

August 12, 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Skokie Public Library held virtually via Zoom, Wednesday, August 12, 2020.

CALL TO ORDER

Mark Prosperi, President, called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

Members present: Mark Prosperi, President; Eugene Griffin, Vice President; Karen Parrilli, Secretary; Mira Barbir; Jonathan H. Maks, MD; Magnolia Rivera-Pulex; and Richard Kong, Director

Staff present: Laura McGrath, Deputy Director; Blythe Trilling, Finance Manager

Observers present: Observer JGV entered the meeting at 7:11 pm.

COMMENTS FROM OBSERVERS

There were no comments submitted prior to the meeting as requested on the agenda.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT (Written report provided by Mr. Kong to the Board prior to the meeting)

COVID-19 Reopening Update

In late June, I formed a safety task force made up of library staff representing different departments and led by Learning and Development Manager Leah White and Safety Supervisor Thalma Brooms. I asked them to think through the safety measures needed for launching Stage D of our reopening plan.

After reviewing the task force's recommendations and having further conversations with the management team and the Village of Skokie Health Department, I shared an update with staff outlining my intent to expand services to the public by opening certain parts of our first floor (youth area and east lobby) and the renovated second floor in early August. Later, due to a delay with aspects of the new staircase connecting the public areas of the first and second floors, I informed the staff that the start of Stage D would be at the end of August at the earliest. I also kept the Board informed of all this with email updates.

I will continue to consider a number of factors in determining when to move us into Stage D. The main considerations include:

- Monitoring key indicators used to identify significant increases of COVID-19 transmission in our region (suburban Cook County)
- Factoring how additional community mitigation interventions implemented for our region would affect our staffing and service models

- Working with ABA and SMC to determine when we are able to safely open up our newly renovated second floor to the public

We have been using the image of a dial that can be turned up and down, depending on a number of criteria. To start Stage D, the intent is to start with the dial turned very low. Over time, services and restrictions on our service model inside the building may be adjusted if it is determined that it is safe to do so and we have capacity as an organization with our staffing and other resources. Throughout Stage D, we will require masks to be worn by all visitors inside the building and will ask people to keep at least 6 feet apart from others. All staff will be required to complete a “Returning to the Building” training module designed by Leah White to ensure that everyone is aware of the new safety guidelines in place for staff and patrons as we approach the possible start of Stage D.

With the start of accepting returns of checked-out materials, curbside pickup service, summer meals, preparation in the building for Stage D, and all of our online efforts, our staff is very active. They have been supportive of our overall approach, and have demonstrated great adaptability. Our community has also been very patient with us and have shown us that they understand why we are being cautious and prioritizing the health of patrons, staff, and the broader community.

Renovation Update

Outside of the aforementioned delay with the new staircase, the renovation is going very well right now. Architect Andrew Berman, along with his associate Alexander McLean, visited the library in-person recently and spent three full days on-site to review Phase 1 (second floor and first floor workroom) and Phase 2 (west side of first floor, including courtyards and south loading dock). They spent valuable time with our SMC (Shales McNutt Construction) site superintendent, Mike Glover, and commented to me that the renovation is going very well. Andrew Berman observed that the quality of work is better than what he normally sees and shared that he was very pleased with the way the library, SMC, and his team have been able to work together so well during a pandemic and very difficult circumstances.

Over the next couple of weeks, SMC will address items on the punch list created by Andrew Berman. There are minor adjustments to paint color, carpeting, lighting, and other areas. The nonfiction collection came back from storage and our Access Services staff is hard at work to make sure everything is in order and arranged well. ASI Signage is currently installing signage, designed by graphic designer Neil Donnelly, throughout the second floor.

Board members may contact me if there is interest in touring the renovation on a weekday after 3 pm. Masks and social distancing will be required, of course.

Financial Outlook for FY 2020-2021

Note: An update will be provided each month through FY 2021

Three months into the fiscal year, we are doing well in staying in line with our reduced spending limits (i.e., 10% reduction of approved operating budget). During late July and the first week of

August, we received approximately \$3 million in property tax revenue. Due to the extensions allowed for paying property taxes, we still anticipate needing to wait until October to have a true sense of what our fall tax collection rate will look like.

CARES Act

Cook County received approximately \$429 million from the U.S. Treasury from the CARES Act to assist with direct expenses related to COVID-19. \$51 million of this relief is going to municipalities, so Finance Manager Blythe Trilling and I have reached out to the Village of Skokie to ask if some or all of the library's expenses related to our pandemic response can be reimbursed to us from the relief they receive from Cook County. We are awaiting their response.

Battelle Laboratory Testing

RAILS continues to provide updates on the REALM Project, which is the research project led by OCLC, IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services), and Battelle to determine how long the COVID-19 virus survives on materials that are prevalent in libraries, archives, and museums. They announced a fourth round of testing that began on July 31. Based on results we have seen so far from the research project, we are using a 3-day quarantine process for returned physical materials.

Discussion of Director's Report

Mr. Prosperi asked if there were any other potential delays to finishing up Phase 1 of the renovation project. Mr. Kong did not foresee any and hopes that the library can open by August 31. Ms. Barbir asked Mr. Kong about COVID-19 rates in Skokie. Mr. Kong said that Dr. Counard from the Village health department said that the rates in Skokie look relatively good and that contact tracing is up and running. Dr. Maks also shared his perspectives on the current state of the pandemic locally. Ms. Rivera-Pulex asked if there is a staff person stationed at the door to answer questions from patrons regarding when the library will be reopening. She also asked about Mr. Kong's communication with schools regarding their plans for starting the school year. Mr. Kong said that having a staff person at the door at all times when the library is closed is not feasible but there is sufficient signage and online communication with the community about the status of the library. He also explained that the library is in regular communication with the schools. Mr. Griffin asked who would be the new director of the Village health department, and Mr. Kong said the position has been posted by the Village and the library already has a relationship established with other members of the health department. Ms. Barbir asked that Mr. Kong think about the potential of special library hours specifically for seniors. Mrs. Parrilli praised the current setup of the library in preparation for reopening. Mr. Prosperi asked about potentially limiting spaces or time for children that may be dropped off by parents unattended. Mr. Kong said that they would be held to the same time limits as other patrons.

Mrs. Parrilli asked if the library had heard back from the Village regarding the potential of being reimbursed with monies from the CARES Act. Mr. Kong said that he is still waiting for a response. Ms. Rivera-Pulex asked about the types of expenses that might be reimbursed, and Mr. Kong explained that a list of COVID-related expenses was shared with the Village.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF JULY 8, 2020

Mrs. Parrilli made a motion, seconded by Dr. Maks to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of July 8, 2020, subject to additions and/or corrections. There being no additions or corrections, a roll call vote was taken and the minutes were approved unanimously and placed on file. The vote was 6 ayes and 0 nays.

YEAR-TO-DATE BUDGETARY STATUS

The Board noted the year-to-date budgetary status.

APPROVAL OF CONSTRUCTION PAY APPLICATION #8

The Board reviewed Construction Pay Application #8 and change orders #83, 88-100, 102, and 104-113. PCO #97 required Board approval.

A motion was made by Dr. Maks, seconded by Mr. Griffin:

MOTION: THAT THE SKOKIE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVE CONSTRUCTION PAY APPLICATION #8 AND CHANGE ORDERS #83, 88-100, 102, AND 104-113, SUBJECT TO AUDIT.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. There were 6 ayes and 0 nays.

BILLS

Ms. Rivera-Pulex asked a clarifying question about the bill for Paylocity. Mr. Kong explained that it is used for payroll. She also asked about the bill for Tutor.com, and Mr. Kong explained that it is an online subscription service for students. She also asked about a payment to One Bag at a Time, and Mr. Kong explained that the charge is for the library's reusable bags for patrons.

A motion was made by Mr. Griffin, seconded by Dr. Maks:

MOTION: THAT THE SKOKIE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVE THE BILLS, SUBJECT TO AUDIT.

The roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. There were 6 ayes and 0 nays.

CONSENT AGENDA (Financial Statements; Reports; Gifts; Personnel)

Dr. Maks praised the open rates for the library emails going out to patrons. Ms. Rivera-Pulex asked about any feedback regarding other types of communications out to the public besides social media, emails, and other online formats. Ms. McGrath mentioned that the print newsletter is still being mailed out physically to every household in Skokie. Ms. Barbir asked about the data regarding click rates in the weekly emails, and praised the Facebook Live event and the library's posts on LinkedIn. She also expressed concern about how the digital divide affects seniors. She asked about the possibility of Community Engagement staff working with liaisons in senior homes in order to train people how to use online platforms like Zoom. Mr. Kong stated that the library engages with different organizations and offers online programs for seniors.

Mrs. Parrilli made a motion, seconded by Ms. Barbir:

MOTION: THAT THE SKOKIE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVE THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, SUBJECT TO AUDIT, AND THAT THE FOLLOWING CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS BE PLACED ON FILE:

1. REPORTS;
2. GIFTS: \$50 FROM PATRICIA SERRANO IN MEMORY OF LONG-TIME VOLUNTEER CELENE EPSTEIN; \$500 FROM KIWANIS CLUB OF SKOKIE VALLEY FOR SUMMER MEALS PROGRAM;
3. PERSONNEL: DEPARTURES: KAILYN ABRAHAM, PART-TIME MATERIALS PAGE, ACCESS SERVICES, EFFECTIVE JULY 24, 2020; LADIPO FAMODU, PART-TIME EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING SPECIALIST, LEARNING EXPERIENCES, EFFECTIVE AUGUST 3, 2020; SABA MAHMUD, PART-TIME PATRON SERVICES ASSISTANT, PATRON ENGAGEMENT, EFFECTIVE JULY 3, 2020; SARA RAJA, PART-TIME PATRON SERVICES ASSISTANT, PATRON ENGAGEMENT, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2020

A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. There were 6 ayes and 0 nays.

UPDATE OF ANTICIPATED CAPITAL PROJECTS

The Board has asked for an updated list of potential, upcoming capital projects every six months. The capital asset study includes a fuller picture of what capital improvements are needed over the long term, and the current renovation project will address many issues with the facility and grounds. Therefore, the spreadsheet provided to the Board only highlights recently completed projects since 2015 and work that is in-progress, as well as key anticipated expenditures for the future.

FY 2021

Outside of the renovation work already completed for Phase 1, the replacement of the second floor computers (public and service desks) and the refurbishment of the cooling towers are the main projects to be completed this year. Other projects that will be completed in 2021 to coincide with the renovation of the first and second floors include the following:

- Replacement of the library's Bibliotheca equipment (Board approved)
- Upgrade and expansion of the library's security-related systems (Board approved)
- Upgrade and expansion of AV/Technology (Board approved)
- Fabrication of custom book displays (Board approved)

Additional expected expenditures related to the renovation project include the new fish tank and the millwork for the play structures in the youth room.

FY 2022

There are some technology-related projects planned for the next fiscal year, but assuming the renovation wraps up on schedule by the end of FY 2021 and barring any unforeseen emergency expenditures, FY 2022 should be a light year as far as capital expenditures.

FY 2023 and beyond

Looking ahead to the summer of 2022, Mr. Kong anticipates that both the lower roof and upper roof will need to be replaced. In addition, the library may consider a major repaving project for the parking lot and driveways, and a replacement of the south retaining wall and fence, once the roofing replacement is completed in the summer of 2023. Several technology upgrades will also be needed over the next several years, and those are indicated on the spreadsheet.

Another updated list of anticipated capital projects will be provided in February 2021 as the Board considers the FY 2022 operating budget. The complete capital asset study is available through the Board's Dropbox, and can be viewed at any time, though Mr. Kong anticipates having a new capital asset study created after the renovation project is completed.

Mr. Prosperi asked a clarifying question about the millwork in the youth area. Mrs. Parrilli asked if the plans for the new youth area would still include a baby garden. Mr. Kong said that it would.

DISCUSSION OF 2020 TAX LEVY

Next month, the Board will need to adopt a tax levy for transmission to the Village of Skokie. The 2020 levy will be introduced as part of the Village's Levy Ordinance in early December and acted on by the Village Board before the end of December. This levy will fund the library's 2021-2022 Fiscal Year.

As a reminder, the 2019 operating levy was \$12,201,936, and there was a continuing levy of \$1,273,050 for payment of the library's bond debt from construction completed in 2003. The total 2019 levy was \$13,474,986, which was a 0% increase from both the 2018 and 2017 levy. The levy increases from the past five years were as follows:

2019 levy	\$13,474,986	(0% over 2018 levy)
2018 levy	\$13,474,986	(0% over 2017 levy)
2017 levy	\$13,474,986	(1.5% over 2016 levy)
2016 levy	\$13,275,848	(1% over 2015 levy)
2015 levy	\$13,144,404	(1% over 2014 levy)

Last month, the Board reviewed tax collection shortages over the past five years. Starting with the 2017 levy, the Village directed the Cook County Clerk to extend an additional 3% for loss and cost in collection of the tax levy. This should help make up for future shortages. The tax collection shortages from the past five years were as follows:

FY 2020	\$57,732	(.43% of collection)
FY 2019	\$160,380	(1.19% of collection)
FY 2018	\$449,170	(3.38% of collection)

FY 2017	\$208,379	(1.59% of collection)
FY 2016	\$343,359	(2.64% of collection)

Despite these collection shortages, the library has maintained a healthy cash balance in the General Operating Fund, regularly spending less than revenues. The library's General Operating Fund balances as of May 1 for the past five years were as follows:

FY 2020	\$8,053,129	(includes \$1.36 million transfer from 2019 Bond Proceeds)
FY 2019	\$7,280,444	(after transfer of \$1.2 million to Reserve Fund)
FY 2018	\$6,495,304	(after transfer of \$550,000 to Reserve Fund)
FY 2017	\$6,267,321	(after transfer of \$200,000 to Reserve Fund)
FY 2016	\$5,607,690	(after transfer of \$300,000 to Reserve Fund)

We have built a healthy balance in the Reserve Fund in recent years, with a total balance of \$10,025,221.32 as of July 31, 2020. In addition, \$425,935 has been budgeted in the capital line for current capital expenses in the FY 2021 budget. With the library's starting unaudited balance of \$8,053,129 (less \$678,836 due to Debt Service) in the General Operating Fund at the start of the current Fiscal Year, we have sufficient funds for about eight months of operation when factoring in an average monthly expenditure of \$1 million. Despite the uncertainty of how the current economic climate during the COVID-19 pandemic may affect property tax revenues, we currently have a strong position with our General Operating Fund balance and our Reserve Fund balance.

In order to help the Board determine this year's tax levy, the Board was provided with charts showing an analysis of the General Operating Fund for the past seven years, and a preliminary look at the projected budget for FY 2022 based on either a 0% or 1% increase in the 2020 tax levy.

When preparing the projected revenues for FY 2022, tax collections were reduced by 2% in order to use a more conservative projection than last year. Revenues also include a conservative \$200,000 for Corporate Replacement Tax and \$20,000 for interest (note: we are not including interest from our Reserve Fund in this figure). Though the library has already received its 2020 Per Capita Grant letter for \$80,980 from the Illinois State Library, this is not included in our projected revenues. Revenues from other usual sources such as donations/sponsorships and replacement fees for lost items are not included as well in order to work with a more conservative projection of revenue overall. On the projected expenditure side, increases are anticipated for the library's portion of health insurance for participating staff, as well as our business insurance through LIRA.

These projections indicate that a 0% increase for the 2020 tax levy could be manageable if the Board is comfortable with a significant decrease in the capital line of the operating budget for FY 2022. The renovation project, funded separately through the 2019 Bond, will likely be completed by the end of the current fiscal year, but there are still some smaller capital expenditures expected for FY 2022, as noted in this month's update of anticipated capital projects. These projects could be covered by the reduced capital line in the operating budget, but it would be very tight. Of course, if the Board wanted to, the approved budget for FY 2022 could include an additional appropriation of funds from

our Reserve Fund, which has increased in recent years, to offer more of a cushion in case other capital needs arise.

If the Board would like to see a stronger capital line in the FY 2022 operating budget, it may want to consider a 1% increase in this year's tax levy, which should yield an additional \$132,055 in revenue. This could bring our capital line in the FY 2022 operating budget to about \$216,000. If we see a reduction in property tax collections next year, the extra revenue gained from a potential 1% tax levy increase would be helpful. Both a projected operating budget based on a 0% and a 1% tax levy increase are presented in the attachments.

Board action on this matter is not required until September.

Mr. Griffin requested that Mr. Kong bring a projection with a 1% reduction in the tax levy to the September meeting for consideration.

DISCUSSION OF EMERGENCY CLOSING POLICY

In March 2019, after the library closed due to severe weather (i.e., the late January 2019 polar vortex), the Board approved a revision to the Personnel Code that added language about how the library would handle employee pay for emergency closing situations. At that point, the library very rarely closed, and when it did, the practice was not to pay non-exempt employees for their normally scheduled time during emergency closings. In order to be more equitable, the Board decided to amend the policy (see attached) to make it clear that the library would pay employees who are scheduled, but excused from work due to an emergency closing. Many local public libraries handle emergency closings in the same way, paying staff for emergency closings that are out of their control. The current policy also makes clear that emergency closing decisions are the responsibility of the Director, though I have also always kept the Board informed of these important decisions and invited input. The current policy also states that certain staff who are designated "essential" may be required to work during an emergency closing, and usually this will include staff from Building and Safety Services, Information Technology (IT), and the Administration.

In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the library continued to pay staff during the unexpected emergency closing since it was out of anyone's control. Most libraries handled staff compensation in a similar manner. Staff have been very appreciative of the library's policy. The Board has requested that there be further discussion about this emergency closing policy. In Mr. Kong's view, we can keep the policy as is, with the understanding that he, as the Director, will keep the Board informed at all times regarding emergency closings and factor in discussion among the Board. If the Board feels that there needs to be a distinction between how short-term emergency closings (perhaps 30 days, but length can be discussed) are handled from potentially long-term closings such as what we experienced with the 2.5 months of closure experienced between mid-March and June), the policy can be amended.

In light of the unprecedented long term closing of the library due to the COVID pandemic, Ms. Barbir asked the Director to follow up with library attorneys to discuss possible needed revisions to the emergency closing policy. She suggested talking to the library's attorneys about

what wording they would suggest. Mr. Griffin proposed that the policy say that the Board would have to approve the continuation of pay at each Board meeting. Dr. Maks proposed reducing the limit to less than 30 days, for example 14 days. Mr. Kong explained the logistical difficulty that would present. Mr. Proserpi asked that Mr. Kong prepare proposed language and discuss it with the attorneys. The Board would like to continue to discuss the potential change to the policy at the next meeting.

DISCUSSION OF TRUSTEE APPOINTMENT PROCESS

Mr. Proserpi thanked Mrs. Parrilli for her past 10 years on the Board. Mr. Proserpi proposed that he and Mr. Griffin interview the applicants and present four finalists for full interviews with the entire Board. Ultimately, two trustees will be selected. There may be a need to schedule a special meeting for the interviews. The interviews will be carried out virtually.

REACHING ACROSS ILLINOIS LIBRARY SYSTEM (RAILS)

RAILS Board of Directors Meeting

Friday, July 24, 2020

The following are highlights from the July 24, 2020, RAILS Board of Directors meeting's supporting documents and recorded video conference via Zoom.

As this was the annual meeting of the new fiscal year, 2020-2021, newly elected Board members took the oath of office, and the nominated officers were unanimously approved. New officers are: Michael Campbell, President; Thomas Staff, Vice President; Sarah McHone-Chase, Secretary; and Dianne Hollister, Treasurer.

Financial Report: Mr. Jim Kregor reported that the unassigned General Fund total cash and investment balance ending June 30, 2020, was \$13,400,000, covering 14.3 months of operation. Expenditures remain under budget, especially with limited services and travel during the Covid-19 crisis. He mentioned that RAILS has spent approximately \$10,000 on PPE and is hoping to recoup this expenditure from a FEMA grant.

Executive Director's Report: Deirdre Brennan mentioned that with resumption of delivery services in June, about 80% of all libraries are participating in deliveries at a volume of materials only at 25%.

Work continues on the Census 2020 project. RAILS received a new deadline for completion of the census project of October 31, 2020.

RAILS is also concentrating on advocacy programs, especially for school libraries, and the "My Library Is. . ." campaign.

After she confirms the policy from the RAILS bylaws, Ms. Brennan, with approval from the Board, will send out a notice throughout the RAILS area for candidates interested in filling a vacancy for the Academic Library board member vacancy. The Executive Committee will review the candidates and bring its recommendation to the Board.

Ms. Brennan introduced the Strategic Plan Goal Four: Prepare Libraries for the Future - the inclusion of additional goals to understand and respond to social issues and speak out and work to eliminate systemic racism and bias. A Board member mentioned he attended an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) program at the Skokie Public Library and quoted a statement made by Executive Director Richard Kong, "It's (racism and bias) not just about color, but sexual orientation, age, religious background, etc." A suggestion was made that the Board create a new EDI Committee.

Illinois State Library: Greg McCormick stated the FY21 Illinois library system grants were approved. Also, the final payments from the FY20 Area and Per Capita grants should be received soon. He mentioned that ISL shares in RAILS' concern for Illinois school libraries. He stated that the Illinois Board of Education is looking into their involvement with e-learning through school media centers.

Next meeting: Friday, August 28, 2020, via Zoom.

The Board noted the RAILS report from Mrs. Parrilli.

The Board will make a decision regarding who will attend upcoming RAILS meetings once the new trustees are selected.

COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES

Ms. Barbir thanked the library staff for everything they are doing and the exemplary way they are handling the pandemic situation. Mrs. Parrilli echoed her comments.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:01 pm, a motion was made by Mrs. Parrilli, seconded by Ms. Barbir to adjourn the regular meeting. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Karen Parrilli, Secretary