history is a primary interest for adults and brings an audience, including a program about nearby Site R. The library also partnered with the Thurmont Senior Center to host a poetry program featuring Nico Ambush which introduced the seniors to mindful poetry. Ms. Whitney shared that one participant told us: "This process was meaningful—it brought memories to the surface and allowed me to feel hope."

During Tax Season, VITA volunteer tax preparers provide a much appreciated service to low income folks in the area.

Every year in March, the library hosts the Celtic Concert at Mt. St. Mary's University. This year featured champion fiddler Sean Heely and his band. Mr. Whitney shared that the crowd was thrilled by the bagpipes and dancer that accompanied him. When the weather begins to warm up, staff look forward to taking more programming outside again. Staff work closely with local partners at the National Park Service at Catoctin Mountain Park and the rangers at Cunningham Falls State Park to provide programming opportunities, including storytimes, hikes, tree identification walks, and more.

This spring, staff arranged a community service project for a group of Catoctin High School students who worked with staff at Cunningham Falls to root out invasive species from a section of the park's woods. This was all a lead-in to the annual Thurmont Green Fest. The library works in partnership with the Town of Thurmont and the Thurmont Green Team to plan the annual Green Fest, which brings together organizations whose mission is to promote environmental and green practices. This year, despite soaking rain while the organizations were trying to set up, there was a great turnout. People visited reps from the 26 different organizations, watched tree pruning demos, and enjoyed the Glamourview food truck. There was actually tree hugging too.

In Emmitsburg, spring saw the beginning of a new community garden. One regular customer with a passion for gardening worked with the Town to start the garden right across the street from the library, and invited our young customers to plant the veggies and flowers to get it going. Throughout the growing season, staff held storytimes and gardening programs at the garden so the kids could see the fruits of their labors.

Spring launches the library's heaviest outreach season—staff are at all kinds of community events: Cunningham Falls State Park's Maple Syrup Festival, Thurmont Business Network Showcase, Thurmont Main Street's Art and Wine stroll, Maryland Iron Festival at Catoclin Furnace, and the Thurmont Farmer's Market to name just a few. These events really help to get the word out about the library, register new users, and meet people who don't often visit the library.

Ms. Whitney shared that summer is the business season. The covered deck is used for programming, including a Bubble Fun program. The library hosted a really fun kickoff party for Summer Challenge to encourage families to sign up, which included an ice cream truck, water games, photo booth and lots of other activities.

One of the partners for Summer Challenge was Thorpewood, a 156-acre property dedicated to nurturing therapeutic relationships with the natural world. Staff asked them to open the property to all FCPL visitors for one day and had a huge response. 276 people enjoyed the goats, groomed the horses, petted the cows and chickens, got dirty in the mud kitchen, climbed all over the farm equipment, and attended Storytime and a story path provided by FCPL. Two little girls came into Thorpewood saying they were too afraid to meet the baby goats, and left saying they weren't scared of them anymore. Staff heard comments such as "Best day of my life," "You made our day, thanks so much!" "Thank you so much for this—we love the library especially in the summer—you guys are awesome!"

While FCPL likes to have lots of really fun sparkly programming in the summer, it's also a time to chill out, and find a quiet moment with a book or playing a game with friends. Staff try to hit that happy balance, so that everyone can feel comfortable when they visit. There is always something for visitors to do, whether it's a scavenger hunt in the children's room, or a jigsaw puzzle in the adult area.

The town of Emmitsburg heard about the awesome Story Path at Thurmont and asked if FCPL would partner with them to bring a path to their Community Park. They provided the story signs and FCPL provides them with the stories for the path, which staff update every few months.

This summer, Thurmont launched the first summer lunch program. Staff started small and worked with the school system to get the word out. Lunch was offered 3 days per week through the summer. Staff planned for 20 lunches each day to test the waters, but participant numbers

were higher than projected. There was a very positive response from community members and staff plan to continue the program this summer.

Each summer, Thurmont's Friends of the Library pay for three musical concerts, usually bluegrass or folk music on Sunday afternoons. This makes for a really pleasant afternoon on the shady deck, looking out over the woods and attendance averages at about 70 attendees each concert.

Over 400 people braved the blazing heat to come out to TRL's Touch a Truck event and then they all escaped inside the library to cool off and play. People came from all over the area and across the state line and really enjoyed meeting community helpers.

North County kicks off Autumn with Library card sign up month—one of the library's best outreach events was at Mt. St. Mary's where staff signed up 50 students and faculty for library cards. Staff continue programming with the local parks, where young customers created art from Nature through a program that came to us from the Artist in Residence program at Catoctin Mt. Park. The artist also did a creative writing workshop with adults.

Thurmont had a new tavern open, so staff took the opportunity to meet some new customers by hosting trivia nights once a month through the fall. Staff also try to use the deck for as long as the weather holds out, including hosting a meditation group that can enjoy the surroundings.

Trunk or treat 2023 had over 550 attendees, with a food truck and local businesses promoting their services by hosting the "trunks". Dana Crum, of Woodsboro Craftsmen said, "We come to this event to promote the business, but its more about being a part of the Thurmont Community—it's such a positive and fun family experience!"

Live animals like Eddie the pig are perennial favorites, but inflatable animals like Dino who visited for Dinovember are also a hit. There was a number of large party-like programs featuring the best loved cartoon and gaming characters like Bluey and Marip, which Ms. Whitney noted are always super popular for families to come to. In addition to having the character in the building, there are lots of games and enrichment activities for the kids to play.

Ms. Whitney concluded by sharing Thurmont and Emmitsburg's combined statistics. While these branches are in a less populous part of the county, staff hear frequently from customers that they value excellent library service in their areas. Ms. Whitney shared an empowering story about a woman had been exploring the library, and sat for quite a while in the children's room looking at picture books. This customer explained that she was reminiscing and soaking in the quiet. She really wanted us to know the positive impact the library had on her life as a single mom and on her two sons. They used the library all the time since money was scarce—programs, books and the kindness of staff brought a sense of stability to their lives and she wanted to thank us. She

also said her boys are thriving and she attributes that to the time they spent at TRL. This is a story staff hear over and over, and it is gratifying to know that our work makes a difference.

Follow-up discussion occurred regarding further explanation of some programs, as well as location of the Emmitsburg story path.

S. White expressed her love of hearing the branch stories at each meeting, and how each branch tailors their services to their given community.

Middletown Library Construction Update: Ms. McDuff shared recent images (as of today, January 3, 2024) of the new Middletown Library. The drone shots were taken in November of 2023. Photos included individual spaces, such as Staff workroom, study nooks, the porch, the Children's room, and the teen room.

Ms. D'Agostino asked if the porches would be big enough for programming. Ms. McDuff confirmed that the porches are designed for sitting. There will be furniture and connectivity available.

Ms. McDuff shared that the Children's space will have a Route 40 theme, which acknowledges the history of the Middletown community.

Ms. McDuff then shared an updated timeline, noting that there have been slight delays due to construction and supplies. FCPL will settle on a date very soon, and the Board will be made aware as soon as possible.

J. Donald asked if the theme of Route 40 will include recognition of "the National Road," or the stone markers. Ms. McDuff confirmed that the theme will be a more subtle nod to Route 40. Follow-up discussion occurred regarding potential for themes elsewhere in the library. Ms. McDuff confirmed space is allotted for displays, but themes will be left open until post-opening.

Board Questions and Comments:

Mr. O'Leary acknowledged the book reconsideration process that occurred at FCPS, as the results were released. reminded the Board of the book banning scenarios happening in Frederick County. Discussion occurred regarding past challenges at FCPL, and the results of those challenges.

Further discussion occurred regarding the ALA report on book banning trends from January to August 2023, which reports that the volume of book banning attempts directed at public libraries have increased dramatically.

S. White asked Mr. Kelly to remind the Board of the status of FCPL's material reconsideration form. Mr. Kelly confirmed the reconsideration form is now available on the website, which provides a formal process. Many of these conversations happen on the front lines at branches,

there is an opportunity to deescalate situations. Thanks to FCPL staff, many situations do not go beyond that initial conversation.

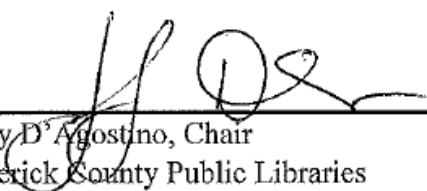
Mr. O'Leary confirmed that he can send the ALA report if needed.

Other Citizen Remarks: None

The next FCPL Board of Trustees meeting will be held at the C. Burr Artz Library – Community Room at 7:00 p.m. on February 7, 2024.

K. Spertzel made a motion to adjourn the meeting ; seconded by M. O' Leary. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned 7:50 p.m.



Jenny D'Agostino, Chair
Frederick County Public Libraries
Board of Trustees