

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
OCTOBER 4, 2023**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on October 4, 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, C Hall, 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; E. Gambrell, Youth Services Coordinator; R. Frecker, Branch Administrator, Walkersville Library; J. Diaz, Branch Administrator – Brunswick Library; B. Heltebridle, Branch Administrator – C. Burr Artz Library; A. Knight, Branch Administrator – Middletown Library; R. Cox-Steib, Branch Administrator – Myersville Library; A. Whitney, Branch Administrator – Thurmont Regional Library and Emmitsburg Library; S. Yates, Branch Administrator – Urbana Regional Library and Point of Rocks Library; C. Fitz, Teen Supervisor – Walkersville Library; G. Ntali, Development Intern; J. Spiegel, Special Project Manager – Frederick County Government; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: S. White made a motion to approve the Minutes of September 6, 2023; seconded by S. Sheppard. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

CHAIR’S REPORT: J. D’Agostino noted that during her recent hiking trip she had the opportunity to speak with ladies from all over the country and discussed with them their library systems. She added that it was awesome to hear about how wonderful FCPL is. They were very jealous over some of the different programs offered by FCPL and the Summer Challenge. Thereafter, Ms. D’Agostino thanked the Friends groups for providing books for the Summer

Challenge. She noted that the ladies were very impressed to hear that everyone who completed the Summer Challenge actually received a physical book. She added that one thing in common with everyone was the fact that they want digital resources.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly welcomed everyone to the October Board Meeting. Thereafter, Mr. Kelly introduced FCPL's new Development Intern, Gabbi Ntali. Gabbi is a Hood College student majoring in Integrated Marketing and Communications and she will be spending this Fall at Jess' side getting an introduction to Development work. We are excited that she has joined our team and that she could be here tonight.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly noted a few of the ways our team has recently worked in service to our three strategic priorities – expanding access, building bridges, and sparking excitement.

Expanding Access

September was Library Card Sign Up Month and the team worked hard to 'expand access' by registering over seventeen-hundred new customers for library cards. That is a new record, surpassing last year's September registrations by almost 200 borrowers. As our cardholder numbers grow, it is reasonable to expect our circulation to grow. You'll remember that we saw our highest circulation last fiscal year at 3.8 million and this year we are on pace to beat that record.

As Summer closed, we were able to reflect on the success of our Summer lunch programs at Walkersville, Brunswick, and Thurmont. Together, those branches served more than 6,800 meals this year! Walkersville and Brunswick built on already strong programs and it was Thurmont's inaugural year. Thurmont saw better than expected turnout for their program. Working with partners, as we do for the lunch program, is a great way to reach more people and expand access. Another example is a unique partnership we have with the United Way. On Monday evening, Brunswick staff, in cooperation with the United Way of Frederick and Brunswick's local food bank & service organization BEACON (Brunswick Ecumenical Assistance Committee on Needs) distributed over 100 chromebooks in the library's Community Room to families at no cost. The United Way is the lead on this grant-funded state program which seeks to bridge the digital divide for community members, including our ALICE families. The United Way provided laptops to individuals who qualified under the eligibility requirements of the grant and were limited to one device per household. The genesis of this partnership goes back a few months when, shortly after being awarded their grant, United Way leadership reached out to Library Administration, because they knew our branches were uniquely positioned in the communities they hoped most to reach.

At the Brunswick event, library staff welcomed visitors, signed up folks for library cards, and shared information about the library's resources, including downloadable eContent, our free wifi, wireless printing services, and details about upcoming programs and library events. A number of other branches are also partnering with the United Way on similar laptop distribution events.

Building Bridges

As noted in one of the call-outs on the Dashboard, staff from all around FCPL attended the Girl's Flag Football Kickoff Event at Frederick High School. We 'built bridges' to over 450 attendees - including students from almost every high school in Frederick County. It was special to be part of such an historic event!

Jumping back to Brunswick. The team there expanded their partnership with Hope Valley Farm. Building on the success of their "Spring Storytime on the Farm," our team hosted their recent "Art on the Farm" program. Over 100 attendees dropped by to paint with watercolors, explore the 29-acre grounds, and create Nature Mandalas using flowers, pinecones & other natural materials. Families and visitors of all ages & skill levels enjoyed peaceful artmaking, pleasant weather, & stunning views on the last Friday in September.

Spark Excitement

The Myersville team found the secret to 'sparking excitement' in their community...and it is vehicles! Their touch-a-truck event welcomed 170 excited and eager participants. Police and fire staff said that they connected with more families at the library's event than they did at their own National Night Out program. Our team even got a great shout-out on Facebook from the Waste Management and Recycling Department!

At a separate event, the Myersville team also hosted a highly successful school bus visit and storytime. Families from all over the county showed up and over 70 first-timers got to practice getting on and off of a real school bus. One little customer shared that even though he walks to school, he had a great time trying the bus.

Finally, another callout on your dashboard highlights the many successful Back-to-School events our team participated in, in partnership with FCPS. Library staff attended 33 back-to-school events and interacted with over 5200 students and their families. We spoke to many folks about our student success card program, with many parents excited to learn about this for the first time. Our team continues to look for opportunities to build awareness of the student success card program.

These are just a few of the ways that we have been working toward our Strategic Priorities of expanding access, building bridges, and sparking excitement.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly reviewed statistics. We know that you'll share our excitement to see continued growth in programming and visits, strong circulation numbers, and even surpassing previous record months in some areas. For example, FCPL achieved a new high watermark for wi-fi usage -- reaching an impressive 38,219 sessions in a single month.

Mr. Kelly noted that earlier he highlighted our successful library card sign up month in September, but Courtney took a look at the Summer numbers as a whole. Card sign-ups for June through August saw a remarkable 20% increase this summer compared to last year, and an astounding 65% more than the summer of 2019. It is a testament not only to the accessibility of our digital cards and the removal of barriers by going fine free, but also the exceptional outreach efforts of our team.

Mr. Kelly thereafter highlighted a third call-out and that is the Student Success Card program. If you'll recall last month, we heard public comment from Mary Jo Richmond, Coordinator of FCPS' media specialists. In her comments, Mary Jo acknowledged our valuable partnership. As you've heard tonight -- from outreach at events like the Flag Football game and many back to school highlights to the success of our student card program to storytimes where we help our littlest customers feel a little less anxious about boarding a school bus for the first time, connecting with students is an important part of what FCPL does.

Mr. Kelly thanked the FCPL team for their continued hard work and he echoed Mary Jo's comment about the value of our partnership with the school system.

BUDGET/CIP UPDATE: Mr. Kelly noted that at this time of year, it is his job to bring updates to the Board on 3 years' worth of operating budgets – FY23, 24, and 25. For the FY23 budget, the audit report will be presented to the Board's Finance Committee on November 1st and the full Board will hear the Finance Committee's recommendation at the Nov 15th meeting. For the FY24 budget, Brandy will provide a report on YTD actuals in just a few minutes.

Mr. Kelly added that for the FY25 budget, he and his team are hard at work building that draft budget. As you are aware, the audit will provide staff with an ending fund balance number which will be reflected as revenue in our proposed FY25 budget. We will present the draft budget to the Board for its consideration at the February meeting.

On the capital side of things, Sheila is on the agenda this evening to provide an update on the Middletown branch. Mr. Kelly thereafter provided an update on the West Frederick Library. In collaboration with the Department of Public Works, an architecture firm has been selected to complete the feasibility study of the current Hillcrest Park site. The firm that was selected was Dewberry Architects. They have a lot of library experience and were, in fact, the firm that designed our Thurmont branch. Mr. Kelly added the Thurmont Library is the branch he hears the most design compliments about when he is out in the community. We will have our kickoff meeting with Dewberry soon and the work will run through March. At the conclusion of the feasibility study, we will know whether the site will meet our needs and we will have some ideas for how a library branch might be situated on the parcel.

Not to get too far ahead of ourselves, but the City's consideration of rezoning of the site would follow a favorable feasibility study, and then we would, in partnership with DPW, begin searching for a design architect.

Mr. Kelly thereafter reviewed some important, upcoming dates:

First, this week is Banned Books Week. A time to recognize that in 2022, libraries nationwide saw a record number of attempts to censor books – nearly double the reported attempts at censorship in the American Library Association's over 20 years of tracking this statistic. Preliminary data for the current year shows that we are again on track for a record-breaking year of bans and challenges nationally. That being the case, Mr. Kelly invited everyone to:

- reflect on FCPL's mission and vision...which are posted on FCPL's website
- to remember the vital role public libraries play in supporting all members of their community
- to remind ourselves of our core strategic priority which is **providing access**.

Mr. Kelly reminded members of the FCPL Board of Trustees that the Citizens for Maryland Libraries annual meeting is Saturday, October 21st at the Bowie Branch of the Prince George's County Memorial Library System.

Also, he noted that the audit will be presented to the Board's Finance Committee at 7pm on Wednesday, November 1st.

And, finally, the next meeting of the full Board will be on Wednesday, November 15th.

K. Spertzel inquired whether the circulation numbers include digital. S. Sheppard further inquired whether the library card sign-ups include digital as well. Mr. Kelly responded with a "yes" to both inquiries.

NEW BUSINESS:

a. Financial Report: Ms. McDermott reviewed the August Financial Report for FY2024. She noted that the data is tentative as of August 31, 2023, and the data was pulled on September 15, 2023.

Revenues collected are at 2%, of which there was no percentage change from the previous board meeting. The County posted \$100K of the quarterly In-Kind County Revenue. The remaining County In-Kind should be reflected at the next board meeting update. Library Miscellaneous Operating revenue increased by \$9K, and Passport Revenue increased by \$7K.

Expenditures are at 13%, a 7% increase from the previous board meeting. The most significant percentage change is equipment maintenance and repairs at 41% due to prepaid expenses which were recorded and posted. The personnel, security, and telephone expenses added together are

17% for the month. There was a 3% increase to the office supply line for miscellaneous office supply items, an 8% increase to the Library Materials for e-books, periodicals, and books, and a 6% increase to the other operating expenditure line for monthly reoccurring expenses.

Grants Awarded are at \$640,540. Since the last board meeting the Emergency Connectivity Fund Grant from the Federal Communications Commission was awarded in the amount of \$40,440 to support the purchase of additional technology equipment.

Grants Submitted are at \$0. There are currently no new grants submitted for this month.

Donations increased by \$1,117 from the previous month. The donations received include several generous donations for Greatest Need, Youth Services, and the branches.

Other endowment revenue includes a \$22 interest payment received from the Nallin/Churney CD to be used for the purchase of large print books.

This brings the total to \$725,321.

Ms. D'Agostino inquired about comparing revenues and expenses from year to year. Ms. McDermott noted that she does a general comparison from the previous year and the current year or previous month to current month to make sure FCPL is where it should be in our numbers. Mr. Kelly added that FCPL staff had their first quarterly meeting with staff from the budget office. He noted that the budget staff were pleased with how things are going for FCPL. S. White inquired about pre-paid items. Ms. Dermott advised that she plans for the pre-paid items each year.

T. Lancaster inquired whether a possible government shut-down would affect FCPL. Ms. McDermott noted she has been with the County for 25 years and has never seen any impact from a government shut-down in the past. Mr. Kelly added that one area that may be affected would be the IMLS grant money that comes through the State Library – it may be put on hold. He noted that there is no imminent concern at this time.

b. Summer Reading Challenge: E. Gambrill and C. Fitz provided an update on the Summer Reading Challenge 2023. C. Fitz noted that in conjunction with FCPL's Strategic Plan, there are three priorities. The first priority she discussed was expanding access. She noted that the Chromebook was the most popular prize this year and last year. There were 40,257 tickets submitted for the Chromebook. She displayed a photo of the winners (brother and sister) of the Chromebook.

The next priority is Building Bridges. C. Fitz noted that 6,551 people attended the 92 outreach programs this summer. She displayed a photo of one of many outdoor storytimes. She further noted that FCPL staff had access to the Rover and Book Bike this year which allowed staff to get to some new and exciting destinations.

The third priority is sparking excitement. E. Gambrill noted that 48,984 people attended FCPL's 1,092 branch programs this summer. She noted that while staff did a great job of sparking excitement out in the community, there were lots of cool things happening at the branches too. Thereafter, Ms. Gambrill displayed a photo from the Reptile Smiles program.

Ms. Gambrill displayed a graph of participants by age. This year the adult numbers were amazing. The teen participation also increased. FCPL provides an all-ages program. She noted that numbers don't tell the whole story but sometimes they tell a really great story. In 2023, FCPL hit 11,030 participants. Our most successful year was pre-COVID in 2019 with 11,684 participants. She advised that the 2019 program ran from May 15th through September 1st. The program this year ran from June 1st through August 15th. It was a shorter program with high participation. She noted that this year's Summer Challenge was one of our most successful years yet. She further noted that 47.7% of participants finished the program. She was delighted to see the numbers increase because the work group sees this as evidence that we have hit a great game play formula.

C. Fitz noted that each branch had a goal and an incentive program for staff members for sign-ups and finishers. She displayed numerous photos of branch staff at various programs. Thereafter C. Fitz highlighted some of the feedback received from our patrons regarding the Summer Reading Challenge. She displayed a photo of the winner of a hammock at the Middletown Library. She further displayed photos of other Summer Challenge winners at various branches.

Ms. Gambrill thereafter reviewed the numerous community destinations that were part of the Summer Challenge. There were 41,436 community visits. She added that staff sent out a survey to the destinations that were part of the Summer Challenge and received really positive feedback from that. She thanked all of the sponsors that were part of the Summer Challenge. In addition, she thanked community partners who donated prizes and to all donors who purchased grand prizes from our wish list. She thanked library staff for their hard work and guidance through this amazing summer. Ms. Gambrill also pointed out Woodsboro Bank. They were a new sponsor this year and were amazing. They really invested not only their money to FCPL but they held summer challenges among their staff. In addition, Woodsboro Bank sent a staff member to every single kick-off event at the library branches.

Discussion followed regarding staff activities/prizes for the Summer Challenge.

S. Sheppard noted that she did not see any colleges/universities as destinations. Ms. Gambrill replied by saying that S. Sheppard was absolutely correct and that is a great idea. Further discussion followed about destinations for Summer Challenge.

c. Urbana Regional Library Update: S. Yates provided an update on Urbana Regional Library and the Edward F. Fry Memorial Library at Point of Rocks. The Urbana Regional Library represents the south county area of Frederick County. She started her presentation with a

review of numbers. She noted that there was an increase in circulation at both locations as well as an increase in visits at both locations. The Urbana Regional Library saw a 31% increase in new library card holders and both branches had a huge increase in the number of programs offered and the number of attendees at each event. The Urbana Regional Library had an increase of 120% and the Point of Rocks Library saw an increase of 161% over the last fiscal year. The Urbana Regional Library issued almost 3,000 new library cards last fiscal year and Point of Rocks issued 58 library cards. She thereafter noted that the Urbana Regional Library had 191,818 visitors and the Point of Rocks Library had 21,385 visitors to the library. The Urbana Regional Library had 549 children/teen programs with 35,558 attendees. The Point of Rocks Library had 69 children/teen programs with 1303 in attendance. In addition, the Urbana Regional Library had 105 adult programs with 2,622 attending those programs and the Point of Rocks Library had 11 adult programs with 159 in attendance.

S. Yates noted that south county branches are constantly looking for ways to expand access to library resources within our community. She added that staff look for ways to invite new customers to join the library. One way that we do this is LAN (Library Adventure Night). It is a large-scale event in partnership with our local feeder schools. The goal is to connect with our local teachers to promote library services in classrooms around the south county area and invite families into our building. Staff marketed this year's program as a special "night to remember" for children to receive their first library card. She displayed photos from Urbana Regional Library's carnival-themed event with an incredible two hours of juggling, face painting, bingo, storytellers, stilt walker, balloon twisting and snow cones. During this event, staff issued 53 library cards and there were over 450 people in attendance. As a result of the success of this program, it was decided to bring this special night to Point of Rocks Library as well. That event connected FCPL with our local elementary schools and even a Principal attended as a guest. Staff issued 7 new library cards that evening. Staff plan to continue to have these events twice a year – in May (just before Summer Reading Challenge) and in September to support library card sign-up month.

Ms. Yates stated that staff are always looking for ways to form new partnerships to empower our community and continue to be a place for conversations. She noted that in April, 2023, staff hosted an author talk with Kuri Yasuno who discussed her book, Autism with a Side of Sushi. This event provided an opportunity for parents, caregivers, and friends to engage in conversations with the author and each other about navigating the world differently. The author donated a portion of her sales that evening back to the library.

During the month of June, children's staff at Urbana Regional Library and Point of Rocks Library developed new partnerships and also enriched those existing partnerships (especially from pre-COVID). We were able to host both of the kick-off events outdoors with the help of our partners. Within a matter of days, our sign-ups for Summer Challenge had already reached a combined total of over 1,000.

In addition to building bridges with our community through programming partnerships. Staff looked for unique ways to be more visible in the community leading into the new school year and library card sign-up month. In August, staff worked with Living Grace Church, one of our current partners, and provided library card sign-ups at their Back-to-School Supply Give-Away and Breakfast event. Anyone in the community could come to this event and receive new school supplies at no cost. In total at the event, staff spoke with 54 people and issued 11 library cards.

Urbana Regional Library staff, along with staff from around FCPL, attended the Girl's Flag Football Kick-off Event at Frederick High School. Staff were able to talk to students from almost every high school in Frederick County. Staff issued library cards to a few Baltimore Ravens Cheerleaders. She thereafter noted that other places in the community you may have seen library staff include the Urbana/Oakdale home football games, Thanksgiving Farms, three local ice cream shops, local festivals, family nights at our local schools, farms, parks and many other places.

Ms. Yates noted that sparking excitement is her favorite strategic priority. She added that staff spark small moments of excitement every day at the library because the library is a very exciting place. A few stand-out moments from this year include the Train Watch Party and Storytime and the Starlight Film Festival. As part of the 275th anniversary of Frederick County, staff hosted a train watch party and storytime at Commons Park and Train Station in Point of Rocks. We also celebrated the train station as it will soon appear on a U.S. postage stamp as part of a series of commemorative stamps honoring five important, historic railroad stations across the country. The station itself has long been recognized for the unique beauty of its Gothic Revival Architecture. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973.

Thereafter, she noted that although not a historic landmark, Starlight Festival is a tradition in the Urbana community and something families look forward to every year. This year was no different; it was an action-packed film series that did not disappoint this summer. The festival itself featured visits from super heroes, a variety of animals including a live reptile show, Jake from State Farm, a fencing demonstration, a pirate band and at the end of each night there was a movie under the stars. This year with the help of 15 community sponsors, the library hosted a total of 1,710 people at the three events.

Ms. Yates thereafter reviewed "What's Next?" She noted that we have so much to look forward to this upcoming year, including the continuation of opening our passport facility, connecting with our community partners and, as always, dressing up in large inflatable costumes. She shared a story about a family from Peru that came into the Urbana Regional Library for the first time in September to see Chip, an alpaca who was visiting for storytime from Green Meadows Petting Zoo. Coming from a generation of alpaca farmers in Peru, the children had never seen an alpaca in real life. As staff learned more about their life in Peru, we were able to get the entire family signed up for library cards and let them know what other opportunities were coming up at the library. She stated that you never know what is going to connect with someone and bring them into the library – it could be a book they saw on TikTok, a storytime, a quiet place to study,

the PS4 in the teen room or Chip, the alpaca, who helped our staff learn a little more about one family on a Saturday morning and that is truly the magic of FCPL.

d. Middletown Construction Update: S. McDuff provided an update on the construction of the Middletown Library. She displayed a drawing of the final site rendering. Thereafter she shared several drone photos that were taken on September 15th and noted, as you can see from the drone photos, there has been considerable progress. She also shared a mock-up photo of stonework and siding. Myersville Library has a lot of gray and the Middletown Library will incorporate browns and warmer tones. Some walls are starting to be painted. She noted that most of the drywall has been completed. Another photo was displayed of the built-in bookcases in the children's department. The area will also include a mural on the wall and a reading nook. Various other pictures were displayed of the interior of the building including a picture of the west side view of the mountains.

Ms. McDuff advised that there is a slight delay in the grand opening due to various issues. One of the main issues is the water meter. As a result there are some major things that can't be done without water. Right now we are looking at early 2024 for the grand opening; probably mid/late January or early February, 2024.

S. White inquired whether the water meter issue is the result of post-COVID. Ms. McDuff noted that the construction company has to get the water meter from the town. She advised that she does not know if it is COVID-related. She also noted that there is a long delay on the folding partition walls for the meeting room. The major manufacturer for those partition walls went out of business and now another company is going to provide those for us but it is substantially delayed. She added that the grand opening would not be delayed because of the folding partition walls. We would just open without them.

Ms. D'Agostino inquired whether the 15-day delay was approved by the County. Ms. McDuff advised that the County did approve the delay.

Mr. O'Leary noted that it is a very impressive schedule. It doesn't seem that long ago that we were breaking ground and now the project is not that far off at all.

BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS: None.

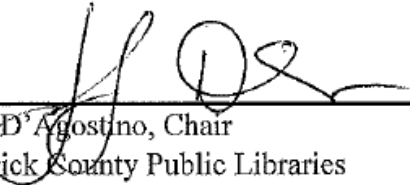
OTHER CITIZEN REMARKS: Public comment was heard from the following individual:

B. Bernier of Leesburg, VA

The next FCPL Board of Trustees meeting will be held at the C. Burr Artz Library – Community Room at 7:00 p.m. on November 15, 2023.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.



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