

**Duluth Public Library Board  
Minutes of Virtual Meeting  
August 25, 2020**

**Call to order:** Sue Henke called the meeting of the Duluth Library Board to order at 4:35 on August 25, 2020.

**Members present:** David Sperl, Matt Rosendahl, Stephen Welsh, Neil Glazman, Sue Henke,

**Also present:** Carla Powers (Library Manager), Arik Forsman (City Council Liaison), Jim Filby Williams (Director of Property, Parks and Libraries), Bridgit Maruska (Public citizen), Dennis McManus (public citizen)

**Absent:** Lizzy Luoma, Betty Ramsland, Michelle Foshay

**Review and approve agenda:** Motion by Sperl, seconded by Glazman, to approve the agenda as drafted. Motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comment:** No public comments received.

**Review and approve minutes from July 28, 2020:** Motion by Sperl, seconded by Welsh, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

## **Reports**

### **Library Manager's Report** (Powers)

The Minnesota Department of Education organized a collaborative meeting with public libraries and schools this week. There were three attendees from within the Arrowhead library system but no one from the schools. There will be another meeting scheduled in a couple of weeks and DPL staff will try to attend again in hopes of having an opportunity to connect with schools.

Last week NAACP did a free mask handout and also did voter registration at the same time. About 55 people participated. When the library is open under normal operations the library usually provides voter registration information, and additionally patrons use computers to find information about the election. Glazman mentioned that League of Women Voters might be a good partner to provide voter registration information on the outside of the building. Powers will check into this.

### **Friends Report** (Powers)

The Friends discussed fundraising ideas given that they were unable to have a book sale this year. One idea was to encourage people to make a donation equal to the amount of money they saved by using the library, which is on the bottom of their checkout receipt. President Marcia Semerau was contacted by the Bookworm Garden Club, the group that planted and maintained flowers around the library, which is considering disbanding. Carla is looking into ways to support that group and keep them going.

### **Foundation report** (Rosendahl)

Libations at Home fundraiser will happen September 19. Rosendahl encouraged board members to sign up. He shared that fundraising has been exceptional for Every Child Ready Duluth, and is strong for general library support as well.

## **Old Business**

### **Every Child Ready Duluth Update (Powers)**

Henke mentioned that she attended one of the community planning sessions. Several suggestions came up, and as it turns out the library is already doing much of what was suggested. There has been good attendance at Story Strolls - the largest attendance is 104, but generally averages 20 to 40 per event. Community Schools Family Open House was a great event where staff spoke to over 100 people, and made a contact with the assistant superintendent at ISD709. The Port Card program might come back as an opt-in, rather than the preferred opt-out program.

## **New Business**

### **2021 Budget**

First the 2020 budget was discussed. Filby Williams reported that the Mayor and CAO have expressed their appreciation for the Library Board's proposal to restore in-person services. The budget is less of a concern at this time than the increase in Covid cases locally. City administration wants to avoid potentially calling staff back from layoff only to have to lay them off again due to the pandemic ramping up again. City Hall remains open to the public on a limited basis, but administration is considering closing it again for health and safety reasons. Filby Williams expressed that perhaps by October 1 enough will be known about the Covid trajectory to begin restoring limited in-person services at the Main Library. There was a question about calling back staff for other services, such as interlibrary loan, that do not require opening the building to public visits. Powers will discuss this with Filby Williams

The city's budgetary picture for the remainder of 2020 and 2021 appears better than it did initially. Between the temporary wage concessions from some bargaining units and federal aid, along with the willingness to dip into cash reserves if necessary, it appears likely that the City has sufficient funding to support full staffing for the remainder of this year and into next year. In the coming months the issue driving restoration of library services will be public health considerations more than money. Filby Williams expects 2022 to be a difficult year due to labor concessions ending and federal funding being exhausted.

The preliminary 2021 draft budget assumes that the city will fulfill its commitment to Every Child Ready Duluth. The administration is cautiously optimistic that the 2021 budget will support pre-pandemic levels of staffing once it is safe to do so. The Mayor will present her 2021 budget at the September 10 City Council agenda session. We will drill deeper and develop more detail as the fall proceeds. There could be a strong need to pivot based on how the societal conditions may change.

## **Ongoing Business**

### **Advocacy**

Since the July meeting a core group has formed, including members from the Foundation and Friends, who have met with all city councilors as well as the Mayor and CAO. There was a discussion of next steps. A suggestion was made to send councilors a letter after the presentation of the 2021 budget in order to continue the conversation. It would be good to follow up after September 10 but before the max levy vote on September 14. We could also share comments before the session when the library budget is presented - that will happen tentatively Monday, November 9 at 5:30. The public can still speak at a council meeting even when it's held via WebEx.

A question was raised about the facility study. So far Sara Weiner from Gensler has led a discussion around various concepts for how the space can be configured in the building. The next steps will be for TKDA to look at the building infrastructure. There also has been a consultant brought in to look at the data infrastructure. Existing data cables are getting quite old and grew out of needs that have come up. A consultant came in to look at switch closets that could reach through the long and skinny building. Concepts were passed along to TKDA. Filby Williams mentioned that the Main Library facility is still on the Mayor's mind. He said she is looking forward to a time when we have the renewed financial strength to take on a large project.

A question was raised about filling the vacancy on the board. Powers was told the clerk's office has only received an application from one person. She said she will circle back to another person who expressed interest and make sure that this application was submitted for consideration as well.

Meeting adjourned at 5:43 p.m.