

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
JUNE 7, 2023**

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

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: T. Lancaster, G. Mayfield, M. O’Leary, S. Sheppard, K. Spertzel, and S. White.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: J. D’Agostino and County Liaison, J. Donald

STAFF PRESENT: J. Kelly, Director, S. McDuff, Associate Director, C. Hall, Associate Director; B. McDermott, Finance 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; 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; A. Moser, Assistant Branch Administrator – C. Burr Artz Library; Lori Gubala, Bookmobile Coordinator; N. Dowlearn, Library Associate – C. Burr Artz Library; E. Kirunova – Library Associate – Emmitsburg Library; J. Spiegel, Special Project Manager – Frederick County Government; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

CHAIRS REPORT: In Ms. D’Agostino’s absence, S. Sheppard noted that she recently attended the NCORE Conference in New Orleans last week. She commended FCPL for sending two employees to NCORE, which is a national conference on race and ethnicity in higher education. This says a great deal about what is important to this organization. She noted that she knew the types of information that FCPL staff would be privy to and bring back to FCPL to increase our learning and actions on issues of race, ethnicity, gender and LGBTQ+. Ms. Sheppard noted that she has attended this conference five times and noted that she walked away again with a wealth of knowledge on how to deal with the many issues we are seeing around the country – from the books we are allowed to read to the history we are allowed to learn. There were approximately 5,000 people in attendance at this conference for that very reason. She noted that she is looking forward to using that knowledge in her own profession and as a member of the FCPL Board of Trustees.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: S. White made a motion to approve the Minutes of

May 3, 2023; seconded by K. Spertzel. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the fiscal year.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly noted that he recently had an opportunity to attend a virtual lecture hosted by the Digital Public Library of America. Richard Ovenden, Director of the Bodleian Libraries at the University of Oxford, discussed his latest work, Burning the Books: A History of the Deliberate Destruction of Knowledge. He said that the idea to research and write this book came after he visited a site in Berlin -- where 90 years ago last month...in May of 1933 -- there was an organized mass book burning.

Ovenden's talk focused on the importance of libraries and archives as an essential part of the infrastructure of democracy and he highlighted 5 reasons why libraries are critical to a healthy democratic society: First - their role in education. In libraries, information is free to everyone and there is no expectation that individuals must pay a fee to access it. Second - that libraries make a diverse body of knowledge accessible, not just one perspective. By building good collections, libraries seek to meet the varied informational needs of the whole community and support an individual's right to make their own decision about which books are right for them or for their families. Ovenden noted that, in his view, the current attempts to censor certain books demonstrates the quality, importance, and need for this information. Third - libraries protect the rights of citizens. Fourth - libraries are reference points for facts and truth. Fifth - libraries preserve and celebrate the identity of both society as a whole and of its individuals.

Yet, despite the important role libraries play in society, Ovenden went on to highlight how some libraries were, and are, being destroyed.

Historically, some libraries go away in an instant...

In 1992, Serbian militants targeted the National Library of Bosnia. It was the only building bombed on that day. First responders and library staff who attempted to save collections in the aftermath of that bombing were then targeted by Serbian snipers.

In 2021, during the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, one of the first actions Taliban soldiers undertook was destroying school libraries that had been established in the previous 10 years.

And, just last year, it was widely reported that Russia launched a strategic campaign to destroy Ukrainian libraries, archives, and museums. In "Putin's War on Ukrainian Memory," an article that appeared in the Atlantic this Spring, Ovenden outlined the Russian atrocities writing "The destruction of knowledge and erasure of memory has always been an aim for those who seek to impose their own version of history on the next generation."

While each of the aforementioned actions happened quickly, Ovenden notes that other libraries, by contrast, are eroded slowly over time.

Some libraries are eroded by neglect or underfunding as scholars now believe this is what happened at the Great Library of Alexandria 2,000 years ago or at the Library of Glastonbury Abbey in the Middle Ages and other libraries, Ovenden notes, are being eroded in our own country, in the present day, by attempts at censorship.

Deborah Caldwell Stone of the American Library Association has reported that “147 pieces of legislation across the Country have been drafted which would seek to limit what individuals can voluntarily read. This legislation seeks to censor books that affirm or even simply acknowledge the lives and voices of groups that have been marginalized in the past; books that recognize the humanity of all people.”

Mr. Kelly added that if anyone is interested in learning more, he would recommend Ovenden’s talk which is now available on DPLA’s YouTube channel.

Next, Mr. Kelly highlighted the work of FCPL’s team in service to our three strategic priorities – to expand access, to build bridges, and to spark excitement.

Expand Access: Recently, over the course of a week, staff from Urbana visited the “On the Mark Adolescent Clubhouse” multiple times to do outreach. The center, run by the Frederick County Health Department, serves 12 to 17 year-olds who are in recovery from or at risk for substance abuse. Thanks to our outreach, many of the teens learned for the first time that they had Student Success Cards and were shown how to use them to access a variety of learning resources as well as downloadable books, music, and movies. One student was excited to discover FCPL had financial literacy books and he went online after our presentation, found a title he wanted, and put the book on hold at CBA using his Student Success Card. Another student explained they he was excited to use Linked-In Learning to start learning how to code. Many of the students also expressed interest in using BrainFuse, a platform which offers online homework assistance.

Building Bridges: A recent example of how we are building bridges is related to recruitment. As you know, our Personnel Analyst has been cultivating relationships with local colleges and universities to market our vacancies more directly to their graduates. In the context of those talks, we learned about a platform called “Handshake” which many recent graduates and soon-to-be graduates use to do their job search. FCPL has completed the enrollment process on our end and, once we are vetted, we will be able to post our own vacancies there. One appealing feature of this tool is that we are able to push our vacancies to students from specific colleges and universities. FCPL looks forward to using this platform and hope it can help us with recruitment, a topic that is of shared importance to you, our Board, and to our team.

Mr. Kelly also noted that FCPL staff attended the annual Children’s Festival on April 29th. Although originally scheduled to be held in Baker Park, excessive rain forced the event into the Armory. Staff were flexible and easily pivoted to this indoor environment. The Bookmobile was able to park outside the building where they welcomed crowds into the warm, book-filled space. Staff also used the Rover, our new grant funded transit van, to bring a variety

of fun and engaging activities, including the chalk spinner, giant-sized Connect Four, and branded giveaways. Between the outreach table inside and the Bookmobile outside, staff spoke with over 700 customers and registered many folks for library cards.

As part of Frederick County's 275th anniversary celebration, the Urbana team hosted a program for seniors and children about some of the transformations that have taken place in their community. Many seniors in attendance shared their recollections of The Peter Pan Inn, detailing memories of eating with their families amongst the water fountains and peacocks that famously roamed the grand restaurant grounds. During a human bingo activity, six year old Riley connected with one senior and learned that he enjoyed eating cereal for breakfast, just like her, although his favorite was a brand made in Argentina that he used to eat as a young boy. One senior excitedly brought some props to share, including an old TV channel dial and a rotary phone, which she enthusiastically demonstrated to the kids. Susan Hofstra, the Urbana Senior Center Supervisor, commented that the seniors really enjoyed themselves during the program and that she was looking forward to our next intergenerational program.

Also highlighted on the Dashboard is Thurmont's Green Fest, planned in coordination with the Town of Thurmont and the Green Team. It attracted 450 attendees who interacted with 27 environmentally-focused organizations from around the area to learn about tree health, pollinators, and conservation of native plants, animals, and wildflowers. Slim Harrison played his one-man-band instruments for families, and helped the kids make banjos and kazoos from recycled materials. Glamourview Creamery Food Truck kept everyone fed with grilled cheese sandwiches. Sonia Demiray of the Frederick County Forestry Board expressed her gratitude for the partnership writing "Thank you so much for organizing and keeping the mood happy!"

And, finally, the Walkersville team is building bridges by collaborating with the Walkersville High School Spanish Department to present an evening of Bilingual Storytime that is going very well. Students help present the content and a teacher comes with them. Attendance increases each week with 30 attendees at a recent meeting. The majority of attendees are native Spanish speakers.

Spark Excitement: The Myersville Children's team sparked excitement by hosting a marvelous Peter Rabbit Party, complete with a planting activity. This program brought together the whole community with Andrew Grimm from A Piece of Harmony Farm donating seeds and pots. He also facilitated the donation of soil from Summer Creek Farm. The team had over 60 happy customers bustling around the branch doing crafts, gardening, and connecting.

Mr. Kelly further mentioned that we spark excitement with our own staff. During National Library Week (in April), the system-wide Wellness Team coordinated activities like:

- Snacks and treats throughout the week
- Pizza on Wednesday
- Prize drawings of FCPL branded merchandise

- Brain Teasers to work on throughout the week with an answer reveal on Friday
- A Tree of Gratitude that allowed members of staff to acknowledge each other for their exemplary work
- And an off-site farm tour, trivia game and dinner at Milkhouse Brewery

All of these activities were to honor our team and their hard work. Mr. Kelly also acknowledged our branch Friends of the Library who contributed goodies to their branches. We received overwhelming positive feedback on a survey at the end of the week with one person sharing that "it was wonderful to feel appreciated and treated to fun activities". Mr. Kelly noted that we appreciate our amazing team all year long, but this week-long event was a good opportunity to do something special. Our thanks to everyone who worked hard to make it a success.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly reviewed statistics. He noted that the May/June numbers will be shared at our next meeting in September at which time we'll have the impressive FY23 totals. April has followed the typical trend with a slight slow-down in circulation and visits, likely due to spring break travel. That said, our circulation numbers are steadily increasing, and we are approaching a nearly 20% higher circulation compared to FY19. New card registrations and wifi use remain strong, far surpassing the FY19 trends.

We were curious though about the other areas where we have been trending behind our FY19 numbers and whether we were edging closer to getting to our previous high marks, so Courtney looked into that for us. Mr. Kelly noted that he can report that we are closing the gap on visits which is just 5% off the FY19 number. As for program attendance, back in October we were 30% under YTD totals, but in April we've cut that in half so now we are roughly under by 15%. Mr. Kelly added that in most of our measures we are exceeding trends or narrowing the gap. The only measure that remains consistently low is public computer use. Mr. Kelly noted that this is something that he has noted in past reports, but reminded everyone that FCPL has seen record wifi use this year which offsets that low public computing number, as folks are coming in with their own devices to access the internet. Mr. Kelly stated that we will continue to track these numbers.

Budget/CIP Update: On the operating side of things, Mr. Kelly noted that the Council held public hearings on County Executive Fitzwater's proposed FY24 budget and considered 59 amendments. A few of those amendments did concern the library's three budget appeals, but ultimately, all three made it into the final budget that was approved by the Council. Therefore, effective July 1, we will receive funding for a position at the Urbana Library Branch, a Communications Bilingual Specialist position, and a replacement vehicle. Mr. Kelly thanked the Board and our community at large for its advocacy on the budget. Mr. Kelly also thanked FCPL's entire team for helping put the budget together. It is a lot of work, most especially for Brandy, who has to manage it all and maintain countless drafts during 6 months of talks.

On the capital side of things, the approved CIP covers FY24-29 and outyears, so in theory, it is a 6-year plan; however, as we've seen, things can shift when you start looking at projects beyond year one. Mr. Kelly advised that what he can tell everyone is, as it is currently written, the County has design funding in place for FY24 for the Westside Library with construction funding

to follow in FY26. If conversations between the City and County continue as they have, I'm hopeful we will have an announcement very soon on a site selection. That needs to happen before any design conversation starts. Following that, the CIP lists the North Frederick Library with site survey dollars in FY25 and design to follow in FY26. If that schedule remains in effect, then in FY26, we will have one project in construction (Westside) and one in design (North Frederick) which is unprecedented for our library system.

Looking even further out, Linganore Town Center Library has design funding in FY28 and the CBA remodel has design funding in FY29. It is an ambitious building program, but we are grateful for the partnership we have with the County Executive and County Council, with Public Works, our community partners, and to the State's Library Capital Grant program without which these projects might not be possible. It is exciting to see our Facilities Master Plan come to life.

Mr. Kelly advised that the FCPL Board of Trustees does not meet in July or August. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 6, 2023 at 7pm.

NEW BUSINESS:

a. **Financial Report:** Ms. McDermott reviewed the FY23 Financial Report for June, 2023. She noted that the data is tentative as of April 30, 2023. Revenues are at 73%, a 1% increase from the previous board meeting. FCPL received a transfer to the County In-Kind of \$59K. Miscellaneous Operating Revenue increased by \$7K. Passport revenue increased by \$10K. For the second month, there were over 300 passports processed in April, and year-to-date over 1900 passport applications have been processed. Federal Grants increased by \$27K for reimbursement related to the Equity and Engagement Grant and the Staff Development Grant. Both grants will be closed as of June 30th.

As FCPL quickly approaches the end of the fiscal year, it has been working on wrapping up FY23 orders to meet the county's year-end deadlines. Ms. McDermott pointed out that June 9th is the last day for the library to complete any library purchases for FY23 that require a requisition, and June 26th is the last day to purchase items using a county procurement credit card for the transaction to post against FY23. The new FY24 fiscal year will begin on July 1st.

FCPL's expenditures are at 74%, a 9% increase from the previous board meeting. The most significant change was a 20% increase in County In-Kind Appropriations and 7% to personnel. Other Operating Expenditures increased by 13% as the increase this month is related to staff training/conference, which will be supported/reimbursed by the Staff Development and MLA Grant. Library Materials increased by 7% as staff prepare for material purchases prior to the end of the fiscal year.

As FCPL ends the first month of the 4th quarter of FY23, the report reflects a 1% difference between revenues and expenditures. When comparing FY22 and FY23, the primary difference between each year is the timing of the revenue and expenditures being posted to the General Ledger. FCPL is right within the projected budget with revenue and expenditures as we move toward the end of FY23.

Grants Awarded are at \$1,065,095, and Grants Submitted are at \$270,489. Since the last board meeting, a new grant has been awarded - the Dollar General Literacy Foundation Summer Reading Program Grant for \$1,000.00 to support the purchase of books for the Summer Reading Program. Since the last board meeting, there have been no new grants submitted.

Donations are at \$163,230

Since the last board update, donations have increased by \$29,227K due to several generous donations to the Greatest Need, Youth Services, Summer Reading Challenge, and the Branches. Ms. McDermott noted that, as of today, the Summer Challenge cash donations received are at \$32,935, of which \$8,135 is solely designated to support the Summer Challenge grand prizes. Each year the Summer Challenge is generously supported by many donors and sponsors, and this year's support totaled \$307,127 in both cash and in-kind donations. These donations make it possible for the library to offer the best possible summer reading program, and we are so thankful for the generous support.

Other endowment revenues are at \$178,101. There was an increase of \$540 from the previous month. The funds are from the Mary A. Quill Endowment to support the purchase of materials.

This brings the total to \$1,406,426.

b. Community Engagement Update: B. Hissong, Community Engagement Manager, provided an update on the Community Engagement Department. This department does a lot of different things such as programs (local and system-wide), partnerships, outreach, youth services, and Summer Challenge but he noted that this evening's update will be about vehicles.

Mr. Hissong stated that FCPL has two bookmobiles which have been incredibly busy this year. We have a community bookmobile that visits neighborhoods and older adult communities. The early-start bookmobile visits pre-K programs, after school programs, The Judy Center, and summer camps. These bookmobiles are maintained and operated by our three amazing drivers, Lori, Tara and Jen.

The Community Bookmobile has 16 stops every two weeks. Eight of those stops are neighborhood stops and the other eight are senior stops. The most recent neighborhood stop that was added about a year ago was Amber Meadows. He noted that we are pleased to say that visits have increased substantially. The Waverly stop which was added in 2019 has also seen an increase in visitors – mostly young folks – and this makes sense because it is near Waverly Elementary. Mr. Hissong noted that the two stops mentioned are in communities where they do not have easy access to library branches. The past few months we have seen members of the community come on board and find value from this service.

Thereafter, Mr. Hissong noted that bookmobiles are not just about circulation of materials. They are about experiences and the library connecting with the community. Lori and Jen are very innovative and unique in ways they try to engage the visitors on the vehicle.

Mr. Hissong advised that the early start bookmobile serves our youngest readers. The schedule for the early start bookmobile has changed for the summer. FCPL received a lot of requests from places for bookmobile stops. Every request that was on the waiting list was accommodated which means that every two weeks they will be stopping at 43 stops. He added that Tara and Jen did an amazing job writing a grant request and were awarded that grant in the amount of \$1,000 from Dollar General. These funds will be used to purchase quality books and give them away at the places we visit during the summer.

The early start bookmobile staff performed over 500 storytimes which reached almost 11,000 children and teachers. He thereafter shared several quotes that were received from the many bookmobile stops.

Mr. Hissong shared that both bookmobiles circulated almost 43,000 items. The bookmobiles went to 15 different outreach events and saw about 1,400 folks.

He thereafter shared that the book bike has been in use since October, 2022 and has gone to 13 different locations. Staff have interacted with approximately 1,600 customers.

Mr. Hissong advised that the Rover (transit van) is here. It is 2022 Ford Transit Van. It is wrapped with a wonderful design so there is no doubt it is a library vehicle. He mentioned that the van has an internal hydraulic liftgate that helps staff take out and put back in the rolling bookcase, etc. The collections department helped order 450 items for the “van collection”. If the van would go into a neighborhood where English is the second language, we can curate the books as needed and chose Spanish books. There are lightweight modular stools, tables, and giant Legos that are on the van. Recently staff took the van to Baker Park to do a video shoot with Frederick County Government TV. We invited some families out and they had a great time. The video will be available for viewing within the next few weeks. The Rover was also part of the Touch-A-Truck Event at Brunswick Library and it was at the Baker Park Children’s Festival.

He added that eventually branches will be able to reserve the Rover. The goal is that it does not have a set schedule; it is meant to be flexible and fill in the gaps. Everyone will be able to find out where the Rover will be through social media posts as well as FCPL’s online calendar on the website. Staff have been doing an incredible amount of community engagement/outreach and we are excited for the next fiscal year.

c. Election of Officers: G. Mayfield noted that there are two openings for the next term: vice-chair and secretary. He noted that both of the incumbents agree to extend their terms in those positions. Mr. Mayfield thereafter made a motion to nominate Shemica Sheppard for Vice-Chair and Suzette White for Secretary; seconded by K. Spertzel. No further discussion.

VOTE: Unanimous

d. By-Laws Update: Mr. Mayfield noted that at the last meeting about the update, there was some back and forth about the wording. Mr. Kelly made a very good suggestion that maybe

what we could do is break it into two parts regarding the language to remove a board member. The proposal was to have a first vote of everyone on the Board to determine whether a cause exists to move on to a second vote to actually remove the person in question. In the second vote, the person in question would not get to vote.

Mr. Mayfield made a motion to update Article III – Composition of the Board of Trustees #7; seconded by M. O’Leary. No discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Mr. O’Leary noted that this updated language helps to define this article a little more than it was on the first go around.

e. Director’s Evaluation: Mr. Mayfield noted that everyone on the FCPL Board of Trustees has seen a copy of the Director’s Evaluation and we are moving to a new process this year to officially accept the evaluation. Mr. Mayfield made a motion to accept the Director’s Evaluation; seconded by S. Sheppard. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS: S. White noted that she recently had an amazing experience a few weeks ago at the Urbana Library. She advised that she went to the library to return a book and the plaza in front of the library was full of young children and there were a lot of parents there too. Someone was reading to the children, there was singing and someone was signing and Ms. White stated that she didn’t want to leave. Thereafter, she went to the front desk and one of our associates was engaging in dialog with another customer in an Asian dialect. She noted that we can take building bridges in so many directions.

M. O’Leary noted that he was approved to serve a second term on the FCPL Board of Trustees and he is very happy for that opportunity. He stated that although he is retired now, he was a librarian in his working career. He worked at FCC as the Library Director. In retirement, he decided to become more engaged in the public library system. As he spent time learning about what staff do, he was immensely gratified to see each of the libraries have the same mission which is to do the best possible job and deliver the best service to the many, many, many people that turn to FCPL. Each library does this in its own different way. FCC is a good institution and FCPL also does a very good job and he is very gratified to be associated with two of the most effective libraries in Frederick County and beyond. Mr.O’Leary further stated that he is looking forward to the next five years.

Mr. Kelly thanked Mr. O’Leary for being willing to step up to a second term.

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 September 6, 2023.

G. Mayfield made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by S. White. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.



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