

September 9, 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Skokie Public Library held virtually via Zoom, Wednesday, September 9, 2020.

CALL TO ORDER

Mark Prosperi, President, called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Members present: Mark Prosperi, President; Eugene Griffin, Vice President; 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: Richard Demsch entered the meeting at 6:54 pm.

COMMENTS FROM OBSERVERS

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

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF AUGUST 12, 2020

Dr. Maks made a motion, seconded by Mr. Griffin to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of August 12, 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 5 ayes and 0 nays.

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

COVID-19 Reopening Update

On Tuesday, September 1, we began Stage D of our reopening plan and allowed patrons to enter the building on the east side to browse/check out collections and use a limited number of computers. The day went smoothly as our preparation and communication of safety guidelines worked well. We will continue to monitor the situation in order to determine when we will be able to loosen restrictions and offer expanded services in the building. We will also monitor key indicators used to identify significant increases of COVID-19 transmission in our region (suburban Cook County) and consider how any new community mitigation interventions implemented for our region would affect our staffing and service models. Throughout, I will continue to stay in contact with Bruce Jones, the interim director of the Village's Health Department, to seek guidance on our overall pandemic response.

Renovation Update

With Phase 1 (second floor and first floor workroom) essentially completed outside of a handful of changes we are waiting on (e.g., additional lighting in workroom, a few panels of glass for the staircase), the focus has shifted to Phase 2 (west side first floor). We are seeing a lot of progress for

Phase 2, including landscaping and pavers added to the courtyards. Andrew Berman will visit the library again on September 8-9.

Financial Outlook for FY 2020-2021

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

We are doing well in staying in line with our reduced spending limits (i.e., 10% reduction of approved operating budget). Up to this point, we have received approximately \$4.8 million in property tax revenue. We are expecting to receive an additional \$1.4 million, but due to the extensions allowed for paying property taxes in Cook County, we still anticipate needing to wait until October to have a true sense of what our fall tax collection rate will look like.

We received information from LIMRiCC (our health insurance pool) that the Board of LIMRiCC voted to end the relationship with Blue Cross Blue Shield and move to Aetna starting with the calendar year 2021. The decision was driven primarily by cost considerations, as Aetna provided rates that are more competitive. Rates will not be increased from 2020, and the plans will remain similar with the same coverage amounts. HR Manager Beth Dostert and I will attend the full membership meeting on September 15 online and provide more information to the Board if needed.

Staffing Levels

We are experiencing increasing levels of activity with curbside pickup service and returned materials, and at the same time are experiencing reduced staffing levels (264.5 unfilled budgeted hours or 7 FTE – full-time equivalent) due to recent departures. We have held off on hiring any new staff or increasing hours for existing staff positions since Mid-March, but we now need to increase staffing levels to fit our current service and operation needs. I would also like to consider possible promotions to reassign certain staff to new positions as needed.

Skokie Community Foundation Healthcare Symposium

Community Engagement Manager Nancy Kim Phillips and I are both assisting with the planning for a two-part Healthcare Symposium organized by the Skokie Community Foundation. Gene Griffin has spearheaded this initiative, which involves many different local organizations. The theme for the symposium is COVID-19: Local Lessons Learned. The first event will take part on Wednesday, September 9, 9am-noon, and will encourage a discussion involving local leaders representing healthcare, nonprofit social services, education, and public sectors. The library is also taking care of the technical aspects since the events will take place online using Zoom.

Library Closed on Election Day

Public Act 101-0642 made November 3, 2020 a state holiday (2020 General Election Day) and the law states that government offices should close unless authorized to be used as a location for election day services or as a polling place. There is a lack of clarity about how the term “government offices” is defined, and many are waiting for more guidance, but our attorney said that he believes the intent of the law is to have government facilities, including libraries, closed for Election Day unless used as

a voting location. We are not a voting location, so we will close on November 3, 2020. Since the holiday and office closure is a state law mandate, the Board does not need to approve the closure.

Discussion of Director's Report

The Board discussed the current staffing levels at the library. Ms. Rivera-Pulex asked if staff are being paid overtime due to the reduced number of staff. Mr. Kong stated that it has not been necessary to pay staff overtime. Dr. Maks asked about whether staff have been happy to pitch in and help in other areas. Mr. Kong stated that they have. Dr. Maks asked that the library be mindful of what is economically feasible. Ms. Rivera-Pulex expressed concern that if there were a need to close the library again, it would lead to a potential reduction of hours and staff. Mr. Prosperi asked about the number of staff working remotely at this point, and when Mr. Kong expects that to end. Mr. Kong said that some staff would be asked to continue remote work until it becomes safe to welcome more people into the building per health recommendations. Mr. Kong praised the staff for its engagement and responsiveness during the pandemic. Ms. Barbir echoed Ms. Rivera-Pulex's concern about a potential future closure. Mr. Kong assured the Board that he would not be proposing increasing staffing levels if he did not feel it was necessary to maintain the high level of service the library has been providing.

Mr. Griffin commented on the healthcare symposium and thanked the library for its support and participation.

Ms. Barbir asked when the law regarding the election day closure was passed. Mr. Kong stated that it was a few months ago.

APPROVAL OF CONSTRUCTION PAY APPLICATION #9

The Board reviewed Construction Pay Application #9 and change orders #114-129. None were in amounts requiring Board approval.

Ms. Rivera-Pulex requested a financial summary to know where the library stands in terms of the overall picture of the renovation project. Mr. Prosperi asked that it include expenses not included in the construction budget. Mr. Kong stated that an update on the construction budget would be provided at the next Board meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Griffin, seconded by Ms. Barbir:

MOTION: THAT THE SKOKIE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVE CONSTRUCTION PAY APPLICATION #9 AND CHANGE ORDERS #114-129, SUBJECT TO AUDIT.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. There were 5 ayes and 0 nays.

BILLS

Mr. Griffin asked a clarifying question about a charge for the rental of a tent for used for curbside service. Mr. Kong explained that, at the beginning of curbside services, the library did

not know how long it was going to be needed, but that he does not foresee the library needing it for that much longer. Mr. Prosperi asked about how the library might handle an increased number of patrons inside if outside curbside service were to cease. Mr. Kong said he would provide more information about the next stage of services after more discussion with Ms. McGrath and other staff.

Ms. Rivera-Pulex asked about a charge for Omeka.net. Mr. Kong explained that it is for software the library uses to manage digitized collections. She also asked about a charge for clocks. Mr. Kong explained they are for clocks being placed throughout the building in renovated areas. She commented on her recent visit to the library, praising the layout of the second floor and how easy it is to find books.

Ms. Barbir proposed a video tour of the new space so that patrons who are not coming into the building can experience it virtually.

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 5 ayes and 0 nays.

CONSENT AGENDA (Financial Statements; Reports; Personnel)

Ms. Barbir asked a clarifying question about the Section 125 account. Ms. Trilling explained it is for a cafeteria plan used to provide dependent care assistance to employees.

Ms. Barbir made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rivera-Pulex:

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. PERSONNEL: DEPARTURE: SHAZ SHAH, PART-TIME MATERIALS HANDLER, ACCESS SERVICES, EFFECTIVE AUGUST 30, 2020

A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. There were 5 ayes and 0 nays.

APPROVAL OF RENEWAL OF COMMUNICO

In 2016, the library began using Communico, a cloud-based application suite that handles functions such as event management, digital signage, and room reservations. In September 2018, the Board approved a two-year renewal of our contract for Communico.

When the renovation is completed, the library will use the Broadcast module to provide content for the displays located throughout our public spaces, including both entrances, study room reservation tablets, and event schedule displays outside of every program space. We will continue to use the Attend module to allow patrons to register for events. The Reserve module

will be used for reserving study rooms. Overall, staff is very pleased with Communico's modules and with their responsiveness when staff have had questions or suggestions.

We also plan to implement the Roam module, which is designed for staff use on mobile devices. Staff would be able to move throughout the library assisting patrons with checkout, catalog lookups, program information and registration, room reservations, and patron account information without being tied to one of the service desks.

There is no increase in our fee per year for the renewal of Communico so we will pay the same amount (\$15,000 per year) for the next two years.

Mr. Kong recommended Board approval of a two-year Communico renewal at a total cost of \$15,000 per year.

A motion was made by Mr. Griffin, seconded by Ms. Rivera-Pulex:

MOTION: THAT THE SKOKIE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVE THE RENEWAL OF A TWO-YEAR CONTRACT WITH COMMUNICO AT A TOTAL COST OF \$15,000 PER YEAR.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. There were 5 ayes and 0 nays.

APPROVAL OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION CONSULTATION PROPOSAL

As Mr. Kong mentioned during the July Board meeting, he has been speaking with a number of consultants to discuss how the library may continue its EDI (equity, diversity, inclusion) efforts and respond to the current dialogue and calls for equity and justice. He believes that Reesheda Graham Washington (RGW Consulting) will be able to help the library assess where we are as an organization with EDI work, and establish a firm strategic direction and path to making the progress needed at this time.

The proposal provided to the Board describes a six-week process of discovery, where Ms. Graham Washington would engage with library staff, the Board, and community members and partner organizations. Afterward, she would create a report with specific recommendations regarding the development of an EDI trajectory with steps needed to achieve our specific goals. At that time, the library may determine that we would like to engage with RGW Consulting further, explore other experts to aid us in the work, or pursue our objectives internally. The library's EDI Committee and other staff members will be engaged in the process of discovery and implementation of the recommendations throughout. Current EDI Committee Chair (Young Adult Supervisor) Laurel Johnson and past EDI Committee Chair (Community Engagement Manager) Nancy Kim Phillips assisted Mr. Kong in his conversations with several consultants. They all agree that RGW Consulting would be an excellent choice given her approach to this work, her familiarity with public libraries, and her background in education and working with local communities.

Mr. Kong recommended Board approval of the proposal from RGW Consulting for a total amount of \$12,000.

Ms. Barbir asked about Ms. Graham Washington's work with libraries. Mr. Kong stated that she is currently working with some libraries including Oak Park. She asked about the recommendations provided to other libraries. Mr. Kong mentioned the formation of affinity groups as one example. He also mentioned that a review of certain policies may be suggested.

Dr. Maks asked about which Board meeting she might attend. Mr. Kong said it would possibly be at the November meeting. Mr. Prospero asked if any of her potential recommendations would require Board action. Mr. Kong said that it was a possibility, and that it is important for the Board to be involved in the process. Mr. Prospero stated that he believes the hiring of a consultant is necessary at this time due to the village's diverse population that the library needs to represent. He also mentioned the difficult current moment in our country in terms of relations between different groups and the income disparity in the library's area. He expressed his support for hiring a consultant.

Ms. Rivera-Pulex asked about the goal of hiring the consultant. Mr. Kong said that he would like for an outside consultant to come in and assess the condition of the organization as far as EDI is concerned, where the library needs to improve, and what steps need to be taken. He would like for her to provide a roadmap and foundation for the library to follow over the next few years. Ms. Rivera-Pulex expressed her support.

A motion was made by Mr. Griffin, seconded by Ms. Rivera-Pulex:

MOTION: THAT THE SKOKIE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPROVE THE PROPOSAL FROM RGW CONSULTING FOR A TOTAL AMOUNT OF \$12,000.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. There were 5 ayes and 0 nays.

ADOPTION OF 2020 TAX LEVY

At this meeting, the Board needs to adopt an operating 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 fund the library during FY 2022. The 2019 operating levy was \$12,201,936 with a continuing levy of \$1,273,050 for payment of the library's 2001 bond debt. The total 2019 levy was \$13,474,986, a 0% increase from 2018 and 2017.

Last month, Mr. Kong provided the Board with information relevant for this decision, including projected FY 2022 revenues and expenditures based on a 0% increase and a 1% increase (see attached). As requested during last month's Board meeting, he also provided projections based on a 1% decrease in the levy from last year.

Recently, the library received some good news from the LIMRiCC (Library Insurance Management and Risk Control Combination) Board that premiums for 2021 will not increase for our HMO and PPO health insurance plans, but we are expecting an increase in our business insurance through the LIRA (Libraries of Illinois Risk Agency) pool.

Our 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. 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, which should be sufficient to cover the capital expenses we expect in FY 2022. In addition, 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. A 1% decrease in the tax levy would result in reductions in our operating budget of \$132,055. Considering the increase expected for insurance, as well as the capital expenses we anticipate, Mr. Kong did not recommend decreasing the levy.

Mr. Kong recommended that the Board adopt a 0% increase for the 2020 tax levy, resulting in a levy of \$12,276,686, not including the \$1,198,300 for next year's bond payment. The total amount levied will be \$13,474,986, the same amount levied in 2017-2019.

Ms. Barbir expressed support for Mr. Kong's recommendation of a 0% increase for the 2020 tax levy. Ms. Rivera-Pulex agreed.

A motion was made by Ms. Barbir, seconded by Ms. Rivera-Pulex:

MOTION: THAT THE SKOKIE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES ADOPT A 0% INCREASE FOR THE 2020 TAX LEVY, RESULTING IN A TOTAL LEVY OF \$13,474,986.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. There were 5 ayes and 0 nays.

DISCUSSION OF EMERGENCY CLOSING POLICY

Last month, the Board discussed the possibility of revising the existing emergency closing policy, which was last revised in March 2019 after the library closed due to the 2019 polar vortex. 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.

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, and our staff have been very appreciative of the library's policy. When the library started curbside pickup services, Mr. Kong made the decision to end our emergency closing status and we began paying staff based on actual hours worked.

After some discussion during the August Board meeting, the Board requested that Mr. Kong work with the library's attorney to bring forth a possible revision to the policy for further discussion. The attached revision, prepared in consultation with our HR attorney from Robbins Schwartz, makes a clear distinction between how short-term emergency closings (30 days or less) are handled from long-term closings (more than 30 days). The revised language states that the Board would determine staff compensation in the case of a long-term emergency closing, and that staff would not be guaranteed payment of their previously scheduled time.

Mr. Prosperi asked what would happen if the state were to implement more restrictions. Would the library be back in an emergency closure situation? Mr. Kong explained that it would depend on the restrictions. Richard presented two different potential scenarios. If the Governor were to state that mitigation measures are being put in place where the library could only provide online and curbside services, then he would not consider it an emergency closing. If the state were to go into total lockdown again with no one allowed to be in the building or near the building at all, he would consider it a new emergency closing.

Mr. Griffin proposed clarifying language to define it as a closure of the physical library building versus a termination of library services since the library would still be able to offer online services during an emergency closing. Mr. Kong said he would speak to the attorneys regarding the language.

Ms. Barbir asked for clarification regarding why 30 days should be the amount of time staff are paid during a long-term emergency closure versus 14 days. Mr. Kong explained that it would provide time to hold a Board meeting, and to communicate any changes to employees so they understand the conditions of employment during an entire pay period.

Dr. Maks requested that the updated policy be brought as an action item at the October meeting.

COMMENTS FROM TRUSTEES

Mr. Prosperi proposed an election for the position of secretary at the following Board meeting. He also expressed praise for the four trustee candidates being interviewed.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:42 pm a motion was made by Dr. Maks, seconded by Ms. Rivera-Pulex to go into closed session pursuant to 5ILCS 120/2(c)3 of the Open Meetings Act (to consider selection of a person to fill a vacancy in a public office). The vote was 5 ayes and 0 nays. The motion passed.

All observers left the meeting.

The Board interviewed and discussed the candidates for the open Trustee positions.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:32 PM a motion was made by Dr. Maks, seconded by Mr. Griffin:

MOTION: THAT THE SKOKIE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES ADJOURN FROM CLOSED SESSION AND RETURN TO OPEN SESSION.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

OPEN SESSION

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:33 PM pm, a motion was made by Mr. Griffin, seconded by Dr. Maks to adjourn the regular meeting. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.
