

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
MARCH 1, 2023**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on March 1, 2023 at the C. Burr Artz Library.

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

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** S. White

**STAFF PRESENT:** J. Kelly, Director, C. Hall, Associate Director; B. McDermott, Finance Manager; J. El-Zeftawy, Development Manager; B. Hissong, Community Engagement Manager; M. Currens, Library Collections Manager; J. Marshall, Manager – Systems; C. Brohawn, Project Coordinator; K. Cambrel, Communications Manager; J. Diaz, Branch Administrator – Brunswick Library; R. Frecker, Branch Administrator – Walkersville Library; B. Heltebridle, Branch Administrator – C. Burr Artz Library; A. Knight, Branch Administrator – Middletown Library; R. Cox-Steib, Branch Administrator – Myersville Library; J. Nielson, Library Technician (substitute) – Myersville Library, Serena Balassi, Intern – Development Department; J. Spiegel, Special Project Manager – Frederick County Government; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

**CITIZEN REMARKS:** None.

**CHAIRS REPORT:** Ms. D’Agostino advised that she has been speaking with various people in the community to see what their thoughts were about the library and to be able to get some feedback from them. For the most part, the comments received were outstanding. People are very supportive of programming and it is really neat to see how the library makes connections. The only negative comment she received was someone asking for more teen programming and she noted that FCPL is trying to fill that gap by hiring more teen supervisors.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** S. Sheppard made a motion to approve the Minutes of February 1, 2023; seconded by K. Spertzel. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT:**

**FCPL – Update:** Mr. Kelly welcomed everyone to the March meeting. Thereafter, he introduced one of FCPL’s newest team members, Kelly Cambrel. She is our new Communications Manager.

Our team works month in and month out in service of our three strategic priorities – to Expand Access, to Build Bridges, and to Spark Excitement. Here’s how they’ve been doing it lately.

Our Collections Department staff has been working on a project recently which expands access by making our catalog even more user-friendly. They’ve been working with a company called Backstage to provide authority control services. Authority control covers things like ensuring that author names and subject headings in our catalog are accurate and up-to-date, that indexing is improved and standardized, and that appropriate linkages to related topics happens when folks search the catalog. What does all of this mean for customers? When the work is complete, it will mean a catalog search with improved discoverability and the right materials in your hand more quickly.

Our branch staff have been building bridges by meeting communities where they are beyond the bricks and mortar. In her recent update to the Board, Brunswick Branch Administrator, Jenny Diaz, shared information about the Bucket List Book Club, established and overseen by Becca Reeves, an employee at the Brunswick Library. This monthly program is a partnership between FCPL, Curious Iguana, and Frederick Health Hospice. The January meeting had 48 people in attendance and you may have seen the group’s February meeting profiled in [The Frederick News Post](#) this week. While a selected title is the springboard for conversation, it is not a book club in the traditional sense. Rather, it is an opportunity for anyone to explore topics like death, dying, and grief in a group setting in dialogue with trained Hospice staff. This is another great example of how a collaboration between the public library and trusted partners can help meet a community need.

Another example of building bridges was a program in partnership with the Multi-Faith Alliance of Climate Stewards hosted at the Middletown branch and coordinated by Waneta Gagne. Customers learned about renewable energy from those working in the field and they also heard about local and federal incentives available to the renewable energy users. Over 30 people attended this program, which is particularly noteworthy given the size of the current branch. When the new branch opens, later this year, it will have a community room for popular programs like this one.

Staff are sparking excitement by working to make our branches more welcoming and inclusive. Jess O’Brien, a librarian at the C. Burr Artz Library, brought the first “Library Before Hours” event to the Progress & Learning Autism Network (or PLAN). It included a storytime and book exploration time. The families were so appreciative of being able to come to the library before it opened on a Sunday and have the space to themselves, free of any anxiety. Staff were able to provide a familiar face, the parents were able to meet other PLAN families, and many were first time library visitors who were able to sign up for library cards. Mr. Kelly added that two families said they have been too nervous to bring their children to the library since they were not sure how they might behave so being able to have a safe, nonjudgmental space was crucial for these library first-timers.

Mr. Kelly thereafter shared a brief story which illustrates how interactions with a single customer can often hit all three notes in our strategic plan by expanding access, building bridges, and sparking excitement. Over the last year, an Urbana customer named Sunkia had been a daily visitor to the branch. When she first began using our computers, she shared that she was practicing English and studying for the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exam. Staff were able to get her in contact with our partners at the Literacy Center to practice her English with other ESL learners. Once she passed the TOEFL, she set out to work on writing applications to colleges and practicing her resume skills. JobNow by BrainFuse, a digital product that FCPL offers, turned out to be an amazing resource for her. Sunkia studied every day in the branch for her American Dental Association board exam. In Saudi Arabia, she had been a trauma dentist and was excited to get a dental degree in America and start practicing pediatric trauma dentistry in a hospital. Last month, she came in and was beaming with joy. She shared that she had passed her exam and proudly displayed her printed score to staff. She told staff “You all helped me do this. I could not have done this without you. The library feels like home.” Going to each staff member, she gave them candy and personally thanked them. She told the team that she was headed to a residency in Seattle, but planned to come back to the area to practice pediatric dentistry after her residency.

Public libraries are transformative spaces. We are grateful to do the work that we do and to serve the community in so many ways.

Pivoting to statistics, the January numbers are on the Dashboard. You can see that visits, circulation, new cardholders, and Wi-Fi usage follow the typical upward trend for January. While visits match the FY19 numbers, the other measures mentioned are greatly outpacing FY19. One standout metric is our new cardholder number for January at 1,544. Whenever we see a spike like this, Courtney Brohawn takes a closer look to check for errors. Mr. Kelly noted that he was happy to report that it was not an error. While some branches did see a jump in new cardholders, nearly 40% of our new cards in January were web registrations, indicating customers are taking advantage of our simplified access and digital services. As in recent months, the trend we were watching was for programming holds. We are offering fewer total programs each month, but program attendance is keeping pace with FY19. He added that since we don't typically track study room use on the Dashboard, Courtney thought she would highlight it on the Expand Access call-out. As you can see, our study rooms have been reserved over 5,500 times through the first half of the year. The building bridges call-out highlights the program that was mentioned earlier. On the reverse, you'll find YTD measures... we are gaining ground when it comes to total visits -- still lower than FY19, but now just 5% off the pace. The YTD circulation number through January, however, is up 10% when compared to FY19. Mr. Kelly further added that he knows he reminds members of the FCPL Board of Trustees at every meeting, but honestly, he never tires of saying it - FY19 was the highwater mark for FCPL in terms of use. The fact that we're just 5% off the pace for visits coming out of a pandemic and we're exceeding our total circulation number by 10% is nothing short of amazing. In conversations Mr. Kelly had at the American Library Association Annual Conference, many of our peer libraries indicated that they have still not bounced back from the pandemic, so our team has a lot to be proud of.

**Budget/CIP Update:** On the operating side of things, we had our meeting last Monday with the County Executive to answer questions about our FY24 proposed budget. She is hosting a public hearing on the budget on Tuesday evening, March 14<sup>th</sup>. As in past years, the Board Chair and Mr. Kelly will be attending the meeting to advocate for library support. Mr. Kelly noted that he recently learned that the Budget balancing tool – Balancing Act – will again be made available to the public so the public can show support for the appeals made by County Divisions, as well as, component units like the library. In the past, we’ve been lucky to have select library budget appeals appear on the public portal for community consideration and, in his opinion, Mr. Kelly stated that the positive public response to FCPL appeals was a factor considered by County Executive Gardner as she set priorities for her budgets and he has every reason to believe that County Executive Fitzwater will take the feedback she receives from the public through this platform, under the same consideration.

As a reminder, this year, FCPL has just 3 budget appeals – The first is a librarian position for the Urbana branch. This person would help launch, oversee, and coordinate the new passport service at Urbana. The second is a position for a bilingual Communications Specialist to help us build a bridge to the native Spanish speaking population county-wide. This person would not only help us translate existing marketing materials, but they would also create social media messaging and help us connect with the population through outreach. Our final appeal is to replace a county-owned vehicle that FCPL has which staff use to attend statewide trainings and participate in regional and local meetings. According to County Fleet services, this vehicle is nearing end of life. As we have in past years, we will share the news about the launch of the County’s budget tool and encourage folks to participate in the public process of ranking appeals to help the County Executive as she considers priorities of her first budget.

On the capital side of things, Middletown construction remains on track. Sheila McDuff is scheduled to provide the Board with a construction update at an upcoming meeting before you adjourn for the summer. The other project to provide an update on is the West End library. The County and City continue to work on an MOU regarding the parcel adjacent to Butterfly Ridge Elementary School. Mr. Kelly stated that it is his understanding that they are currently discussing stormwater management and parking issues – specifically how these will work with the City’s planned Recreation Center near the proposed library site. On a related note, at a meeting last week, we were told that the Himes Avenue building had been over-promised with many county agencies hoping to have space there. This is something we knew anecdotally based on conversations that we’d had with the architect, but we were officially told that the library was out of consideration for Himes. Therefore, as of tonight, the only option still under discussion for a West End library is the parcel proposed by the City of Frederick. So, there is a lot riding on the MOU and, in addition, the timing of the agreement is also important since it will influence the project’s placement in the CIP. As a reminder, per DPW, library capital projects are 3 years in general from start to finish. A year and half for design and a year and half for construction. Mr. Kelly noted that if he receives any news of a signed MOU on this project, he will let everyone know.

Mr. Kelly thereafter noted a few important dates. March 14<sup>th</sup> is the County Executive's public hearing on the budget. The date of our next Board meeting will be April 12<sup>th</sup>. As a reminder this is the second Wednesday of the month, not the first Wednesday.

Additional discussion followed regarding the Himes Avenue property and the planned West Frederick Library.

Mr. Donald inquired who makes the list of what libraries get built and in what order. Mr. Kelly advised that where to place things is the opinion of the County Executive and whether or not land exists.

Further discussion followed regarding the New Market library location.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**a. Financial Report:** Ms. McDermott reviewed the FY23 Financial Report for March, 2023. She noted that the data is tentative as of January 31, 2023.

Revenues are at 51%, a 3% increase from the previous board meeting. There was a transfer to County in-kind revenue of \$210,000 and a transfer from the Maryland State Education Grant in the amount of \$303,000. Passport revenue increased by \$9,000 and miscellaneous operating funds increased by \$5,800. She noted that FCPL is over halfway through the fiscal year and, as we continue to move through the fiscal year, keep in mind that the transfer from the County General Fund is posted quarterly. In addition, she noted that FCPL's ending fund balance and contribution/donations funds are only recorded at the end of the fiscal year.

FCPL's expenditures are at 53%. There was a slight increase in each budget line for expenditures except for equipment, maintenance and repairs (no change). The most significant percentage change was an 8% increase in the County In-Kind appropriations and 6% increase in personnel and telephones. There was also a 6% increase in contracted services for marketing services and a 6% increase in library material purchases for materials, periodical subscription renewals and e-content. Ms. McDermott further noted that expenditures are recorded daily when an expense transaction is posted to the general ledger so there could be times throughout the fiscal year when you could see a larger percentage difference between revenues and expenditures due to the timing when things are posted to the general ledger.

Grants Awarded are at \$1,064,095 – there has been no change to the grants awarded since the last board meeting.

Grants Submitted are at \$273,489. Since the last board meeting a new grant application has been submitted. The Dollar General Summer Reading Grant was submitted for \$3,000 to purchase books to support the library's annual Summer Reading Challenge.

Donations are at \$107,738, which is an increase of \$19,772 from the previous month. This includes several generous donations for the Greatest Need, Youth Services and the branches. Other endowment revenues are at \$120,997 which is an increase of \$26,000 from the previous month. The interest funds received from the Stoner Trust are restricted to the libraries' greatest need and the Glassman Trust is restricted to purchasing materials in specific fields of study.

This brings the total to a little shy of \$1.3 million.

**b. Walkersville Library Update:** Ms. Frecker provided an annual update on the Walkersville Library. She noted that this past year, the Walkersville Library was able to have its first real egg hunt in several years due to the Covid out-break. We had an annual hunt that nearly 400 people participated in this past year. The Easter egg hunt is a perennial event.

The summer lunch program is held every year. Walkersville Library has been doing this program for a number of years in partnership with Glade Valley Community Services and the Town of Walkersville, who help support this project. The Summer lunch 22 was the biggest year yet for Walkersville Library. Approximately 4,575 lunches were served and over the life of the program, which began as a partnership with another community organization in 2018, Walkersville Library has served over 15,000 lunches.

This year we have been able to offer some really incredible inclusive programming that we have been dreaming about during all the years of Covid. Staff have been able to include visits with our therapy dogs, art and music programs, and visiting the Rock Creek School to share programs and resources.

The Walkersville Library continues to offer STEAM programs on Wednesday mornings. Staff are providing support in closing educational gaps particularly in math that schools have experienced during the Covid years. The national report card has identified a significant slide particularly in math and we continue to develop ways to help support our kids and communities in rebounding from the pandemic years. Staff from NIH have been coming to the Walkersville Library and doing science programs. The Walkersville Library has been partnering with NIH throughout the fall and winter and these programs bring in a lot of people.

Trunk or treat this past year was a hit as always. There were nearly 700 participants. Walkersville Library had its first haunted house this year. The Town of Walkersville is very supportive of the Walkersville library and she noted that we are very lucky to be able to have community events that everyone looks forward to.

In May of last year, the Walkersville Library hosted an African Dance troupe at the Walkersville Days festival. They were amazing. We also had Miss Monocacy come to storytime and the Westminster Astronomy Organization came and shared their telescopes with staff and patrons so that we could look at the night sky.

Walkersville Library has an active relationship with the State Troopers. They visited the Walkersville Library and that was a big hit. Kids were able to get in the cars and push the buttons and see the equipment. This was a really cool program and fun but it also had a purpose. The fire department comes to the Walkersville Library a couple of times a year as well. The goal of these programs is to make kids unafraid of police or firemen in case of an emergency.

The Walkersville Library also hosted animal guests. Over 100 people came to pet the hedgehogs. She thereafter displayed photos of sword fights. Staff from Martial Arts came to the library and did martial art demonstrations. Walkersville Library also began ESL classes on Sunday afternoons and the numbers grow each week. This program is in partnership with the Literacy Council.

At Christmastime, the Walkersville Library hosted the annual community tree lighting with special guests, Santa and Mrs. Clause. She displayed a photo of staff in reindeer costumes. In addition, staff provides STEM activities – Christmas Science.

Ms. Frecker noted that staff at Walkersville Library did many events for library card sign up month -- most notably the Duck race. In addition, she noted that the Walkersville Library won the milkshake contest at the Glade Valley Community Show. The winning milkshake was a pumpkin milkshake. The Walkersville Library received a \$300 grand prize and we thereafter gifted it back to their organization. We also worked with GVCS on the Christmas toy shop where we helped more than 50 families with their toy lists for their families for Christmas.

Additional services that were provided this year included notary services with over 700 documents notarized. The library gets a lot of new customers when they come in to get things notarized. We also hosted vaccine clinics with over 1200 vaccines this year. Staff won awards at the county employee picnic for their vaccine work at the children's clinics and as always, our perennial free service—occupying your children while you check out the books. Staff are the vital part of what makes this run - they are the magic.

Mr. O'Leary inquired whether the notary service is free. Ms. Frecker advised that notary services are free, if the patron has a library card. If the patron does not have a library card, there is a \$2.00 charge.

Ms. Sheppard thanked the staff at Walkersville Library for the science activities/programs.

**c. Library Legislative Day:** Mr. Kelly provided an update of Library Legislative Day, which took place on February 15<sup>th</sup> in Annapolis. Library Legislative Day is an annual opportunity for

Maryland's library leadership to meet with members of our delegation to thank them for their support of the State's Capital Grant program and the Per Capita State Aid that we receive. He added that the state aid provides FCPL with approximately 20% of its operating budget. Additionally, we discussed pieces of legislation that we are following, answered questions they might have had, and asked for their consideration of the pending legislation. Our focus this year was on Senate Bill 205/House Bill 276 – a piece of legislation that is tied to State Aid. Last year, the General Assembly passed a funding bill which outlined levels of support for the next few years. This year's SB205 just clarifies language in last year's bill and does not propose any changes to the previously agreed upon funding levels. Since this bill does not have an additional fiscal impact, we think the bill will easily pass. The other item we discussed was the Maryland State Library's Capital Budget for FY23. The Governor included \$4 million in supplemental funding to offset construction cost increases for previously funded projects, including our own Middletown branch. We again asked for our legislators to consider supporting the supplemental funding put forth as part of the Governor's budget. Mr. Kelly advised that the Maryland General Assembly meets from January through April.

**BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:** None.

**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 April 12, 2023.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.



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Shemica Sheppard,  
Vice-Chair, Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees



