

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
SEPTEMBER 6, 2023**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on September 6, 2023 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, and S. White.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: County Liaison, J. Donald.

STAFF PRESENT: J. Kelly, Director, S. McDuff, Associate Director, B. McDermott, Finance Manager; B. Hissong, Community Engagement Manager; J. El-Zeftawy, Development Officer; M. Currens, Library Collections Manager; J. Marshall, Manager – Systems; C. Brohawn, Project Coordinator; K. Cambrel, Communications Manager; R. Frecker, Branch Administrator, Walkersville Library; J. Diaz, Branch Administrator – Brunswick Library; B. Heltebridle, Branch Administrator – C. Burr Artz 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; L. Branson, Circulation Supervisor – C. Burr Artz Library; N. Koronet, Library Associate-Teens – Brunswick Library; Lori Knapp - Library Associate Children’s – Urbana Regional Library; Marybeth LeBlanc, Library Associate-Children’s - Brunswick Library; G. Carr, Library Technician - Brunswick Library; J. Spiegel, Special Project Manager – Frederick County Government; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: G. Mayfield made a motion to approve the Minutes of June 7, 2023; seconded by S. White. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

CHAIRS REPORT: J. D’Agostino shared an experience she had at the C. Burr Artz Library with her family. During the Summer Challenge, she brought her family to the library and her daughter had her Starbucks with her and her daughter was wondering if she could bring it into the library. My daughter asked L. Branson if she could bring her drink into the library and he treated her with such kindness. It was a genuine interaction.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly welcomed everyone back from summer recess. He noted that since the last meeting, FCPL closed out FY23 and we will be reporting to you about how FCPL

finished the year. He added that we are also well into FY24. As hard as it is to believe, September marks the last month of the first quarter of the fiscal year. There will be lots of updates tonight. Mr. Kelly began by taking a moment to highlight 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: Mr. Kelly noted that at last week's Board retreat, he mentioned in passing a new platform that FCPL has started using to get the word out about our vacancies. "Handshake" is a popular site for college students and recent graduates that allows FCPL to push notifications about our vacancies to candidates from specific schools – for instance, colleges and universities in Frederick County or nearby HBCUs as well. We have been using Handshake since mid-June and hope that, in time, it will help with recruitment.

Another way FCPL regularly expands access is, of course, through library programming and outreach. Back in July, C Burr Artz children's staff hosted ten programs in the community to replicate services found within the library, including storytimes at Lincoln and Waverly Elementary Schools, Kindness Rocks and Parachute Play programs at the Frederick Rescue Mission Camp; an Art Program at the Waverly Bookmobile stop, and outreach at Market Days for the Waverley, Lincoln, Hillcrest, and Butterfly Ridge Elementary Schools. We also brought the Book Bike to Baker Park and to Frederick Coffee Company. The team also connected with the Asian American Center's new Family Support Services Program which was a great networking and brainstorming opportunity.

Building Bridges: Mr. Kelly advised that the Walkersville team restarted a partnership with Maryland Legal Aid to be a site for expungement clinics. Through this program, a lawyer from Maryland Legal Aid comes in for about three hours and walks attendees through completing the forms to expunge old criminal records. She is not their lawyer but gives them what they need to do this themselves. The sessions are marketed in different places including temp agencies and workforce services, as many people seek jobs there because they do not have strong chances of being hired with a criminal record, no matter how small or old it is.

The Brunswick team partnered with historians from Frederick County Parks & Recreation who led a history walk at Othello Regional Park to learn about the land and the park's namesake, Barney "Othello" Howard. Howard and his family were enslaved on the nearby Needwood plantation by the Lee family. After gaining his freedom, Howard purchased five acres of land where he built a stone cottage for his family, some of whom remain living in the area today. 25 people attended the event, on a hot and humid day, and enjoyed asking questions while touring the grounds. This program offered a more inclusive history and helped educate our community about some of the experiences of enslaved people and families here in Frederick County.

The Thurmont team organized a Health and Wellness Fair in July that brought 26 Health & Wellness-based organizations to the North County Community. Representatives from these agencies and businesses connected with over 125 attendees. After the event, Erin Betz from Country Meadows Retirement Communities shared: "Thanks so much for hosting the Health &

Wellness Fair on Saturday! I know how much effort these things take and you did an amazing job!! We look forward to continuing to partner with all of the libraries - you provide such an amazing service to the community.”

Frederick Pride was on June 24th and FCPL staff had an outreach table at the event. Our spot was located along Carroll Creek, directly behind the library, and the crowd was thrilled to see our team. We interacted with 600+ folks that day and created over 20 new library cards.

Spark Excitement: The Maryland Room has been supporting Frederick County’s 275th programming in a number of ways: Derek and Mary provided outreach at the History Pavilion at Utica Park. Mary coordinated the Pavilion which brought together representatives from 16 organizations of the Frederick Historic Sites Consortium. They coordinated a program called "The Vast Void of a Famous Photo" where researcher Paul Bolcik decoded the mystery within a Matthew Brady photo of Confederate prisoners at Gettysburg. Mary took her expertise to the Myersville-Wolfsville Historical Society and provided a presentation on genealogy research. Mary and Derek also assisted in creating the Carroll Creek Art Tour. Mary presented two of the numerous tours given that day. This outreach and programming by the Maryland Room is a great example of how we are Sparking Excitement for the community.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly reviewed statistics. In June and July, staff from across the system provided almost 1,000 programs with over 45,000 attendees. Summer is always our busiest time, but this summer has been remarkable. He thanked FCPL’s incredible team for developing and hosting amazing events that resonate so well with the community. The team is truly ‘expanding access, building bridges, and sparking excitement.’ Some branches saw over 400 attendees at a single library event. That kind of attendance used to be rare, but it is becoming more and more common and speaks to how our team is connecting to our communities.

The Fiscal Year ended in June and it was an incredible year for FCPL and FY24 is off to a great start as you can see on the July dashboard. While you can observe a slight decrease as compared to June, this follows the trend line for many of the measures. Project Coordinator Courtney Brohawn took a closer look at this for us and it’s worth noting that, in spite of the month over month decrease, FCPL saw the highest circulation, new cardholders, and Wi-Fi usage for any month of July to-date.

Budget/CIP Update: Mr. Kelly stated that we closed the books on the FY23 budget, and have entered into FY24. B. McDermott will report on the financials momentarily. He added that he and his team began planning FCPL’s draft FY25 budget for the Board’s consideration in a few months.

As a reminder, the Board’s Finance Committee will hear a report on the FY23 audit in early November. That audit will reveal our ending fund balance number which, as you know, is an important piece of the puzzle for the FY25 budget that we are putting together now.

On the capital side of things, Mr. Kelly noted that Middletown construction is ongoing. At the start of the project, the construction firm's target date for opening was the end of the calendar year; however, it now sounds like an opening day after the first of the year is more realistic. How far into the year is unknown at this point as it all depends on how much ground the construction firm can make up this Fall. We will, of course, keep you posted.

The West Frederick library project is also moving along:

- In July, the County Executive and the Mayor of Frederick signed an MOU to explore the feasibility of the current Hillcrest Park site as a potential location for the West Frederick branch.
- In August, a community meeting was hosted at Hillcrest Elementary. The County Executive and Mayor addressed the crowd, Department of Public Works' project manager provided background on what is included in a feasibility study, and Mr. Kelly noted that he was invited to talk about the design phase which will come after feasibility and the importance of community input to the design process.
- Late last month, the DPW received proposals from 3 firms interested in working on the feasibility study. Those proposals are currently being evaluated. If a firm is selected in September, then work could tentatively begin in October and DPW anticipates it would be completed by Spring. If the site is deemed feasible, then the City's rezoning process could start and the design phase would follow.

Mr. Kelly advised that the next Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 4, 2023.

He further advised that the Citizens for Maryland Libraries annual meeting is Saturday, Oct 21st at the Bowie Branch of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System.

NEW BUSINESS:

a. LATI Recognition: Mr. Kelly provided an overview of LATI. 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 FCPL's 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 thereafter recognized the two latest LATI graduates: Noa Koronet and Lori Knapp. He also provided certificates to each of the graduates.

Mr. O’Leary also added his congratulations to the LATI graduates.

b. Financial Report: Ms. McDermott noted that County Finance is working on preparing/completing the FY23 Year End Financial Audit Report, which will be presented to the Finance Committee and the full Board in November. The Financial Audit Report presented will be the final financial report through June 30, 2023.

The data presented is tentative as of July 31, 2023, and the data was pulled on August 17, 2023.

She noted that total revenue is at 2%. She added that as we end the first quarter of the new year, the YTD collected totals \$330,003, which includes Miscellaneous Operating, Passport Fees, and the MD State Education Grant.

Ms. McDermott further advised that the transfer from the county general fund and in-kind County revenue is transferred quarterly. The contributions and donations, and fund balance revenue YTD will remain \$0 throughout the year due to the fact that both are only recorded at the end of the fiscal year.

Ms. McDermott added that total expenditures spent are at 6%. The most significant were the following: Library Material Purchases at 11% for the FY24 annual e-content subscription renewals. Other operating expenditures are at 9%. Equipment maintenance, and repairs is at 31% (for several FY24 annual technology software, license, and hardware agreement renewals). County Finance also posted the monthly personnel and telephone expenses which, when added together, is 13%. There will be times throughout the year when expenditures exceed our revenue. As Ms. McDermott noted earlier, specific FCPL revenue is recorded quarterly or at the end of the fiscal year but expenditures are recorded, when the expense is posted to the general ledger.

The grants awarded are at \$600,100 and include The Middletown Branch Construction Grant supplemental funding of \$563K from the Maryland State Library to support the construction of the new Middletown Branch project, which will bring the total grant funding to \$4.172 million. The Staff Development Grant and the Maryland Library Association Conference Grant totaling \$31,100 from the Maryland State Library Agency is to support Library Staff Training throughout the fiscal year and the Maryland Library Association Conference in May, 2024 and the Frederick County Workforce Service Technology Partnership Grant of \$6K will be used to continue the support of improved access through the circulation of devices and hot spots to citizens who do not have access to similar devices, a smartphone, or a reliable internet connection.

Grants submitted are at \$0. Ms. McDermott noted that last week, FCPL received the notification of the award for the Emergency Connectivity Fund Grant from the Federal Communications Commission in the amount of \$40,440 to support the purchase of additional technology equipment. This grant was submitted in FY23, so staff were very excited to receive the support of the Grant from Federal Communications Commission.

Thereafter, she noted that donations are at \$8,637. The donations FCPL received include several generous donations for Greatest Need, Youth Services, and the branches.

Other endowment revenue is at \$75,004. There was an increase of \$75,000 from the C Burr Artz Trust for the sole benefit of the library. A \$4 interest payment was received from the Nallin CD to be used for the purpose of large print books.

This brings the total to \$683,741.

Ms. D'Agostino inquired about the size of the grant writing team. Mr. Kelly said there is not actually a grant writing team. Staff members keep their eyes and ears open for grant opportunities.

c. Holiday Schedule: Mr. Kelly reviewed the proposed 2024 holiday schedule and noted that there are no additional holidays added and that the proposed schedule just includes dates for 2024.

M. O'Leary made a motion to accept the holiday schedule for 2024; seconded by G. Mayfield. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

d. Reaffirm Policies: Ms. McDuff noted that at the recent retreat, she presented details and recommendations for updates to two library policies to bring us to a better alignment and a reaffirmation of the rest of the policies.

K. Spertzel made a motion to accept the two updates to the policies and reaffirm the rest of the policies; seconded by S. Sheppard. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

e. Library Development Update: J. El-Zeftawy provided an update on library development and FCPL's fundraising initiatives over the last year. She began with comparing numbers from the last three fiscal years and total donors for each year. In FY23, FCPL had 652 donors and they raised \$215,480.45. We were happy to see these numbers increase after FCPL had experienced an unexpected decline. She noted that whenever she sees a decline, she looks at what is happening nationally in the non-profit sector and philanthropy community for an explanation. Looking at national data, FCPL is in the same boat as everyone else and we are not seeing a decline that is unique to our donors.

She further noted in that in 2022, everyone was surprised that charitable giving declined nationally for the first time in over a decade. Total donations dropped by approximately 5% compared to the previous year. Researchers suggest that the decline is most likely due to rising inflation, concerns about the ongoing impact of the pandemic and geopolitical uncertainties. She added that it could also be donor fatigue because, during the pandemic, FCPL saw unprecedented levels of charitable giving with many people and organizations going above and beyond their usual levels of giving. Ms. El-Zeftawy added that the good news is that overall, the non-profit sector and the philanthropy community are remarkably resilient and we are seeing a more positive trajectory in 2023 both across the United States and at FCPL.

Reflecting on FY23 and what contributed to FCPL's success, we had several successful fundraising campaigns throughout the year such as the annual #GivingTuesday appeal, which kicks off our year-end fundraising campaign. The date for this year is Tuesday, November 28, 2024.

Ms. El-Zeftawy noted that FCPL had two standout campaigns this past year: Summer Challenge and our third Read-a-Book Ball.

Our donors raised over \$25,257 for Summer Challenge. She added that more information on the Summer Challenge will be presented at next month's meeting. She noted that J. D'Agostino sponsored a skateboard this year and G. Mayfield sponsored a hammock. She thanked them for encouraging and motivating our readers to reach their goals this summer.

The Read-A-Book Ball raised over \$10,000 in FY23 but over the last three years, this campaign raised over \$50,000 for library programs and services in a time when FCPL really needed the support. The FY23 Read-A-Book Ball was inspired by country music icon, Dolly Parton. The campaign included Dolly inspired storytimes, a virtual author talk with superstar Sarah Smarsh, a Spotify playlist curated by James Kelly and Book-Ball inspired coffee, donuts, cocktails and milkshakes offered by local businesses, all of which were designed to support the library. FCPL had 428 people attend the Read-A-Book Ball. She noted that hundreds of library supporters shared photos of themselves reading and offered suggestions of titles for others to read as we all celebrated literacy and what a joy it is to stay home and read a book.

Thereafter, Ms. El-Zeftawy noted the campaign to support the new Middletown Library has been at the forefront of our fundraising efforts in FY23 and FY24. The success of this campaign has been because of our generous leadership donors. She thanked Mick O'Leary and Jan Samet O'Leary for making the first leadership gift for the campaign. This campaign was designed to meet a funding goal of \$100,000 to construct an early literacy play and learning space at the Middletown Library. She posted pictures of a similar space in another library outside the system but FCPL's will be similar in style but different. This space is a departure from the early literacy spaces that we currently have at the C. Burr Artz Library, Walkersville Library, Urbana Regional Library and Thurmont Regional Library. What is unique about this space is that it is designed to encourage imaginative play. The structure can be changed from month-to-month. For example, it might be a post office one month, an ice cream shop the next month, etc. She added that what she loves the most about this space is that it is designed specifically to increase library visits, increase circulation and build academic/social skills.

Ms. El-Zeftawy stated, as mentioned earlier, that the campaign's success is due to our leadership donors and she highlighted two donors. The Middletown Lion's Club has generously pledged full funding for the installation of a custom Everbright, a modern art installation that allows for hands-on, accessible, collaborative and creative play. Another donor is Susan Harne. Ms. El-Zeftawy noted that she first met her a few weeks ago because she wanted to make a gift to the library in memory of her daughter, Jenny. Jenny was an elementary school teacher and later a

school librarian who passed away unexpectedly this past Spring. In talking with Susan, Ms. El-Zeftawy asked Susan to tell her about Jenny because her job as a philanthropy professional, is to match the right gift with the right person at the right time. Susan noted that one of Jenny's favorite books to read to her students was The Giving Tree by Shell Silverstein.

Thereafter, Ms. El-Zeftawy noted that each year she asks FCPL donors to complete a brief survey and the first questions is "What is the main reason you made this donation? Of the 189 responses to our most recent survey, 65 responses included the word "love". They are telling me that they love reading or they love our spaces and our programs or simply that they love their mom. She shared a quote by one of her philanthropy friends, Wayne Olsen, which says "A donor will always give when the emotional satisfaction of giving an asset is greater than the comfort of keeping it." She noted that fundraising is a tool – it is about asking for money but philanthropy is about people, relationships, and outcomes and that is what we're doing at FCPL.

She concluded by thanking the many library donors (many in this room) who give so selflessly to support our local libraries.

J. D'Agostino stated that she recently started a new position in philanthropy and wanted to give a shout-out to J. El-Zeftawy. She was so welcoming and provided a lot of information.

f. C. Burr Artz Library Update: B. Heltebridle provided a quick tour of the past year at the C. Burr Artz Library. This past year we found ourselves saying a lot of "Oh, yeah, this is what it felt like pre-COVID" which is such a rewarding feeling. CBA made 5,200 new library cards in the past year (2,000 more than last year). We checked out 60% more items – a total of 440,500 items were checked out and this was the result of 307,000 visits. We have more than doubled the number of programs with more attendees per program than ever before and tripled our outreach efforts. We added 1,000 passport applications which brings the total up to 2,200. In addition, we brought 13 new staff members on board and promoted 4 FCPL staff into positions at the C. Burr Artz Library. All of these numbers helped FCPL reach a record-breaking year.

Ms. Heltebridle noted that in the spirit of a movie that smashed records this summer, she will highlight how CBA had a very big, very BARBIE year. This year we expanded access particularly by bringing the library to folks outside our walls. She posted a photo of Librarian "Barbie" Amanda on her trip to Frederick Coffee Co. with the book bike. For most of our outreach, we intentionally focused on those who find it most challenging to access our services due to a variety of circumstances. We built a connection with WorldShine Adult Medical Day Care Center providing them with an introduction to library services, particularly digital materials and brought the memory lab to them. From its inauguration and on, we have attended the pop-up event at the Hillcrest Commons Community Center put on by the Asian American Center of Frederick. We also joined the AACF at their adult ESL classes and co-hosted Bilingual Musical Storytimes. Other locations we're making an impact have included The Rescue Mission, City Youth Matrix, Parks and Recreation, Hood College, and the Waverly bookmobile stop.

She thereafter posted another photo of Librarian “Ken” Philip building an important connection with Eddie the Pig. Another photo of Levi Branson was displayed showing him getting kiddos excited about getting on a school bus for the first time. Additional photos were displayed of the youngest ukulele player ever at our How-To-Fest and friends at a storytime at the Common Market. Also, to illustrate the impact a personal relationship with library staff can have – in August, 2022, Jess, our children’s librarian, visited the Progress and Learning Autism Network for the first time. By January, Jess introduced the first “Library Before Hours” event which included a storytime and library exploration time before our doors actually opened. The families were appreciative of being able to come before we open on Sundays and have the space to themselves, free of anxiety and many parents were able to connect. To show the impact, Jess was told that one student in particular has blossomed by our activities.

Ms. Heltebridle thereafter displayed a photo of “Barbie” Jen as she is doing her best Wendy Darling impression at our Disney party. She noted that this past year we had a number of branch-wide experiences (parties) celebrating not just Disney but also Star Wars, Bad Guys, Minecraft, Bluey and more. She further noted that CBA held two events for the first time, the aforementioned How-To-Fest where we partnered with over 30 local organizations and businesses to share information on everything from sewing to bike camping to first-aid. Fantom Fest, where folks of all ages came to geek-out by drawing Pokemon, crafting CosPlay accessories, meeting Star Wars characters or just chilling and watching anime together.

She thereafter noted that we’re always responding and growing. We are continuing to focus on our outreach efforts, particularly for those on the west side of the city. We will develop more cross-departmental programming and present storytimes crafted especially for audiences with unique needs. We are also committed to advancing DEIB efforts in particular those related to language learning, staff trainings and participating in system-wide initiatives. We are strengthening our connections with the Health Department, the UUCF Social Action Committee, Living Well Youth Works and our local school Community Coordinators.

Ms. D’Agostino thanked Jess for making the library available before hours and inquired if this is a regular occurrence and whether attendance is pretty regular. Ms. Heltebridle noted that it takes place monthly on a Sunday. Attendance has been regular. Ms. D’Agostino further inquired whether this is something that other librarians can get trained on and expand that program. Mr. Kelly noted that we will have that discussion with our Branch Administrators.

Ms. Spertzel said she has fond memories of visiting the library on Record Street. Ms. White stated that she loves the monthly update that is provided by the different branches.

BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS: None.

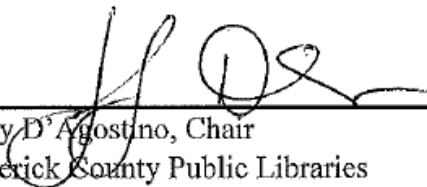
OTHER CITIZEN REMARKS: Public comment was heard from the following individuals:

Mary Jo Richmond
Davis (child of Board Member, Shemica Sheppard)

The next FCPL Board of Trustees meeting will be held at the C. Burr Artz Library – Community Room at 7:00 p.m. on October 4, 2023.

S. Sheppard made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by K. Spertzel. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.



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

