



New Orleans Public Library
Regular Board Meeting Minutes
ZOOM Teleconference
Tuesday, May 11, 2021
4:30 p.m.

NOTE REGARDING PUBLIC COMMENT:

The legal purpose of open meetings is to allow individuals to observe and participate in the deliberations of public bodies. Meetings of public bodies must be open to the public unless closed pursuant to a statutory exception, such as set forth in R.S. 42:16 – 42:18, which authorizes closed executive sessions. Public bodies must provide an opportunity for public comment prior to action on the agenda item upon which a vote is to be taken. The governing body may adopt reasonable rules and restrictions regarding the comment period. R.S. 42:14, requires each public body, except school boards, conducting a meeting that is subject to the notice requirement of R.S. 42:19(A), to allow a public comment period prior to action on an agenda item upon which a vote is to be taken.

PUBLIC COMMENT IS LIMITED TO TWO MINUTES PER INDIVIDUAL

NOTICE OF TELECONFERENCE MEETING:

This meeting is being conducted via teleconference per Executive Order 59-JBE-2020 Section 2.C, which states: “All state agencies, boards and commissions, and local political subdivisions of the state shall continue to provide for attendance at essential governmental meetings via teleconference or video conference and such attendance shall be allowed during the pendency of this emergency. All efforts shall be made to provide for observation and input by members of the public. Before any meeting conducted pursuant to this section, the state agency, boards and commission, or local political subdivision of the state shall first provide a written certification that it will otherwise be unable to operate due to quorum requirements. Such certification shall be posted at the same time and in the same manner as the agenda for the meeting. Nothing in this order shall be interpreted to waive any notice requirements.”

MINUTES

- I. **Call to Order**
 - A. Board Chair, Phala Kimbrough-Mire called the May 11, 2021 Regular Board meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

- II. **Roll Call -- (4:33 p.m.)**

Members Present: Phala Kimbrough-Mire, Vonda Flentroy-Rice, Andrea Neighbours, William Settoon, Dana Henry, Daniel Tapia, Kathleen Coverick
Absent: Raquel Dufauchard

Staff Present: Dr. Gabriel Morley, Michel Thompson, Emily Painton
Others: Courtney Kerney, Dixon Stetler, Jennifer Kitner, Demetric Mercadel, Michelle Thomas

III. Public Comments — (4:35 p.m.)

- A. Courtney Kearney asked about the strategic plan and director evaluations. Ms. Kimbrough-Mire responded that her question will be addressed during the agenda item regarding the strategic plan.
- B. Shannan Cvitanovic asked what the plan is for filling the vacancies of NOPL staff that would emphasize diversity.

IV. Approval of Consent Agendas — (4:37 p.m.)

- A. Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
- B. Approval of March 9th minutes
 - 1. Ms. Flentroy-Rice moved to approve the consent agendas. Motion was seconded by Ms. Neighbours. Motion carried unanimously.

V. Information Items -- (4:38 p.m.)

- A. Friends of NOPL Update – Jennifer Kitner
 - 1. Jennifer Kitner reported that the Friends had a successful Give NOLA Day, raising \$11,000 for the Summer Fun and Reading Program.
 - 2. The Friends received three grants for summer reading from Blue Cross Blue Shield, Entergy, and the Eugenie and Joseph Jones Family Foundation.
 - 3. The Friends hired a part-time staff member to manage the Algiers book sale's increased times and days they are open. There will be a grand reopening of the Algiers location later this summer. Date to be determined.
 - 4. Mr. Settoon asked about the outcome of the Friends' partnership with Tulane. Ms. Kearney responded that the collaboration produced an endeared design to guide library interior designers in creating a shared space at Algiers Regional.
- B. Executive Director Update – Dr. Gabriel Morley
 - 1. Building updates at Nix have been delayed by the weather. We are also waiting for the Department of Environmental Quality to approve the soil after a buried diesel can was found.
 - 2. The Summer Fun schedule is posted on the NOPL website.
 - 3. The city is setting up public spaces where online purchasers can do safe exchanges and will be using parking spaces at some of our branch locations. These spaces will have signage, adequate lighting, and security cameras.
 - 4. Beginning in June at New Orleans East, the district attorney's office will use some of our enterprise zones for its diversion programs. Consideration is being made to build out the space at Norman Mayer and Algiers as well.
- C. Budget Department Update – (Michel Thompson)
 - 1. So far in 2021, NOPL has received \$13.7 million in revenue, which is 73% of our annual budget. We normally receive 95% of our budget by this time, but unpaid property taxes have delayed our financing.
 - 2. Personnel expenditures are at 18%. Unfilled positions due to retirements and resignations combined with a hiring freeze has created a surplus in this account.
 - 3. Operating expenses are at \$730,000. Normally by the end the first quarter, we have approximately \$18 million, however, we only have \$13.7 million.

4. Mr. Settoon asked if the reduction in quarterly revenue was due to the city not receiving the tax revenue or because funds have not been transferred to our account. Ms. Thompson responded that the funds have not been transferred.
- D. 1st Quarter Dashboard Report – (Jane LeGros, 2 minutes)
1. We have 176,000 print and digital items in circulation; 24,000 library visits; 10,000 computer sessions; 240,000 webpage views; issued 3,000 new library cards; and held 141 library programs that 4,000 patrons attended.
 2. Dr. Morley added that Ms. LeGros and the website committee have been designing a new website as part of the strategic plan. We also will open at full capacity on May 17.
 3. Ms. Kimbrough-Mire congratulated the team on the social media and urged the other members to engage with NOPL's social media.
 4. Ms. Neighbours asked what the marketing team is doing to get the word out that the library is reopening on May 17. Ms. LeGros responded that the library sent out an email to all library cardholders and anyone who has signed up for programming emails (70,000+ via email in total). NOPL sent a press release out on May 3, the Gambit is running a story around May 17, and we have advertised it on social media numerous times.
 5. Ms. Neighbours asked if the reopening will be like a party or business as usual. Ms. LeGros responded that it won't be a celebration, just a reopening.

VI. Discussion Items -- (4:45 p.m.)

- A. Millage Update – Dr. Gabriel Morley
1. Mr. Chrastka has been communicating with stakeholders throughout the city to determine the best date to have the millage on the ballot. The consensus is that the November 13th date will work best. This gives us time to socialize the strategic plan and align it with the NOPL objectives. There may be a runoff of the October election on November 13th.
 2. We need to get a replacement on the millage committee for Ms. Nguyen soon.
 3. We need to inform City Council officially and formally that the board voted and chose the November 13th date.
 4. Mr. Henry asked if the millage is expiring at the end of 2021 and Ms. Kimbrough-Mire responded yes.
- B. Strategic Planning Update – Michelle Thomas
1. The NOPL 10-year strategic plan is complete and covers January 2022 through December 2031.
 2. Project Methodology – in 2019 the Board and Foundation engaged Trepwise to conduct community engagement. They did interviews, focus groups, and surveys of over 4,000 city residents. During this time, the staff formed the strategic planning committee to begin formulating a three-year strategic plan. This was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In January of 2020, the board and foundation contracted the Thomas Consulting Group to develop a mission for the library as well as a list of stakeholders. In February, there was another round of community engagement with a teen focus group, community interviews, and two round tables with service providers. In March every branch manager and regional manager and admin staff were interviewed. The result is that the vision remained constant and several themes quickly became evident.

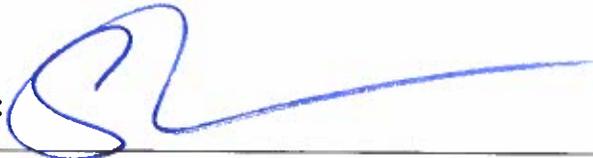
3. The prevalent theme is how to keep the library relevant, make it central to our neighborhoods, and change how patrons engage with the library. The overarching theme is creating a library lifestyle and meeting the needs of the people where they are and provide services that will give them a better quality of life.
4. Two cross-cutting themes: Communication and Equity. Some branches do better at communicating from managers to library staff, but there are inconsistencies in what is placed on the intranet, and staff are unsure where to get the latest information. There are many external stakeholders who are unaware of what is happening at the library. The community, in general, holds the library in very high esteem but many do not take the time to go to the library website to find current events and happenings. The plan addresses equity in regard to promoting staff and hiring a workforce that is representative of the city. The plan also addresses lack of access and transportation issues which mainly affect young people.
5. There were three overarching goals: Smart kids, Ready Workforce, Open Doors. Smart kids encourages the development of creative and critical thinking skills by providing access to the resources kids need to excel in Math, Art, Science, reading, and technology. Several conversations focused on digital literacy and how the pandemic and school closures exposed inequities. Children did not have access to hardware and internet in order to be able to work remotely. Smart Kids includes technology.
6. Early Childhood Literacy includes procuring resources for educators and early childhood centers whether it be working with curriculum instruction staff or help curate packets that teachers can access in real time and expand the number of literacy specialists that work for the library. Library staff will have the ability to go to Early Childhood Centers and teach them how to improve Early Childhood literacy by working with the families in the community.
7. The plan also strengthens alliances with schools, community groups, and parents to find ways to bridge gaps to improve literacy and learning for young people.
8. A third objective engages and empowers teens through innovative programming. The focus groups provided some examples of programming they would like to see and suggested improvement in the library buildings that would make the spaces more friendly (more like a café or relaxed environment where they do not have to be quiet).
9. The second goal is a ready workforce. The library must play a formal role in workforce development. People with lagging literacy skills needing to access job applications and get help with resumes come to the library for assistance. The consensus among stakeholders is that the library become more of a central figure in workforce development and have a seat at the table with other workforce development providers.
10. There are three specific objectives to have a ready workforce: Adult literacy, digital literacy, and workforce and small business development.
11. There is an opportunity to create a continuum for low-literacy adults who have children. Often low-literacy children have low-literacy parents. The NOPL will help to improve economic outcomes by investing in training, technology, and eResources to improve digital literacy and economic opportunity. First objective

is reimagining the spaces. As the interest in digital resources grows, there is less of a need for stacks of books.

12. The pandemic required libraries everywhere to rely on digital offerings and there is opportunity to expand and tie into the digital literacy objectives in the strategic plan. Promoting equity so that access to the library and its resources was a large part of this recommendation.
13. There is tremendous interest in having a library do more outreach. Early Childcare centers would like to see library staff at their locations. Some considerations are pop-ups or festivals in different neighborhoods. Some suggested a modern-concept book mobile that includes computer labs and hotspots. NOPL could be on the front end of developing best practices in moving towards home delivery. NOPL is committed to creating a collection that centers around equity and inclusion, diversity, providing training, and reimagining the physical space where special collections are available to underserved communities.
14. The 10-year plan is a framework for the operating plan, which will be constructed to measure the impact within the community. The operating plan will begin in 2022 to give the staff time to begin putting together strategies that align with our services. NOPL will assess the programs and services we offer to determine what changes need to be done. The annual operating plan will align with the annual budget.
15. Mr. Tapia asked if we are going to highlight local authors as part of the strategic plan. Ms. Thomas responded that is a facet of the current plan.
16. Mr. Settoon asked if the operational plan is going to define how and where we are spending money. Ms. Kimbrough-Mire responded that expenditures under the strategic plan will be directed by the Board. Ms. Thomas added that the operational plan will give staff the opportunity to make specific recommendations on how the plan will be implemented and what it will cost. She recommends that the operational plan be constructed with the annual budget so we can see where we need to invest our fund balance.
17. Ms. Neighbours asked when budget discussions begin. Ms. Thompson responded June or early July. Ms. Neighbours also asked when the board will be able to allocate some reserve money to the operational plan and if we will be able to show these potential expenditures prior to the millage vote in November. Ms. Thompson responded that the budget is presented to City Council in October so it will be available.
18. Ms. Neighbours asked if there has been conversation to keep Ms. Thomas on board to work with staff through the summer and fall. Ms. Thomas responded that conversation has not happened and thanked several members of the board and NOPL. Ms. Kimbrough-Mire added that she is grateful of the work Ms. Thomas put into constructing the 10-year plan and being so inclusive.
19. Ms. Thomas asked how the public can access the plan. Ms. LeGros responded that it will be on the NOPL website on May 12.
20. Ms. Neighbours asked if the public will be able to comment on the posted strategic plan. Ms. LeGros responded that she will create a link where comments will go directly to her.
21. Ms. Flentroy-Rice thanked Ms. Thomas and all that had a hand in the strategic planning process.

- VII. **Action Item: Approval of Millage Ballot Date -- (5:35 p.m.)**
- A. Mr. Settoon made a motion to officially make November 13, 2021 the date the NOPL millage is on the ballot and Ms. Flentroy-Rice seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
- VIII. **Action Item: Approval of New Land-Lease Terms -- (5:39 p.m.)**
- A. The hotel owner wants to modify the current lease in order to have a longer financial commitment. In doing so, the NOPL will receive an increased annual fund allocation. The city realtor drafted a memo outlining the details of the contract for the board. Current rent we receive is \$150,000 annually. The new contract would yield \$215,000 annually.
- B. Mr. Settoon asked how long the lease would be extended and Ms. Thompson responded it would extend the current lease by 15 years.
- C. Ms. Flentroy-Rice made a motion to approve the new land-lease contract and motion was seconded by Mr. Settoon. Motion carried unanimously.
- IX. **Attachments**
- A. Board Packet
- X. **Adjournment**
- A. Mr. Settoon made a motion to adjourn the May 11, 2021 regular board meeting and Ms. Flentroy-Rice seconded. Meeting adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

APPROVED:



Andrea Neighbours, ~~Treasurer~~

Secretary

7/21/21