

DULUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD
Minutes of Virtual Meeting
February 22, 2022

Call to order: Chair Sue Henke called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m.

Attendees: Neil Glazman, Michelle Foshay, Susan Henke, Lizzy Luoma, Betty Ramsland, David Sperl, Stephen Welsh

Also in attendance: City Councilor Terese Tomanek, Jim Filby Williams, Carla Powers

Absent/excused: Alex Strelow

Review and approve agenda: Motion by Ramsland, seconded by Welsh, to approve the agenda as drafted. Approved by consensus.

Public comments: None received in advance of meeting.

Approve minutes of January 25, 2022 meeting: Ramsland asked if there really is 72,000 square feet in the library and Powers confirmed there is. Motion by Ramsland, seconded by Glazman, to approve minutes as drafted. Minutes approved by show of hands.

Introduce Support Services Supervisor Jason DeShaw: Jason was not able to attend due to the winter storm. However, Henke welcomed Therese Tomanek to her first meeting as the city council liaison to the library board.

Reports

Library Manager's Report – Powers noted that the Manager's Report was omitted from the packet, and provided the board a few minutes to review it. In turn, Sperl asked what safety considerations or warnings were in place for the VR gear and Powers agreed to follow up with the staff who will lead that programming.

Duluth Library Foundation Report – Accepted as submitted.

Friends of the Library Report – Ramsland proudly reported that the Friends recently voted to turn over \$10,000 to the library, leaving a balance in their account of less than \$10,000. This means funds are going to benefit the library.

Old Business

Update on services and staffing:

- Librarian II: posting just closed for two open positions. Applications will be scored later this week by Powers, two library supervisors and a Human Resources staff member.
- Librarian I: an internal candidate was selected for this position, leaving a Library Technician position to be backfilled.
- Substitute Senior Library Technician: This position at West Duluth was filled by a Library Technician from Main. Powers will now request permission to hire a Substitute Library Technician to backfill.

- There also are two half-time Library Technician positions that have not yet been filled. Candidates will be chosen from an existing Civil Service list.

Services are largely unchanged, with the notable exception that masks are no longer required, but encouraged, for library patrons. Powers did note that library users will be required to wear a mask if they work in close proximity with a library employee. Staff are required to wear masks. Tomanek noted that the decision on masks was a reasonable action, but inquired about the fact that the libraries are a city building. Masks are still required in city-owned buildings. Powers replied that city administration granted an exception for the libraries based on a recommendation from Filby Williams and herself.

Update on library security – Henke noted that at the last meeting the board had received a report that the city was preparing for a position to assist with library security. Since that time there was an assault on a library staff member by a patron over the mask requirement. Powers reported that the library has completed a draft job description. The draft has been reviewed by the library leadership team, union steward, Filby Williams, and representatives of the Police Department. Currently Human Resources is reviewing it, and it must be approved by a few different groups before hiring can commence. The library intends to hire two half-time Library Safety Specialists to provide coverage 6 days per week. This would allow one person to fill in for the other when there is an absence. These positions will be scheduled to work afternoons, evenings, and Saturdays. These are the times when incidents often arise and there are fewer staff in the building. Powers would like to find someone with social services, street outreach, and/or law enforcement experience. The Library Safety Specialist would proactively greet people, walk through the building, and assist in enforcing the library behavior policy as necessary. In the event of an incident, this person will assist with de-escalation, contact supervisors, and/or back up employees depending on who is first on the scene. Glazman asked if these positions will be armed and Powers answered no. Mayor Larson said it could take two months to be able to hire these positions. Powers said that could be optimistic but hopes that it is achievable. Powers reported that the library continues to have problems with people under the influence or experiencing a mental health challenges. Recently a person broke into the programming room, ate snacks meant for an event, and tried to remove a large screen monitor from the wall. Filby Williams noted that the frequency and severity of incidents is increasing. Ramsland asked if there could be a temporary position hired into the library while waiting for these two half-time positions. Powers noted it may be difficult to contract with a security service for the relatively short period of time it will take before the job description is approved. Filby Williams has asked for a sustained increase in police patrols through the library, and answered that he is open to an interim contract security arrangement. Tomanek asked about opportunities for improved safety in the conceptual design process for a renovation. Filby Williams answered that it will be a top priority by reconfiguring and renewing the library so that it is less prone to safety problems. Powers added that sightlines could be improved in a remodeling project too. “Protecting employees and patrons is the most fundamental duty we have,” Filby Williams said, “so we have to look at possibilities and opportunities we have not looked at in the past.” Welsh asked about video surveillance and 2-way radios in the building; Powers answered that there are cameras. They are not monitored in real time but can be used to go back and look at

footage of an incident after the fact. Powers said staff had been using 2-way radios, but had mixed success with them. The protocol in place prompts staff to use the PA system to alert supervisors to respond when assistance is needed. In an emergency all staff are empowered to call 911. Luoma asked about the idea of putting a police car in front of the library, and whether that creates a welcoming presence. Powers responded that it is difficult in reality to carry out due to police staffing levels. Henke asked if the increase in incidents were matters of copycat acts, or if it was due to the stress of the pandemic and the winter season. Powers noted that it is more likely the latter, and that the lack of stable housing is really stressing people at the margins of society. Henke asked if we should investigate ways for the library to host a social worker, such as illustrated in a recent news story about Rochester Public Library; Powers noted that a social worker from St. Louis County was interested in using the Partnership Center and that the library is going to re-invite them.

Main Library facility – Filby Williams reported that they have entered into contract with Gensler Architects to perform a preliminary library study. The work begins in earnest tomorrow with a meeting of workforce development and library staff with the consultant team. Henke asked if March is still a reasonable timeline to have a pre-pre design report. Powers and Filby Williams said there will be an update, but not likely a completed study. Henke wrapped up by stating that the board will hope to review the finalized report at the April meeting.

New Business

Library organizational chart – Henke thanked Powers for sharing the new organizational chart.

Election of officers in March – Henke asked members to consider stepping up to be chair or vice chair which will be open in March. Ramsland and Henke are term-limited for their current positions of vice-chair and chair, respectively. Foshay asked about term endings, and Henke noted that this is the end of Glazman's second five-year term. The library board will follow city council policy for the conduct of its own meetings, meaning that we will remain in online meetings as long as they hold their meetings online.

Ongoing Business

Advocacy – No further updates.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by Henke at 5:51 p.m.