

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
OCTOBER 6, 2021**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on October 6, 2021 via a virtual meeting.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: J. D’Agostino, M. O’Leary, G. Mayfield, 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; J. Marshall – Systems Manager; D. Frank-Rice, IT Coordinator; R. Cox-Steib, Children’s Supervisor – C. Burr Artz Library; D. Spurrier, Children’s Supervisor – Thurmont Regional Library; H. Hart, Children’s Supervisor – Walkersville Library; K. Quick, Library Associate – Thurmont Regional Library, and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: J. D’Agostino made a motion to approve the Minutes of September 1, 2021; seconded by G. Mayfield. No further discussion.

VOTE: Unanimous.

CHAIR’S REPORT: Mr. O’Leary noted that J. Kelly proposed that members of the Library Board adopt a new and more compact version of the minutes. The current format that we have been following for quite some time is clearly lengthy and the minutes do run a bit long. They are basically a verbatim transcript, or close to that. The compact version that has been proposed will reflect the presentation item and not include full representation of all of the discussion that occurs following the presentation. Mr. O’Leary inquired of members of the Board as to their thoughts on this subject. Discussion followed. Many members of the Library Board agreed with the compact version. Mr. O’Leary advised that the Board Meetings are recorded so there is a verbatim version of the meeting. He also noted that he and Mr. Kelly discussed the fact that if a Board Member wants to add additional depth of a particular discussion that occurred, particularly with action items, that it can be done. He added that he wants the minutes to reflect the Board’s interaction and consideration of these things. In addition, he noted that members of the FCPL Board of Trustees would have the opportunity at the next meeting to amend the minutes, if needed. Further discussion followed.

Mr. Kelly noted that what is being proposed is what is actually in line with what other county board's do. FCPL Board of Trustees minutes are currently running between 15 – 20 pages and other board's run about 4 pages. He added that this can be a work in progress. When the minutes are prepared for this month's meeting and you review them, we will remain flexible.

Mr. O'Leary noted that Mr. Kelly provided him with two versions of the September minutes (a conventional version with a near verbatim transcript and an abbreviated version). Mr. Kelly advised that he will share the two versions of the September minutes with members of the FCPL Board of Trustees. Mr. O'Leary advised that if there is something not included with the abbreviated version that should be there, we can amend them. Discussion followed about posting the actual audio recording of the minutes. Mr. Kelly stated that we have not made the audio of the meeting available to the public but we do retain them. He added that the official minutes are probably what should be posted because that is what is approved by the Board. Mr. Kelly added that if there are questions about that, the format should probably not be changed. If it is felt that we need a great level of detail, then he would advocate for not making any changes. Discussion followed.

Mr. O'Leary questioned Mr. Donald about minutes from other Boards/Committees. Mr. Donald suggested that if there are any questions, that Bryon Black, County Attorney, be contacted. He noted that each Board/Committee seems to do it differently.

Mr. O'Leary noted that this meeting will be taped as usual and at the next meeting, we will receive the abbreviated version of the minutes, and if anyone feels that additional content needs to be provided, we will take care of that.

Mr. Donald added that minutes from the County Council do not include who said what but what official action was taken. Those minutes do not include individual opinions; just what the action was that was taken.

Mr. O'Leary stated that he wants the minutes to include some concise summary of the indication of the Board's consideration so that it is just not rubber-stamped. When the minutes of this meeting are reviewed in November and if anything is seen as far as the Board's deliberation that you think is important and should be included in the minutes, we can do that.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

a. FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly opened with an update on the proposed West Frederick City Library. As everyone may remember, FCPL's Facilities Master Plan calls for a 15,000 square foot branch to be constructed to better serve the communities around the Golden Mile.

County Executive Gardner and Council President Keegan-Ayer understand the need for a library in this area. Since our last meeting, the County issued a press release indicating their interest in acquiring a 200k square foot office building on Oak Street. To orient everyone, this is the large building that sits behind the Red Horse Restaurant on Rt. 40. It was previously home to United

Healthcare and State Farm and a portion of the building is currently being used by the County as a vaccination clinic. The press release noted that the building could be used “to consolidate county services” and that “potential uses for the site included a Next Generation 9-1-1 Call Center, a library, a senior center, and a warehouse.” Subsequently, a pair of articles appeared in The Frederick News-Post this week and Mr. Kelly wanted to bring this to everyone’s attention because, again, a library is mentioned as just one potential use for part of that space.

The articles themselves highlight the concern some of the City’s Aldermen had about the county’s acquisition of the land and the intended use of that space. This is the extent of what we know at this time. It appears that the County’s vote will move forward next week. Mr. Kelly noted that he will, of course, keep everyone informed of any developments, whether the vote is delayed, whether the acquisition moves forward, or whether plans come together for a west-end library on this or any other site.

As Mr. Kelly noted in the past, our challenge with this particular project is finding an adequately-sized parcel of land to accommodate a library and sufficient parking in an area of town that is already so developed. However, he stated that he is grateful there are stakeholders on all sides who understand the need for a library to better serve the community in this area.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly shared details about the upcoming Citizens for Maryland Libraries’ Annual Conference for Friends, Trustees, and Library Supporters. In past years, a member of Library Administration would attend the in-person meeting along with a member of the Board.

The biggest benefit of this conference is the opportunity it affords Board members across the state to connect with one another. Out of an abundance of caution, however, this year’s meeting will be held virtually which makes networking difficult. The silver lining is that it will be safe and, since no travel is involved, it may be easier for you to participate, if you’re interested.

The meeting will take place on Saturday, October 16th from 10 a.m. -12:30 p.m. Registration is free at citizensformarylandlibraries.org. This year’s event will feature an update from State Librarian, Irene Padilla, with a keynote to follow by Rebecca Cokley, Program Officer for the Ford Foundation. If anyone is interested in attending, he encouraged them to register.

Mr. Kelly thereafter reviewed statistics. The packet received by members of the FCPL Board of Trustees reflects August numbers. As a reminder, we did not resume evening and weekend hours until September 7th, so this Dashboard still reflects our more limited operating schedule.

As you can see, our in-branch and curbside visits show a very slight dip in August as compared to July. This follows a typical trend as indicated by the yellow line on the displayed bar graph. The August dip is sometimes attributed to folks taking last minute vacations before the school year begins. We are still about 31% lower than our prior 3-year August average, but it is hoped that this gap will narrow in September, as FCPL returned to its normal operating hours.

For the second month in a row, circulation outpaced the 3-year average. He noted that the 3-year average now includes FY21, our low COVID year, when we were closed 11 months to the public.

Our “new cards issued” remains a highlight this month. We issued 1,189 total cards (not including student success cards), which is 230 more than our prior 3-year average.

WiFi use continues to grow with almost 23,000 sessions this month compared to our 3-year average of 13,000.

Mr. Kelly noted that you will see reference on your Dashboard to a “teen-led program series.” It was designed and presented by a group of four local teens and the curriculum taught the basics of computer coding with an emphasis on the programming language, Scratch. Each week built upon the last with the 10-week program culminating in participants creating their own game with Scratch. The teens offered the same class twice a week to allow for flexibility in attendance and took a big leadership role in the creation and execution of the program. This was truly a teen-led effort with librarians acting as moderators/facilitators. This was highlighted on the Dashboard because this series is another example of how the library builds bridges through programming which connects those who want to learn with subject matter specialists who can teach...fostering lifelong learning.

b. Budget/CIP Update: Mr. Kelly noted that there is not too much to report this month. Staring with the CIP, the Middletown Library design is ongoing and he previously shared the update at the beginning of his report about the West Frederick Project.

Mr. Kelly noted that FCPL was made aware by the State Library of an upcoming funding opportunity. It seems that the State of Maryland will be allocating \$171 million through the Department of Treasury’s Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund. “Constructing new and improving existing library facilities” is specifically mentioned as an eligible expense, so the Maryland State Library will be updating its library capital needs assessment to better advocate for some of the funds that have been earmarked to Maryland.

FCPL is working with County partners to ensure that costs of our projects are accurately reflected on the needs assessment. If one of our projects should be selected and awarded funding, those funds must be spent by December, 2026.

With regard to the operating budget, next month is our FY21 audit which dovetails nicely into upcoming, important dates. On Nov 3rd, staff from the County’s Accounting Department will meet with the Board’s Finance Committee to review FCPL’s FY21 audit. Thereafter, they will then meet with the full Board two weeks later on November 17, 2021, our last Board meeting of 2021. As a reminder, per your request last year, our November meeting was pushed out two weeks to allow more time between the presentation of the audit and the vote.

Mr. Kelly advised, as a small teaser, that at the November meeting, our team will be making its annual presentation on e-content trends and demos. As you know, the e-content marketplace changes quickly, acquisitions and mergers are announced from year to year, and, in the last legislative session, Maryland passed a law to take effect January, 2022 seeking greater equity, access, and more 'reasonable terms' from publishers for e-content. What this could mean for libraries is still unfolding. In years past, this annual update has been an opportunity to provide members of the FCPL Board of Trustees with a snapshot for where things stand and a chance to demo a couple of our digital platforms. We look forward to that presentation in November.

Discussion followed about the funding to be provided by the State of Maryland. Also discussion ensued about the Oak Street property proposed for the West City Frederick Library and the rationale about the County not wanting to lease property for a library.

Mr. Donald added that if a library is done at the Oak Street property, the community will get a library at least five years earlier than at any other location on the west-side. Mr. Kelly also noted that by the time we cut the ribbon on the Myersville Library, it had been 15 years in the making. If we could get the West City Frederick Library in design/construction in the next five years, it would be lightning quick for a county facility.

Going back to the minutes discussion earlier, Mr. O'Leary inquired whether we could post that we have the audio version available should a citizen want to listen to it. Mr. Kelly advised he would check into the feasibility of this and let the Board know. Discussion followed. Mr. O'Leary noted that the Board needs to be transparent about everything that is done.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Financial Report: B. McDermott presented the Fiscal Year 2022 financial statement for October, 2021. The data is tentative as of August 31, 2021 and was pulled on September 16, 2021. The revenue total collected is at 2%. FCPL did receive the first quarterly payment from the State of Maryland in the amount of \$276,000. There was also an increase in library miscellaneous operating revenue and passport fee revenue. She noted that, as was stated last month, much of FCPL's revenue is either posted quarterly or at the end of the fiscal year.

She thereafter reviewed expenditures. Expenditures are at 13%. There was an increase of 17% in the equipment line to purchase technology equipment. Equipment and maintenance repairs increased 26% from the previous month for the purchase of additional, annual technology software licenses and hardware agreements. Library material purchases increased 17% for e-content purchases throughout the month and there was a 4% increase in operating expenditures due to the fact that the County posted the quarterly entry for bank fees. County Finance also posted the personnel and telephone expenses for the month.

Grants awarded are at \$2.4 million. Grants awarded since the last board meeting includes One Maryland One Book grant in the amount of \$500.00 to support the speaker's fee and

programming. FCPL also received \$86,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act to support the purchase of a van, mobile book cart, book bike, multiple chrome books and wi-fi hot spots.

Grants submitted are at \$1,000,000. The \$1,000,000 for the Middletown Library has not yet been awarded. FCPL is currently waiting for the notice of the grant award. The funding will be provided by the Maryland State Library to support the construction of the new Middletown Library project.

Donations increased by \$6,500 from last month. Donations are at \$21,291. The Greatest Need Fund increased by \$4,000 and Branch Donations increased by \$2,500 from the previous month. Discussion followed regarding proceeds received from the Book Ball. It was noted that the proceeds from the Book Ball will be reflected in next month's report.

The only change in other endowment revenue was \$40 in interest from the Nallin certificate of deposit. These funds are restricted for the purchase of large print materials.

Discussion followed about the ARPA grant and the purchase of a van and book bike.

b. Summer Reading Challenge Update: K. Quick, Library Associate/Shelving Coordinator at the Thurmont Regional Library and Emmitsburg Branch Library, noted that she had the pleasure of working with Heather Hart, Children's Supervisor at Walkersville Library and the lead of this year's Summer Challenge. The 2021 Summer Reading Challenge was all about Frederick County. Ellen Byrne, a local resident, artist, and library supporter, created the Summer Reading Challenge graphics for our game boards, posters, and marketing materials. The illustrated map (displayed via PowerPoint) shows all of FCPL's library branches and iconic landmarks and was the focal point for encouraging community members to "Rediscover the Magic" of Frederick County.

As in years past, participants could play through Beanstack or use the paper game boards. Game boards were published in the Summer Edition of "Bookmarks" allowing for easy and convenient access to participants who wanted to log their reading and activities on paper. Printing them in black and white allowed a more personal experience by providing an opportunity for patrons to express their own unique ideas of "rediscovering the magic".

Summer programming remained mostly virtual. In July, 2021, FCPL offered a system-wide, week-long "Call to Adventure" highlighting various children's authors. Outdoor story time was a big success with 189 story time programs and over 7,000+ attendees. Story time also allowed staff to re-connect with patrons and bring additional awareness to the Summer Reading Challenge.

While the Challenge was similar to last year, being mostly virtual, we were excited to have an increase of 34% from last year over all age groups. Birth through Pre-K and K through 5 have always had higher rates and we were pleased to see that teens and adults also had increases as well. One of our continued goals is to increase the rate of finishers and this year's Challenge surpassed last year's with over 500 more finishers for a 30% increase in overall program completion. Elementary children, teens, and adults had a completion rate of 40% while birth –

Pre-K saw a completion rate of 50% . She thereafter shared a graph which displayed the number of participants and the number of completers. The total number of Summer Reading Challenge participants was 4,782 with 2,057 participants completing the challenge. K – 5 had the greatest number of participants as well as the greatest number of completers overall.

Participants were asked to read 3.5 million minutes this summer. That goal was surpassed by more than half a million extra minutes with a total of 4,000,000+ minutes read. Of particular note is that teens typically make up the smallest group of participants, but they were the second highest percentage of minutes read by age group, coming in a very close second to adults. Teens read an average of 1,183 minutes which is almost 20 hours of reading per teen.

There were more than 2,000 prizes earned between finisher prizes, pop-up prizes, and earned ticketed prizes. Tickets were earned by reaching different point levels and participants were able to place their tickets into drawings of their choosing offering a more engaging and interactive way to play. Points were earned by logging reading minutes, checking off activities, or visiting community destinations. The more points earned, the more tickets rewarded, thereby increasing the opportunities for winning prizes! The prizes were generously donated from local businesses and sponsors as well as purchased from funds from our Friends of the Libraries Chapters. She displayed photos of a few of the winners showing the wide variety of prizes that were available to win.

Thereafter, Ms. Quick displayed a photo of Zoe. Zoe's mom shared an e-mail with us as follows: "Dreams really DO come true!!! My voracious little bookworm read more than 20,000 minutes for summer reading. She entered all of her tickets into the drawing for Melody. She has spent the last couple weeks as if she already had her... Today we got the call that she won and I got to watch her jump up and down shrieking my dreams came true (all day long)...We could not be more grateful to @fredcolibrary and all of the amazing Urbana Librarians. We could not have made it through this pandemic without you and we are SO grateful for all that you do!"

Zoe's story of winning Melody, the American Girl Doll, which was one of the ticketed drawings, highlights how the tickets can really incentivize our readers to earn as many points as possible to greatly increase their chances of winning. Patrons were encouraged to visit destinations either virtually or in-person. We had over 15,000+ community check-ins with an increase of over 700 visits from last summer. Ms. Quick thanked all 105 community destinations.

The challenge proved successful by surpassing last year's numbers of total participants by 34 % and a completion rate of 30% to keep the community active and learning all summer long. The numbers also reflect the importance of reading and keeping students engaged and how FCPL is vital to keeping at bay the "summer slide" especially in a year where many students have had gaps in learning and instruction.

Ms. Quick noted that this event could not have happened without our presenting sponsor of Natelli Communities and to our additional sponsors of Bruster's Ice Cream, Clark Computer Services, The Fire Museum of Maryland, The Frederick News Post, Friends of the Frederick County Public Libraries, The Little Gym, The Maryland 529 Plan and the Walkersville Southern Railroad. In addition, she thanked the following staff members: Jess El-Zeftawy, Sam Jones,

Mindy Andros, Bryan Hisson, Courtney Brohawn, Mindy McDonnell, Director's Staff, as well as members of the Summer Reading Challenge workgroup for their support and guidance during another summer of uncertainty. She also thanked all of community donors for providing prizes and incentives for our patrons. General discussion followed.

c. Strategic Plan Update: Catie Hall presented a PowerPoint presentation/update on the FY20 – FY 22 Strategic Plan. She noted that we are in the last year of the plan. Thereafter she explained how the plan works. She stated that a staff work group was put together and they used our organizational guiding principles to envision this three-year plan. The guiding principles are: FCPL's core values, vision and mission. The staff work group came up with three priorities as part of the Strategic Plan: Simplify Access, Build Bridges and Spark Excitement. The plan is not only aligned with FCPL values, vision and mission, but also aligned with departmental and branch work plans that are put together. In addition, they are aligned with individual performance goals that staff have every year. This plan has been put to the test during COVID and we have been very happy with the plan because it allows for so much flexibility. Through all of the challenges this past year or so, this plan has kept us grounded. Staff can relate to the plan and respond positively to this plan.

Ms. Hall noted that **Simplify Access** was a top priority during FCPL's closure and remains so as we continue to work through reopening phases. FCPL laid such a strong foundation of access during our closure; really culminating in the Board's vote for fine-free in June. This was a major success for FCPL in simplifying access by removing barriers for our customers. As FCPL reopens, we are confident that our work is reaching our community where they are. And, she noted that FCPL continues to find ways to remove barriers and invite more community members to benefit from their library.

Ms. Hall reviewed a few statistics:

New Cards – 12,583 (6927 branch & digital and 5656 student). FCPL is still getting cards into the hands of new customers. This will continue to be a focus area for us, especially when the COVID numbers make more outreach and engagement feasible. She noted that FCPL is constantly looking for ways to invite the community back into the library.

Accounts cleared--37,202. This accounts for happy customers that we are welcoming back to our services.

Curbside pickup – 523,213 items during closure. This number represents a serious amount of hustle from our public services staff. Kudos to their effort and dedication. This service is still being offered and still being praised by those customers who need it but demand has dropped considerably.

Wifi usage - 40,610 uses. Expanded reach during a critical need period for our community—technology disparity deepened during COVID.

Build Bridges - this is an umbrella initiative for bringing the community together on topics of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Building bridges includes internal and external bridges.

Spanish language outreach—translations of marketing materials, including FCPL’s quarterly publication, Bookmarks. FCPL also started a dedicated Spanish language Facebook page. FCPL also hosted events such as Viva Latino and Own Voices Writers in Conversation brought together four top writers, Julia Alvarez, Angie Cruz, Reyna Grande, and Juan Felipe Herrera, for a panel discussion about the spectrum of experiences of Hispanic Americans across generations.

EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) work group was started last year and it is being led by Brunswick Branch Administrator, Jenny Diaz. A year was spent learning and creating a beginning action plan for FCPL. The group worked closely with the County’s new Chief Equity Officer, Michael Hughes. The work group has shared their vision and action plan with Management Council. They will do an all-staff roll out at staff day next week. Michael Hughes will be the leading keynote at staff day, as well.

Staff Engagement – Ms. Hall noted that staff did a good bit of internal bridge building this year, too, since we weren’t together as a team like we are used to. A work group was put together to plan online engagement activities—live trivia, message boards with creative prompts—i.e. share your favorite vacation spot, distant team building projects, a food drive for the community food banks, a Rube Goldberg Challenge, and a COVID Scrapbook. She displayed a photo of staff at the Annual Bring a Broom Saturday.

Telework – Ms. Hall advised that this was a new frontier for FCPL this past year and it required a completely new infrastructure and opened up possibilities. Teams and Zoom kept us in touch and VPNs kept us able to offer telework to many staff during closure. We have telework guidelines now, allowing staff a bit more flexibility than our Pre-COVID schedules. And, none of us can imagine working without the ability to chat and video virtually so these will be permanent changes to our work life.

Spark Excitement - Ms. Hall noted that even during COVID, staff found creative ways to think outside the box to make sure FCPL was bringing joy to our community. One of the things we focused on was social media engagement. A chart was displayed showing month-by-month growth on social media.

Discord (server) was created to offer a virtual space for teens to hangout. Discord is a platform that allows for live chats, virtual meetings of the Teen Library Council and live virtual programming. She added that this has been in place for about a year and it has over 300 teens participating in this program with approximately 90 programs.

Other ways FCPL found to engage customers in COVID-safe ways was through story walks for varying ages across the County which was a huge hit. Staff found new ways to do old favorites such as a drive through Trunk or Treat at Walkersville Library.

FY23 and beyond – Ms. Hall stated since this is the last year of the plan, we are starting to think about FY23 and beyond. She advised that Amy Whitney, Branch Administrator at Thurmont Regional Library and Emmitsburg Library, will lead a work group for the next cycle. She is a very trusted team member and has accepted the opportunity to lead the next core group. This group is in the process of forming now.

Discussion followed regarding the continuation of curbside services.

d. Learning From Home Update: D. Spurrier and R. Cox-Steib provided a recap of the components FCPL offers through Learning from Home Initiative.

D. Spurrier noted that the Learning From Home components include: Brainfuse HelpNow, Smart Start Kits, County-wide FCPL/FCPS Monthly Newsletter, expanded programming and a live chat service.

The 2020/2021 school year was like nothing anyone could imagine. Students were learning from home in a virtual environment that was new to teachers, parents and students and, at times, was very difficult on the family. FCPL was there to continue providing access to our community during this time. As you know, FCPL created new programming, updated resources, and services that transformed the best of our library resources and enhanced them for digital and at-home use to support our community in a whole new way. Ms. Spurrier noted that tonight we would like to provide a quick glimpse into Learning from Home – a year later – successes and where we go from here.

R. Cox-Steib reviewed Brainfuse HelpNow. It is an online resource designed to provide expert help, study resources, and collaboration space for grades K-12 and beyond. It builds skills by connecting with live tutors, viewing videos, completing practice tests, and even playing study games with Flashbulb. Tutoring is offered in English and Spanish. There are writing labs as well. She noted FAFSA application assistance and resume and job coaching are also available. This online component went live the last week of September, 2020, and we immediately saw it filled a need. In the last week of September, 2020, it saw 501 visitors, with October maxing out at almost 1,300 visits. The total visits through June, 2021 equaled 6,490 hits. This really highlights what a hit this actually is. The JobNow portion of this powerhouse resource garnered over 1,500 total usage opportunities during the same time period. After careful review, FCPL will continue this valuable digital resource for an additional year.

D. Spurrier thereafter reviewed the Early Literacy Smart Start Kits. FCPL started out with 13 screen-free enrichment kits in the areas of math and literacy. These kits were geared for Pre-K, Kindergarten and first graders. They were a huge hit and quickly showed FCPL was bridging a gap in our communities as check-outs soared and the holds lists remained consistently deep. Staying on top of current news and trends, the Learning from Home team proposed the addition of 15 STEAM-based kits and 5 Social-Emotional kits in May, 2021 to support families looking for screen-free enrichment activities and provide parents a great starting point to talk about emotions as students faced returning to the classroom. Funding was secured by Development Officer, Jessica El-Zeftawy, through a partnership with Johns Hopkins Community Physicians. A

set of attractive bags were purchased to tie the original and new Smart Start Kits into a cohesively-branded resource.

FCPL gained media attention as the kits were launched as part of Mental Health Matters Week in May, 2021. Ms. Spurrier noted that the demand for the Early Literacy Smart Start Kits remains high with hold's lists as deep as 47 holds consistently at one time. The STEAM Smart Start kits that were added in have had 70 three-week circulations over the 5 months since they have been in circulation with an average of 17 holds per kit and a maximum of 35 holds on our magnet kits. The social-emotional kits had 32 three-week circulations over the 5 month period with an average 21 holds per kit and a maximum of 36 holds on the Mindfulness kits. The combined Smart Start checkouts is 249. Ms. Spurrier advised that after seeing these results, FCPL will continue to offer Smart Start kits in our circulating collection.

R. Cox-Steib noted that a key element in learning from home was insuring that FCPL kept up a strong school connection while the schools were providing virtual learning. FCPL did this by offering increased Student Success Card check-outs increasing the number from three check-outs to ten. All children enrolled in Frederick County Public Schools automatically have a library card. We are excited to share that 4,180 physical items were checked out using Student Success Cards from March 15, 2020 to September 2021. This program will continue at the ten check-out limit and it will be again reviewed next spring for effectiveness, both in providing access and balancing any financial loss associated with materials not returned.

She thereafter noted that FCPL staff created video tutorials. These tutorials were aimed at bridging that gap between what students would receive from an in-person library visit. These videos reviewed items like how to put an item on hold and how to use curb-side services. The time and effort that was put into these videos will continue to pay off. These tutorials can be updated as new services are offered.

In addition, Ms. Cox-Steib noted that FCPL also offered a large array of virtual classroom visits. These visits have waned as FCPL staff begin to offer some in-person visits, outdoor story times and visit to schools. The option for virtual visits remains open and viable as staff learned to navigate new technology during COVID.

She thereafter reviewed the School Monthly Newsletter. This project is under evaluation as schools moved into an in-person setting for the 21/22 school year. We recently sent out a survey to our FCPS contacts to gauge interest, effectiveness, and solicit feedback for improvement. She noted that FCPL staff continue to communicate with the schools consistently. The newsletter is a way to provide great news to everyone at the same time. One example of this was letting everyone know about FCPL going fine-free. Another example that we are looking forward to sharing is when FCPL implements its new integrated library system. She thereafter displayed a copy of the monthly newsletter. Our survey showed the newsletter provided information at the teachers' fingertips they could use in their weekly and monthly communications to families. It also revealed some areas of need our teachers and communities have in regards to providing equal access to all students. Teachers also candidly shared ideas for programming and events that would benefit their students.

Ms. Spurrier noted that FCPL has returned to in-person programming. We do story times and other programs, as needed, outdoors. Virtual program offerings decreased as we welcomed in the summer of 2021. People were ready to get outside. Recognizing this, FCPL decided to move to offering in-person/outdoor story times. Virtual programming, however, is something that FCPL will still utilize in the future but just not as heavily as it was before.

R. Cox-Steib reviewed the live chat service. It was launched in September, 2020 and we've had over one thousand customer chats, averaging two to five customer interactions per day. This service allows FCPL to meet people where they are. FCPL expanded coverage of the chat to match library operating hours. Most interactions are for customer account or general library needs. FCPL has received a lot of great customer feedback on this service such as:

- The customer service of the associate was superb. It's amazing to have customer service like that.
- This was a very good way to get my question answered and resolved
- Staff member was great! Very helpful! I LOVE this function!!!!

She noted that this service will continue as well.

General discussion followed.

BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS: Mr. O'Leary noted that the meeting was opened with the format of the minutes. He added that it seems to him that our documentation and transparency protocols are very important and noted that we need to follow them strictly. We need to follow the Maryland Code, the Open Meetings Act, county guidelines, FCPL Board of Trustees By-laws, etc. Any actions by the FCPL Board of Trustees need to reflect with complete confidence what we do. The Open Meetings Act is a painful process and we need to be sure our process of being transparent is above reproach.

OTHER CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

The next FCPL Board of Trustees meeting will be held virtually or in-person at the C. Burr Artz Library – Community Room on November 17, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. Mr. O'Leary stated that whether or not the meeting will be virtual or in-person is almost a week-by-week or even day-by-day consideration. If there is any hesitation whether to meet in-person, we will default to a virtual meeting as long as the County is still making a month-to-month determination on how to get together.

Ms. Smith inquired whether the Finance Committee Meeting on November 3rd will be virtual and, if so, will members of the committee receive a link for the meeting. Mr. Kelly advised that the meeting on November 3rd will be virtual. As far as the board meeting itself on the 17th is concerned, that gives us a little more time to determine whether it will be virtual or not. At the present time, everything is scheduled to be virtual. The county was scheduled to reopen on October 1st but that was pushed back to November 1st since the transmission rate for Frederick County is still high. Mr. O'Leary stated that virtual meetings seem to be effective and is a comfortable option.

C. Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by S. Sheppard. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. O'Leary', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

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