

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
NOVEMBER 15, 2023**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on November 15, 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, 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; K. Cambrel, Communications Manager; C. Brohawn, Project Coordinator; R. Frecker, Branch Administrator, Walkersville 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; R. Bowman, Accounting Supervisor – County Finance Department; J. Spiegel, Special Project Manager – Frederick County Government; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

**CITIZEN REMARKS:** None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** K. Spertzel made a motion to approve the Minutes of October 4, 2023; seconded by S. White. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

**CHAIR’S REPORT:** Ms. D’Agostino advised that earlier this week it was World Kindness Day. While she was speaking with her children about ways to be kind, her youngest child stated that “everyone is kind at the library”. She thereafter thanked FCPL staff. She also noted that L. Tibbs will be retiring at the end of this year and she thanked her for everything she has done for FCPL.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

**FCPL – Update:** Mr. Kelly welcomed everyone to the November meeting; the last board meeting of the calendar year.

He noted that, as you know, the Maryland library community is a close-knit bunch. This is, in part, a function of geography. Being a small state, it is easy for us to get together regularly to collaborate, discuss challenges, and share best practices. It is why Maryland is known as “Library Heaven.” But, that collaborative spirit does not happen on its own. It owes a lot to the Maryland Library Association, an organization that, depending on the day, functions as convener, incubator, and advocate. Many in this room have been active in MLA over the years. It has been a platform for professional growth and leadership development and it is an organization that means a lot to us. This year MLA turned 100 years old -- a milestone that was celebrated in Annapolis earlier this month.

Mr. Kelly added that he was grateful to attend the ceremony and represent the FCPL team. We heard from the State Librarian and elected officials who shared proclamations, but he noted that his favorite part of the evening was talking to friends who showed up to help mark the occasion – retired library administrators, colleagues from other library systems, and the many younger library workers also in attendance who will walk alongside MLA as they head into their next 100 years.

Mr. Kelly thereafter shared a few of the ways the FCPL team has been working in service of our strategic priorities -- expanding access, building bridges, and sparking excitement.

### **Expanding Access**

- FCPL expanded access with an incredibly successful Library Card Signup Month in September, issuing 1,755 new cards. The effort was themed around FCPL’s 60<sup>th</sup> birthday with large events that attracted over 900 customers.
- The month also included exceptional outreach including, but not limited to, the Thurmont/Emmitsburg Community Show, the Thurmont Farmer's Market, Middletown Heritage Days, Butterfly Ridge Elementary School’s Family Engagement Reading Night, Mount Airy Duck Race, the Urbana Latino Festival, and the Myersville Farmers Market.
- Meanwhile, the Brunswick team was looking for ways to engage more adult visitors with disabilities. We heard from the community that post-pandemic staffing shortages for caregivers has created challenges for planning library visits on specific dates and times. A desire was expressed to have items available to engage with during all regular library hours to accommodate drop-in visits. Hearing this, Brunswick staff member, Gale

Carr, used her knowledge from her background working in special education to research items and created a “Sensory Box” to keep at the desk. The box provides activities for adults with cognitive, memory, or attention challenges. It includes puzzles, fidget toys, memory games, and a seasonal craft which can easily be updated monthly. The team notified several of our partners, such as the Scott Key Center, and invited them to a “kick-off” event in the community room. Customers attended the kick-off along with their aides who said that they appreciated the library’s efforts and for making their clients feel welcome and engaged at the library.

- Middletown hosted another Chromebook distribution event late last month. As you remember, we introduced this United Way-partnered program at our last meeting, when the Brunswick team – along with BEACON (Brunswick Ecumenical Assistance Committee on Needs) --- hosted a laptop distribution event. The partner for Middletown was People Helping People. They distributed 150 Chromebooks in 2 hours! Everyone did an amazing job of working together during this process. The library issued new library cards, helped many people on their computers, shared information about our digital resources, and assisted customers with finding materials and check-outs. Several families have already come back to the library since the event. These “returning first-time customers” are exactly what we hope to see from the investment of staff time in partnerships and outreach. It clearly demonstrates how FCPL is expanding access.

### **Building Bridges**

- Mr. Kelly pointed to a call-out on your stats Dashboard, highlighting Thurmont’s *Braided Lives* program which was offered in partnership with the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society. Attendees screened a video that illuminated the often-forgotten history about the lived experience of enslaved people who worked at Catoctin Furnace as well as the larger experience of slavery in Maryland and its long reach into the lives of Black Marylanders to this day.

On a related note, our team had the opportunity to hear from the President of the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Archaeologist Elizabeth Comer, who delivered a talk at our Staff Development Day last month. In her lecture, she shared the research findings of her team which were recently published in the August 4<sup>th</sup> issue of *Science* in an article entitled “Lost Roots: Historical DNA reconnects African Americans to enslaved ancestors.”

- Other successful community events included, the Mead & Read Trivia Night offered at Orchid Cellar Meadery, hosted by staff from both Myersville and Middletown.
- And, staff from Brunswick and Middletown attended the high school football game between their respective towns. Our communities love seeing the library in these unexpected places, and we’re excited to collaborate with one another to have a greater impact.

- On Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup>, Amy Moser and Aftan Francis drove the library's new Rover to the Walk-a-Mile in Their Shoes event, sponsored by Heartly House. This was the first time FCPL provided outreach at this annual event which raises awareness of domestic violence as an issue and community support for its victims. Amy and Aftan shared information about our FCPL's resources, services, and materials and heard from many participants who were glad to see the library and recommended that we continue to attend this important event in future years.

### **Sparking Excitement**

- In September, the Urbana team launched a new program, Baby Sensory Storytime, which originated from an idea suggested by one of their storytime customers. Through research and observation, children's staff learned that many young children raised during COVID did not engage in diverse sensory experiences due to the constraints of the pandemic, leading to some developmental delays. The program includes instrumental music, storytime with paint brushes, parachute play, and a sensory walk with homemade sensory tiles and Astroturf. Many of the parents asked how they could make their own sensory tiles at home. One caregiver with a set of twins let staff know that their usually quiet twin was engaged "more than ever before" at storytime. She loved the sensory tiles and wanted to continue to crawl around on them even after the program was over.
- Last month, FCPL also presented its annual author event, Frederick Reads, featuring musician and author Michelle Zauner. This year saw a huge turnout at both venues. At the FCC event, we welcomed over 300 community members and, later that evening, the Weinberg saw a sold-out crowd of 1,131 people. Michelle was funny, honest, and engaging as she spoke about her life as a musician and her relationship with her mother as detailed in her memoir, Crying in H Mart.

To coordinate with Frederick Reads, Belle Han and the Urbana Children's Staff worked together to host our first Korean Immersive Storytime. The entirety of the story time was hosted fully in Korean, including books, songs, and flannels, all made and curated by Belle. The event had 35 attendees and received rave reviews from customers! We are looking forward to hosting more events like this in the future.

- And finally, October was Halloween, so several branches participated in or hosted successful trunk or treat events this year including Brunswick, Thurmont, Walkersville, and Middletown. Attendance at these events was huge and staff interacted with over 3,000 people through these events. Walkersville also hosted a Haunted House designed by their teen volunteers. They had an early viewing event for their "adults with disabilities" group and had 47 attendees with many dressed up in costume for the event.

Month after month, our team finds creative ways to engage with customers all across Frederick County and this is the work of building community, something we are all dedicated to and proud of.

Turning to statistics, Mr. Kelly advised that the board packet includes two reports -- the September Dashboard and a report on the first quarter of the fiscal year.

Looking at the Dashboard first.

- Library visits outpaced the average in September.
- Circulation came in at over 360k, 34% higher than September of 2022.
- As noted earlier, we had an exceptional Library Card Sign-up Month. The 1,755 new in-branch and digital cards marked our highest Library Card Sign-up Month to date.
- Wi-fi use remains strong.
- FCPL's average attendance for programs, outreach, and school visits in September was 39. This far exceeds the average attendance in September, 2019 which was just 26.

The first quarter report is also in your packet. By placing several important measures in historical context, Courtney does a wonderful job of demonstrating how great our numbers were pre-pandemic and how post-pandemic we've not only bounced back, but seen considerable growth in FY23 and FY24. It will be interesting to see how the rest of the year plays out, but again, there is much to be proud of in this first quarter. These stats are one measure of customer demand and reflect our attempts to meet community needs - needs that only evolve and grow. This will be an important story for the library and its advocates -- like the Board and the Friends -- to tell during budget season.

**BUDGET/CIP UPDATE:** This evening, Ronni Bowman joins us from the County Finance Office to provide the Board with highlights from FCPL's audit. Mr. Kelly noted that he was pleased with the results.

As you know, this report is an important step in our budget process, since the results of the audit inform us of available revenues in the FY25 operating budget that my team and I are creating for your consideration in just a couple of months. Related to that budget. this week, Mr. Kelly advised that he and Brandy submitted base budget changes for the County Executive's consideration related to state-mandated minimum wage increases as well as funding formula changes which are the result of the county's population increase over the past year.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly advised that he will be providing an annual budget refresher to the Board's Finance Committee in mid-January. All other Board members are welcome to attend. This refresher helps refamiliarize the Board with the format and sections of the operating budget that you will be asked to consider and vote on at the February meeting. L. Tibbs will be following up with full details on this virtual meeting soon.

As a reminder, the Board does not meet in December and the next meeting of the full Board will be on the evening of January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

In closing, Mr. Kelly acknowledged that this is Linda Tibbs' last meeting and that she is retiring next month. Although she did not want a big send off, he stated that he would be remiss if he did not offer a word of gratitude for her dedication and commitment to the Board, to our team, and to the community that we serve. He thanked Linda and wished her all the best.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**a. Audit Presentation:** R. Bowman, Accounting Supervisor for the Frederick County Accounting Department, reviewed the FCPL audit for the year ending June 30, 2023. She noted that overall revenues were about \$661,000 higher than last fiscal year. The library recognized an increase of about \$218,000 in state operating grants. Contributions and donations were up \$91,000. Federal pass-thru grants were up \$76,000. Passport revenue was up by \$34,000 and investment earnings were up by about \$13,000 due to the higher interest rates. She added that in FY22 there was a portion of that fiscal year where FCPL was not at full operation yet due to the pandemic. FY23 is the first year that FCPL was fully operational for the entire fiscal year. She thereafter displayed a pie chart noting that the largest source of revenue is the contribution by Frederick County Government which comprises over 81% of the total revenue for FCPL. The next largest area is state grants at 15.46%.

She noted that expenditures were favorable as compared to the budget. Expenditures came in at approximately \$1.7M lower than the budget. She thereafter displayed a pie chart breaking down the expenditures. The largest component of expenditures are salary/fringes for staff at 65%. The next largest component at 14% is the county's in-kind contributions to FCPL for the building depreciation and IIT contributions and parking. The next expenditure at 12.53% is for books, publications, e-books and audio-visual supplies.

Thereafter, she displayed a graph showing comparisons of revenues, expenditures and transfer of funds from the General Fund for FY21, FY22 and FY23. As can be seen, the Frederick County Government appropriation from the general fund to FCPL in FY23 was 12.23M, which was an increase of \$991,000 over last fiscal year. The budgeted use of fund balance in FY23 was \$923,000 which was an increase from the prior fiscal year of \$87,000.

Overall, the revenues exceeded expenditures in FY23 by 732,0000, which increases FCPL unrestricted fund balance. This results in an unrestricted fund balance available for the FY25 budget of 1.3M, which is an increase of about \$351,000 from FY24 budgeted use of the fund balance. This is very favorable to FCPL.

R. Bowman thereafter reviewed the Statement of Net Positions. Assets have increased by \$1.86M. This is mainly because of the increase in funds from the primary government of \$930,000 as well as some adjustments to the library collections and as well as the implementation of the new guidance from the government accounting standards relating to capitalizing subscription-based information/technology arrangements. She thereafter noted that liabilities increased by \$143,000 from the prior fiscal year primarily due to the capitalization of the subscriptions.

In summary, she noted that everything was very favorable this year. Revenue was up and expenditures were below budget and this leads to an increase in the available funds for FY25.

K. Spertzel made a motion to accept the audit as prepared; seconded by S. Sheppard. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

**b. Financial Report:** Ms. McDermott reviewed the monthly Financial Report for FY2024. She noted that the data is tentative as of September 30, 2023, and the data was pulled on October 27, 2023.

Revenues collected are at 22%, which is a 20% increase from the previous board meeting. FCPL received a transfer from the Maryland State Education Grant of \$317K. The County posted the first quarterly transfer from the County General Fund of \$3.5M and posted the remaining in-kind revenue of \$516K for the quarter. There was an increase in passport revenue of \$5,600 and Miscellaneous Operating revenue of \$6,300.

Ms. McDermott pointed out that FCPL's total revenue reflects an increase of \$40K due to the County approving a budget journal to recognize the Emergency Connectivity General Fund Federal Grant which was awarded. Those funds will support the purchase of additional technology equipment.

As FCPL ends the first quarter of FY24, revenues are 4% lower compared to FY23 due to the timing of when the Maryland State Education Grant was received and posted to the general ledger.

Expenditures are at 21%, an 8% increase from the previous board meeting. County Finance posted the personnel, security and telephone expenses which reflect the most significant percentage change of those three expenditures by 14% for the month. There was a 17% increase in in-kind County Appropriations. There was a 5% increase to the office supply line for miscellaneous office supplies, a 7% increase to the library material purchases and a 4% increase to the other operating expenditure line for monthly programming expenses.

She noted that as we end the first quarter of FY24, she would have expected expenditures spent to be around 25%. She added that since we are below our projected budget, she is happy to report that FCPL is on track.

Grants Awarded are at \$640,540. There have been no new grants awarded since the last meeting.

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

Donations are at \$33,781, an increase of \$24K from the previous month. This includes several generous donations received for Greatest Need, Summer Challenge, Youth Services, and the branches.

Other endowment revenues are at \$78,133. There was an increase of \$3,107 from the previous month. This amount includes an increase of \$1,035 from the C. Burr Artz Trust for the sole benefit of the C. Burr Artz Library and an increase of \$2,072 interest earned from the Glassman Trust which is restricted to the purchase of material for specific fields of study.

This brings the total to \$752,454.

Ms. McDermott thanked the County Finance Department for presenting the FY23 audit on November 1, 2023 to the Finance Committee and to the full board tonight.

Ms. D'Agostino questioned the expenditure figures and requested clarification. Ms. McDermott noted that a big portion of the expenditures is for pre-paid expenses and those pre-paid expenses are actually recorded at the beginning of the fiscal year. She noted that currently that figure is at 72% but that figure will probably not move a whole lot until we get closer to the end of the fiscal year.

Ms. White inquired about sheriff security and she noted that FCPL only spent 8% of the budgeted \$131,000. Mr. Kelly advised that the County has provided funding to FCPL to hire off-duty deputies and FCPL has not had to use much of the budgeted amount. She further inquired whether security is at all branches or just CBA. Mr. Kelly noted that the sheriff security is primarily used at the C. Burr Artz Library.

**c. Middletown Library Update:** A. Knight, Branch Administrator at the Middletown Library provided an update on the Middletown library. Ms. Knight displayed a photo of the Middletown Library construction site. She noted that last year the Middletown Library had an unofficial motto of “small but mighty”. This year we decided on an unofficial motto of “grow with us”. We have not only watched with excited anticipation the new building grow from an empty lot to a beautiful building. Staff also listened to the community, added new services and programs, expanded into the community and invited more people into the library to grow with us.

She noted that nothing represents Building Bridges more than our seed library this year. A seed library is a place where people can borrow, donate and/or exchange seeds for free. She thereafter explained how the seed library works. She noted that they had a ton of partners for this program who helped staff set up a seed library. In addition, the Middletown Library had monthly programs to support gardening efforts. The Middletown Library distributed over 300 seed packets this year. Approximately 175 people participated in the program and we are excited to expand our offerings in 2024. These types of connections are happening every month and are evidence of a growing and vibrant community.



Thereafter she advised that one of the most rewarding experiences was being involved with the United Way to help facilitate a laptop distribution. We combined efforts with a local organization, People Helping People, and we worked together to distribute over 130 laptops in a two-hour time block. Also, during this time we were able to issue 35 library cards – a record for the Middletown Library in a two-hour time period. It was exciting to see people checking out books the same day they got their library card. The weekend after the event, we recognized a family who came back to the library and checked out a large number of books. She noted that it was an extremely rewarding experience to be a part of.

Ms. Knight thereafter displayed a slide of Mr. Riley, a media specialist, at the local elementary school. She noted that he has been an amazing partner in our efforts to expand access to students in the community. He not only directly teaches students about the student success cards, but he shows them how to use them through directly teaching students how to put books on hold in our catalog. He further expands access by dropping by the library to pick up books for families who are unable to do so. There have also been times when staff has delivered books to him. He is an excellent partner and is awesome at helping to expand access to the community.

The Middletown Library sparked excitement by inviting our customers and members of our community to grow with us. Our expanded program opportunities sparked lots of excitement. We added opportunities like collaborative Minecraft world building, STEM programs that challenged children to think outside the box, a Unicorn Party with over 100 attendees and the Summer Reading kick-off celebration where we had over 250 people attend in a two-hour time period. In addition, we held a Harry Potter Palooza where 350 people visited the library for an afternoon of fun.

Numerous adult interest programs were added like knitting, and high interest local author programs. In addition, we offered a recent informational series of programs about issues and concerns for loved ones who have Alzheimer's. We also increased the number of storytimes and watched the crowds grow, and grow and grow.

Ms. Knight noted that as we are looking forward to a new building. We continue to be moved by the number of people coming in to say good-bye to the old building. We are reminded that no matter how big or small the building, the people are what makes it special (both customers and staff).

Thereafter, Ms. Knight noted that in sticking with the theme of growth, we are also in the process of hiring and on-boarding new staff and in the next few months the staff will grow from 10 to 24.

Mr. O'Leary noted that staff is doubling and he inquired about the status of hiring and training staff members. Ms. Knight noted that everything is on track. She noted that they just on-boarded a new Children's Supervisor. In addition, we just hired an Assistant Branch Administrator who will be starting in November. Mr. Kelly added that there have been some

internal transfers as well and noted that he is confident that all of the positions will be filled.

**d. Middletown Library Construction Update:** Mr. Kelly shared recent images of the new Middletown Library. The drone shots were taken on November 13, 2023.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly shared a schedule that was originally shared with everyone. The construction project still has a lot of work to do. We are hopeful that the building would be turned over to the county by the end of the year. It usually takes 4 - 6 weeks for FCPL to finish the work that we need to do. At this time, the grand opening is tentatively scheduled in February. As soon as we get a firm date, Mr. Kelly will let everyone know.


**BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:** None.

**OTHER CITIZEN REMARKS:** None.

The next FCPL Board of Trustees meeting will be held at the C. Burr Artz Library – Community Room at 7:00 p.m. on January 3, 2024.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.



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