

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 6, 2022**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on April 6, 2022 at the C. Burr Artz Library.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: J. D’Agostino, G. Mayfield, M. O’Leary, S. Sheppard, C. Smith, K. Spertzel, S. White, and J. Donald, County Liaison

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: J. Kelly, Director; S. McDuff, Associate Director; C. Hall, Associate Director; B. McDermott, Finance Manager; B. Hissong, Community Engagement Manager; J. El-Zeftawy, Development Manager; S. Jones, Communications Manager; B. Heltebridle, Branch Administrator – C. Burr Artz Library; J. Diaz, Branch Administrator – Brunswick Library; A. Whitney, Branch Administrator – Thurmont/Emmitsburg Libraries; R. Frecker, Branch Administrator, Walkersville, Library; S. Yates, Branch Administrator – Urbana Regional Library; E. Gambrill, Youth Services Coordinator; K. Quick, Library Associate – Thurmont Regional Library; M. Currens, Library Collections Manager; J. Marshall – Systems Manager; C. Brohawn, Project Coordinator; T. Schneider, Children’s Librarian – C. Burr Artz Library; T. Garrett, Library Associate – Brunswick Library; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: J. D’Agostino made a motion to approve the Minutes of March 2, 2022; seconded by K. Spertzel. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

CHAIR’S REPORT: Mr. O’Leary advised that the Library Board members were canvassed as to whether we wanted to meet in person or virtually and there was a very strong consensus that we would meet in person. This will be the pattern from this point forward unless some circumstances change. Thereafter he advised that in the packet that was sent to everyone, there were a few models of evaluation instruments for public library boards. He stated that it is his belief that the Board should consider some sort of evaluation or bench-marking process. At a later date this topic can be reviewed and/or considered.

Thereafter, Mr. O’Leary stated that, as we have seen over the last several months, there is a new wave in book censorship as to what sort of content students will have access to and whether parents should be able to determine what material is available to them in school libraries. This has very marginally moved into the public library system but that doesn’t mean it can’t or won’t. He advised that there was a recent article in The Frederick News-Post about a meeting to

consider curriculum material in public schools. The meeting became very contentious and the meeting had to be cancelled.

Mr. Kelly advised that when customers have a concern about materials, that is handled on the front line at the various library branches. It is expected that individual users should determine what is appropriate for them and their families. The job of FCPL is to provide access to the needs and interests of the entire community and this is the reason we have a wide array of materials. Very often things are diffused on the front line but, for whatever reason it is not, they reach out to staff via the “contact us” form and then the appropriate selector will often reach out to the customer.

Mr. O’Leary encouraged members of the FCPL Board of Trustees to go to FCPL’s website and read the Materials Selection Policy to familiarize themselves with it.. There are also links provided by ALA for two documents that are widely accepted regarding the freedom of access of books.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly welcomed everyone to the April meeting. He noted that it is the first in-person meeting in two years and it is exciting to be able to hold our Board meeting in person, to welcome the community back into our meeting rooms, and for programming to resume.

Mr. Kelly thereafter reviewed statistics. Circulation continues to edge closer to pre-pandemic levels, but as you’ll note, visits have not bounced back to the same degree. The return of programming this month should help ‘visits’ through the rest of the fiscal year and will inevitably add an extra boost to circulation as well, since program attendees historically leave with armfuls of materials. Public computer use is still very low but we are seeing record use of wi-fi. It seems that most of our users were focused on quick, task-based, visits to make use of the physical collection or utilizing their own devices. New library cards issued has eclipsed the year-to-date pre-pandemic level. Mr. Kelly further stated that as we do every month, we try to use quotes on the Dashboard to reflect on the ways our day to day work bridges back to the priorities of our Strategic Plan.

Mr. Kelly shared a few final comments about statistics. A lot changed over the past 3 years that could influence trends we see in library use – think about pandemic impacts to service models and programming, think about infrastructure improvements and expanded wi-fi, think about the migration to a new ILS or temporary changes we made to service hours and borrowing policies in light of the pandemic, and think about the elimination of fines. It could prove difficult to point to a specific “cause and effect” when considering these statistics given so many major changes happening simultaneously, but in time, things will stabilize and we’ll continue to report on trends.

Budget/CIP Update: Mr. Kelly advised that the County Executive held a Public Information Briefing on March 17th to share highlights of her proposed six-year CIP. For libraries, she announced construction dollars next year for Middletown and the design in Fiscal 2026 for the East County Library and then she provided an update on the West Frederick Library. She outlined a proposal to put a branch in the newly-acquired Oak Street property, which the County is now referring to as the Himes Avenue site. Because the County owns the land and the building, this property will allow them to save \$6.9 million in approved CIP projects across the county and can help fund renovation and reconfiguration of the new space including a library. What this means for the community is that the County Executive is accelerating the West Frederick Library project 4 years from the existing plan and proposing design funds in Fiscal Year 2023. In other words, if the budget is approved by the Council, the design process for a West Frederick Library could begin less than 4 months from today. It is very exciting how quickly this project is moving and we appreciate County Executive Gardner's support, the County Council's support, and the support of Council President, M. C. Keegan-Ayer to bring much needed library service to the folks in West Frederick.

At her press briefing, the County Executive also announced a Community Town Hall to discuss the West Frederick Library which she will host on Monday, May 2nd at 7pm at the Butterfly Ridge Elementary School. Mr. Kelly noted that he has been asked to attend that community meeting to provide an overview of the design and construction process and a general timeline based on past library capital projects. There has been a lot of community excitement about this project and the Town Hall affords Mr. Kelly an opportunity to assure attendees that community input is part of FCPL's design process.

Discussion followed by members of the FCPL Board of Trustees regarding the location for the proposed West Frederick Library. Mr. Kelly advised that the proposed site is on a current bus route and is walkable from the many communities in that area. He noted that it is also easily accessible from the Route 340 area.

Mr. Kelly then provided an update on the Middletown Library. He noted that the construction bid documents are scheduled to go out this week and it will be several weeks before a selection is made. Once the bid is awarded, library staff will work with DPW and the construction firm to begin planning the actual groundbreaking, still tentatively scheduled for late Spring.

Mr. Kelly thereafter provided an update on the operating budget. On March 21, 2022, he and Mr. O'Leary attended the County Executive's public hearing on the budget. It was an opportunity to thank the County for their support and to advocate for FCPL's single appeal in the FY23 budget. As a reminder, this appeal would fund 4 full-time supervisors focused on teen services at the C. Burr Artz Library, Urbana Regional Library, Thurmont Regional Library and the Walkersville Library. The Budget Director indicated that there were a record number of community responses on the Balancing Act platform this year. The County Executive shared that there were a number of e-mails from library supporters and Mr. Kelly added that he is aware that a teen from Brunswick was among those who wrote in on behalf of the library appeal. That kind of testimony is always valuable, but so much more in this case since the appeal, if funded, would

allow us to more effectively serve the county's teen population. During the course of the meeting, the community could also leave voice-mails which were shared toward the end of the public meeting. One, in particular, was worth noting. It was from a woman who lived in the area of the Golden Mile thanking the County Executive for her plan to accelerate construction of the West Frederick Library at the Himes Avenue building. She talked about community need and that a branch at Himes Avenue would be much easier for her and her neighbors to get to.

Mr. Kelly thereafter reviewed the next steps regarding the budget. The County Executive will announce her FY23 budget next week, then it will go to the County Council for consideration. As a reminder, the County Council cannot add funding, however, they can take funding away from any part of the budget that the County is not obligated by State Law to fund. The Council has until the end of May to finalize and adopt the budget as outlined in the County Charter.

Mr. Kelly reminded members of the FCPL Board of Trustees that our next meeting is Wednesday, May 11th. As a reminder, this is the 2nd Wednesday of the month, because the first Wednesday conflicts with the Maryland Library Association Annual Conference which many library staff members will be attending.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly introduced a new team member, Erin Gambrill. Erin is the new Youth Services Coordinator for Frederick County Public Libraries. She started in the Youth Services Department at Baltimore County Public Library in 2008 and has since worked both as a children's librarian and department head at Carroll County Public Library. She has been a NASA Solar System Administrator since 2019 and holds degrees from the University of Maryland in Baltimore County and Drexel University.

NEW BUSINESS

a. LATI Graduate Recognition: Mr. Kelly stated that he has the honor of recognizing Tabitha Garrett, a member of the Brunswick team, who successfully completed the Library Associate Training Institute. LATI 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 on top of 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. The LATI program ensures that our Library Associates are trained to a high standard statewide and completing this program is a huge achievement.

Mr. Kelly presented Tabitha Garrett with a completion certificate.

Mr. O'Leary congratulated Tabitha Garrett, on behalf of the Library Board.

b. Financial Report: B. McDermott presented the Fiscal Year 2022 financial statement. The data is tentative as of February 28, 2022. Revenue is currently at 52%, which is a 1% increase from last month. FCPL received a transfer from the county for in-kind services in the amount of \$62,000. In addition, there was an increase of \$4,000 in miscellaneous operating revenue (\$2,700 of which was for reimbursement for safety and wellness supplies from the County Human Resources Wellness Grant). Passport fees also had an increase of \$4,000. She noted that contributions/donations and the ending fund balance do not get recorded until the end of the fiscal year.

Thereafter, Ms. McDermott reviewed expenditures. Expenditures are currently at 59% which includes a 5% increase from the previous board meeting. The most significant increases were a 19% increase in telephones and a 7% increase in personnel. She added that there was also a 7% increase in material purchases. The revenues are within the current projected budget.

Ms. McDermott noted that there were no new grants awarded. She noted as well that there were no new grants submitted. She advised that donations are at \$115,845, which is an increase of \$12,000 over the previous month. This is the result of several generous donations to the Greatest Need Fund, Branches and The Maryland Room.

Other endowment revenue is at \$174,277, which is an increase of \$17,000 from the previous board meeting. FCPL received interest on the Stoner Trust in the amount of \$17,398. These funds are for restricted materials.

This brings the total to \$2.7 million. She added that the C. Burr Artz Trust has provided \$100,000 for the CBA Reimagine Fund.

Discussion ensued about how funds from the C. Burr Artz Trust are allocated. Mr. Kelly advised that B. Heltebridle and her team came up with renovations for the C. Burr Artz Library and the list of renovations was provided to the C. Burr Artz Trust. Thereafter, members of the C. Burr Artz Trust either agree or tweak the numbers that they are willing to fund. When FCPL receives the funds from the C. Burr Artz Trust it is already ear-marked for things that they have approved, such as the CBA Reimagine Project.

Further discussion followed regarding the funds listed on the financial report regarding the Middletown Library.

c. ARPA Grant: B. Heltebridle, Branch Administrator at the C. Burr Artz Library and B. Hissong, Community Engagement Manager, provided information on the American Rescue Plan Act grant. ARPA is an economic stimulus bill that was signed into law in March, 2021 to speed up the country's recovery from the economic and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing recession. Various state and local agencies received funds from this act. Libraries in Maryland were encouraged to apply with innovative proposals for this grant.

FCPL's proposal that was submitted to Maryland State Library by FCPL staff was entitled Equity and Engagement: Community-focused library outreach in the wake of COVID-19. Our goal was to meet the public where they are and with what they desire, bridging both library service gaps and customer needs. Basically, FCPL wanted to reach out into the community in new, unique and innovative ways. FCPL's proposal was the only one to be fully-funded.

With the awarded funds, FCPL has purchased a book bike, transit van, a street lab, and mobile tech.

The book bike is actually a "trike". It can be filled with books (up to 260 pounds) and still be light enough for a non-athlete to pedal for miles while still having plenty of display space, when open. It can hold books or anything else we would want to take out into the community. It will also include an electric assist for longer distances or hilly environments. The reason for the purchase of the book bike is to meet the customer where they are and make a one-on-one connection in neighborhoods.

The transit van is a medium-sized van that any staff person could drive and it will allow FCPL staff to provide varied service depending on the situation and community. Materials on the transit van can be changed or updated. It was noted that the bookmobiles serve their roles well but they are limited by their size and a consistent schedule. The transit van will allow staff to set up a pop-up experience that best suits a specific population and service. A few examples were given such as taking the van to an under-served community, an evening school event or a festival.

Thereafter the Street Lab was discussed. The Street Lab is a portable reading room, a pop-up library and a way to make a "place". The Street Lab will be used in conjunction with the transit van and it will allow staff to bring more resources as well as the library "feel" outside and into the community. The Street Lab is compact and folds up so that it can fit in the transit van. Mr. Hisson displayed the new Street Lab for everyone to see. Ms. Heltebridle noted that it comes with a portable bench as well for patrons to sit on

Mobile-Tech was thereafter discussed. It was noted that the reason FCPL is getting this is due to the persistent digital divides in communities within Frederick County. Chromebooks and wi-fi hotspots would be made available as part of the pop-up library experience. This grant will allow FCPL to purchase these devices and position the library to directly assist those ALICE households in Frederick County by bringing digital equity to them in a low-stress and friendly environment. The flexibility of the tools requested would allow FCPL to bring computing directly to these individuals.

Thereafter, an example was given on the use of all of the afore-mentioned items. The transit van would arrive in a parking lot and serve as a mobile hotspot where wi-fi can be accessed through one's own device or through one of the Chromebooks stored onboard. On another day, the van may stop at a local festival. The van has foldable shelving for books, benches and tables providing space for community members to gather and enjoy a book or other activities. Another example was providing computer access including digital and workforce training while partnering with food banks, shelters and other social service organizations. An example of a

more spontaneous, pop-up experience would be the book bike hitting the streets and making stops in parks, public transit centers or pedestrian hubs at which time FCPL staff would be offering the ability to obtain a library card and learn how to download a digital audiobook for travel on the MARC train. Basically, the pop-up library experience can look different each time it is implemented, depending on the community.

As part of the Strategic Plan, the implementation of pop-up library services would enable FCPL to meet the needs outside of our physical buildings, providing meaningful engagement and increasing the library's presence in space that the public may find more accessible. The aforementioned services will place the library in a new contest to inspire wonder, learning and connection. In addition, this also aligns in future Strategic Plans and the evolving pandemic environment as the equipment is flexible and allows FCPL staff to be responsive to community needs. It is our belief that equitable services go beyond access to physical materials and the library building and these outreach tools will help FCPL further our vision of an informed, empowered and vibrant community.

Discussion followed regarding a targeted communication strategy. Further discussion ensued about the ability to issue library cards quickly and easily while out in the community.

d. Frederick Reads: B. Hissong, Community Engagement Manager, provided an update on Frederick Reads. 2022 marks the 16th time this program has been presented. He noted that the last time FCPL hosted Frederick Reads was in October, 2020. It included virtual visits with Wes Moore, author, activist and current Maryland gubernatorial candidate.

Mr. Hissong advised that this year Frederick Reads will be live and in-person again. The author for 2022 is Ruth Ozeki. She is an Asian-American-Canadian novelist, filmmaker and Zen Buddhist Priest, whose books have garnered international acclaim for their ability to integrate issues of science, technology, religion, environmental politics, and global pop culture into unique, hybrid, narrative forms.

Frederick Reads will take place on Monday, April 25, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at The Weinberg Center for the Arts and on Tuesday, April 26, 2022 at 11:15 a.m. at Frederick Community College.

Mr. Hissong noted that Ms. Ozeki's first two novels, My Year of Meats and All Over Creation, have been translated into 11 languages and published in 14 countries. Her third novel, A Tale for the Time Being, won the LA Times Book Prize, was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award and was published in over 30 countries. Her new novel, The Book of Form and Emptiness, tells the story of a young boy who, after the death of his father, starts to hear voices and finds solace in the companionship of his very own book.

Mr. Hissong thanked partners, The Weinberg Center for the Arts and Frederick Community College as well as our sponsor for this event, the C. Burr Artz Trust.

e. Summer Challenge: E. Gambrill and K. Quick reviewed the upcoming Summer Challenge 2022. Some important upcoming dates for this year's Summer Challenge were noted.

Summer Challenge begins on June 1st and concludes on August 15th. All library branches will hold in-person kick-off events. The first prize drawing will take place in mid-June and the second prize drawing will take place in mid-July. The final grand prize drawing will take place in mid-August.

Ms. Gambrell noted that FCPL has a Summer Challenge Wish List and that wish list is located on the library's website. She thereafter played a video by J. El-Zeftawy regarding the Summer Challenge Wish List and how supporters can make a donation. Ms. Gambrell thanked Mr. O'Leary for already donating two Chromebooks.

Ms. Quick noted that the prizes are not "toys". Clark Computer Services has donated 5 Chromebooks for prizes and has offered to sell more Chromebooks to FCPL for prizes at cost. The prizes that have been selected for the Summer Challenge this year were chosen by the work group to create positive experiences which would carry weight outside of the tangible item.

Ms. Gambrell stated that in addition to the Chromebooks and the American Girl dolls, FCPL is purchasing prizes from local community members, when possible. For example, we are purchasing a play kitchen from Dancing Bear, which is located across the street from the C. Burr Artz Library. The telescope is coming from a shop in Mt. Airy.

Thereafter, Ms. Gambrell and Ms. Quick reviewed the goals for the upcoming Summer Challenge:

Goal: To engage thousands every summer.

FCPL is returning to in-person programming and Summer Challenge kick-off events will be held at all branches. Staff are also reaching out to multiple county agencies. We are also simplifying game play to enhance better accessibility. And, finally, we are increasing outreach efforts to meet participants. It is important to note that this is one challenge for all ages.

Goal: To reconnect customers to the library

FCPL is providing free books to all those that finish the program and they may be picked up at local library branches. By doing this we are reconnecting the community to reading and by physically inviting patrons back into the branches.

Goal: To build relationships with partners

Communicating and collaborating with FCPL's Development Officer, J. El-Zeftawy, has helped the work group better understand and advocate for partnerships. Staff have visited established destinations in-person and are reaching out to new destinations. All of this encourages community exploration. FCPL invites partners to donate and/or present programs for Summer Challenge. In addition, staff are supporting FCPS and early literacy partners.

Goal: Ensure children's reading skills do not decline

This is done by increasing a lifelong love of reading through making reading a daily habit. This will battle the summer slide and COVID slide. Families and participants can determine what daily reading means to them and introduces them to goal setting. Books as finishing prizes

signifies the importance of reading for pleasure. FCPL is focusing on high quality books this year.

FCPL will be utilizing Beanstack once again this year. Frederick County Public School students are already familiar with Beanstack. The mobile app provides better access for all users and increases participation overall. Participants will be logging days read versus minutes, titles, points, etc. Ms. Quick noted that there will be one gameboard for all ages. Discussion followed regarding the Beanstack application that is used by the school system and the library. Instructions on how to utilize the Beanstack app can be provided by any service desk staff at any of our library locations.

In conclusion, there are only 55 more days until Summer Challenge begins. We are encouraging our community to read more than the combined 2,430 days from last year for a goal of 3,000 days – over 8 years of reading.

f. Myersville Library Update: M. Currens, Manager – Library Collections and former Branch Administrator for the Myersville Library, provided an update on the Myersville Library. The Myersville Library opened in August, 2019. Staff spent the first six months providing library services and getting to know our community members before COVID. She noted that thankfully staff had built enough goodwill and relationships in the community to carry them through the closure.

She noted that opening a new building in the western hills of the county provided an opportunity for the adjacent communities to have access to all FCPL services (Simplify Access). After opening, FCPL staff hit the ground running. Staff were eager to invite the community in but also to meet the community where they were. The primary focus was building relationships with customers and community partners. Staff particularly focused its relationship building with the local schools, both public and private. This proved a valuable tactic as we were able to host all public school students from Myersville and Wolfsville Elementary Schools as well as students from The Lucy School prior to the COVID closure. Staff also continued to visit those schools and students virtually during the COVID closure to ensure the relationship continued.

Ms. Currens noted that the unique partnership between FCPL and the Frederick and Hagerstown Railway Historical Society allowed staff to be ready to share the story of Trolley 150, when the doors opened. Staff were trained and they hosted trolley talks on opening day and created informative displays. This was all part of Building Bridges (part of the Strategic Plan).

She added that sparking excitement while having our doors closed provided the most challenging task for staff but staff was able to weave itself into the fabric of the community by showing up and getting involved where it mattered most. Most of the happenings in town are organized and coordinated by the town itself. Staff attended the town's Parks and Recreation Committee meetings. This connected staff to the movers and shakers in town and led to staff involvement in much-anticipated and well-attended community events such as the Myersville Music and Trolley Festival, Myersville Volksmarch, and Christmas parade. Staff also got creative by engaging with the community within the narrowed physical spaces during closure. An activity walk for Kids to

Parks Day was created. The library windows were used to display books for check-out and staff also participated in the system-wide fun of curbside Halloween costumes.

Ms. Currens noted that since reopening, staff has focused on providing opportunities for engagement and excitement with scavenger hunts, a pumpkin decorating contest and a gingerbread house contest, which are all small-town, family favorites.

She added that the first few years of the Myersville Library certainly have brought with them unforeseen circumstances and challenges but staff rallied to the occasion along with the rest of FCPL to meet those challenges head-on. Ms. Currens noted that we are proud of the service that staff has been able to provide to the community thus far and we look forward to continuing to grow and adapt as we serve the Myersville community for years to come.

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 Wednesday, May 11, 2022

K. Spertzel made a joint motion to adjourn the public meeting and go into a closed session per Maryland Annotated Code General Provisions Article §305(b)(1) to discuss (i) The appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom it has jurisdiction; or (ii) any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals; seconded by C. Smith. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

The public meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.



M. O'Leary, Chair
Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees