

Duluth Public Library Board Meeting Minutes November 26th, 2024

Present: Bill Arezzo, Lori Steinbach, Michelle Foshay, Matt Rosendahl, Betty Ramsland

Also in attendance: Carla Powers, Jim Filby Williams, League of Women's Voters observer Carolyn Baird, Sarah Kessler, library staff members Heidi Harrison and Bri Belanger

Absent: Lizzy Luoma, Ellen Hatfield, Sue Henke, Jose Gonzalez

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm by Bill Arezzo, Vice President

Introductions

Teen Advisory Board

The Teen Advisory Board (TAB) was started three years ago for teens to give input to the library for materials and programs to offer at the library. The group meets once a month, with an average of 10 to 15 teens per meeting. They brainstorm and do event planning. The year's projects included an entry in the Christmas City of the North parade, creating an escape room, and planning interactive movies events. TAB has had 50 different members over the three years. Harrison helped get the group off the ground and does a great job working with the teens.

Review and approval of agenda

Motion by Rosendahl, seconded by Foshay, to approve the agenda as drafted. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of minutes of October 29th, 2024

Motion by Rosendahl, seconded by Ramsland, to approve minutes as drafted. Motion passed unanimously.

Reports

Library Manager

- New Website – Staff is receiving positive feedback on the site. It is easier to navigate and more colorful. A new addition is the “How do I” section.
- Port Card Updates – Port Cards are fully functioning for all ISD 709 students now that the school district has sent its student files. Belanger worked very hard to get the program reinstated as an opt-out offering for all students.
- Statement of Concern – A patron filled out paperwork to formally express her concern about the book *A Tale as Tall as Jacob*. She was concerned over a scene in the book where a boy developed a tic after taking medication for ADHD. After reading reviews and looking at the book as a whole, Powers decided it should remain in the collection.
- Read to a Dog – This program is going on at all three library locations. It's ideal for kids who may struggle with reading, because the dog is friendly and non-judgmental.

- Book Bingo – Over 200 participants came for a special Book Bingo program at Wild State Cider. It was a nicely done program and a great partnership.
- Library Usage Statistics – Usage is up from last year in nearly every category, other than computer usage at the West Duluth Branch. The Mount Royal Branch has circulated more physical items than the Main Library so far this year. A question was asked whether usage has reached pre-pandemic levels. Powers will report on this at the next meeting.

Duluth Library Foundation

- On Give to the Max Day the foundation's fundraising goal was exceeded by 8 AM.
- A full-time marketing director and part-time administrative assistant have been hired.

Friends of the Library

- The Friends bank balance currently stands at \$12,950.38.
- Membership increased to 221.
- Littlest Holiday Book sale will take place next month. It will take place at Mount Royal over 2.5 days. Credit and debit cards will be accepted.

Old Business

Main Library Facility Update

Filby Williams shared that there is no meaningful information to report at this time. The City is grappling with the difficulty of sourcing \$80 million for this project, especially now that federal pandemic-related funding has ended. However, administration remains committed to finding a way to improve the downtown facility. Filby Williams pointed out that the library is heavily used by people from outside the City of Duluth. However, the service is funded by Duluth taxpayers. There was general discussion as board members posed questions about how to proceed from here. Filby Williams replied that he is not ready to give an answer yet, nor is he declaring defeat. How and when to change the goals takes time and cannot be a quick decision.

Advocacy

No update at this time. Foshay requested leaving advocacy on the agenda as a regular item.

Friends and Foundation Liaisons

There is still a need to fill these roles. A couple of Board members have expressed interest, but nothing is finalized yet.

New Business

Semi-annual review of strategic plan for 2023 – 2026.

Goal 1 – Safety is a priority, and funding will be ongoing into 2025. Significant changes have been made. More cameras have been added at all locations, and help buttons have been installed at the branches. Safety is the biggest area of focus and results. Goal 2 – Port cards and community passes were big wins. Goal 3 – Staff is prioritizing partnerships for programs, trying to reach a broader audience. Goal 4 – Some progress has been made to lower the barriers for hiring. Goal 5 – A dozen staff members have been trained in critical incident stress management, providing peer

support for coworkers. Goal 6 – Supported self-service, empowering library patrons to accomplish as much as they wish without staff assistance, remains an important goal.

Adjournment

Arezzo adjourned the meeting at 5:41.