



New Orleans Public Library
Board Meeting
Main Library Board Room
Tuesday, May 12, 2020
4:30 p.m.

MINUTES

I. **Call to Order** — Board Chair Phala Kimbrough Mire called the May 12, 2020 Board of Directors Meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

II. **Roll Call — 4:31 p.m.**

Phala Kimbrough Mire, Chair - Present
Vonda Flentroy-Rice, Vice-Chair- Present
Laurance Eustis III, Secretary- Not Present
Bernard Charbonnet- Not Present
James K. Chassee- Present
Raquel Dufauchard- Present
Mary Moran- Not Present
Andrea Neighbours- Present
William Settoon- Present
A quorum was present.

Non-Staff Present: Jennifer Kitner of Friends of NOPL

Staff Present: Dr. Gabriel Morley, Tammy Hanson, Michel Thompson, John Marc Sharpe

III. **Public Comments — 4:33 p.m.**

- A. Library staff member, Amanda Fallis, would like information on when library staff are returning to work and what kind of protective equipment the library will provide. She added that having timely information is crucial during this pandemic crisis.
- B. Nancy Lally of the Central Carrollton Association asked for details on when the library will open up and when it will be safe.
- C. Jamell Otis, Library Union Representative, would like information on what safety measures will be taken to protect frontline library staff who return to work, and is concerned about potential furloughs and layoffs of staff as well as the safety of the community.
- D. Adelle Marrs, library employee, feels there is a lack of information regarding opening status and procedures. She expressed concern for co-workers who need to determine if they will need child care so they can return to work on short notice and expressed worry for the safety of co-workers. She feels that the lack in sharing of vital information devalues the labor of the library employees.

IV. Approval of Consent Agendas – 4:37 p.m.

A. Approval of March 10th minutes

1. James Chassee made a motion to approve the March 10, 2020 meeting minutes and Raquel Dufauchard seconded the motion. Consent agenda was passed by unanimous vote.

V. Information Items—4:38 PM

A. Executive Committee Meeting

1. There was a discussion regarding the meeting minute format, and it was decided that Board Chair, Phala Kimbrough Mire, would be working with Executive Secretary, Tammy Hanson, to produce meeting minutes which will then be forwarded to Board Secretary, Larry Eustis and then distributed to the rest of the Board.
2. Ms. Kimbrough Mire provided the committee with a City Attorney update. The approval to use the Library Foundation title does not come from the Library Board of Directors so there is no further action required by the Board. As far as the new articles of incorporation, the City Attorney's office decided that the original articles appear to be valid since the vote to change them did not have a valid quorum. The City Attorney's office also determined that the statute of limitations had expired a year after that action was taken. Thus, any legal recourse is not attainable. The City Attorney's office suggests the Board move forward and work with the Library Foundation to adopt articles that are in line with the original. Our plan is to work with Barbara and the Library Foundation Board on new and restated articles agreed upon by both the Library Board of Directors and the Library Foundation. All board members will get an email outlining the details on those issues.

Ms. Neighbours thanked Ms. Kimbrough Mire for seeking a conclusion on this issue so the Board of Directors can move forward with the Library Foundation on stable legal footing.

B. Budget Department Update

1. Budget Director, Michel Thompson, reported that the library has received 95% of its funding, equaling \$18.9 million. Personnel costs for the 1st Quarter is on target at 25%. Total operating expenses since March 1st is \$353,000 which is lower than usual due to the current spending freeze. She anticipates that operating expenses will pick up as new purchasing procedures become standardized.

C. 1st Quarter Dashboard Report

1. Executive Director, Dr. Gabriel Morley reported on 1st Quarter statistics. There is a 1% increase in digital material circulation. He anticipates that non-digital circulation will spike when the library reopens and level off by the end of the year.
2. Dr. Morley informed the Board that the City Council is not planning on proceeding with a millage this fall. Due to COVID-19 issues, the millage vote will occur in spring or early summer 2021.

3. Ms. Neighbours conversed with a Council member regarding the combining of millages who stated that since property taxes and library funds have increased significantly, a conversation regarding the library accepting a smaller millage amount in order to maintain an individual millage can and should happen. Audubon was able to do this successfully and recoup funding for operations. Perhaps a delay in a millage vote is an opportunity for the library to look at its budget needs and take that number to the Council in hopes of retaining an independent millage.
- D. Executive Director Update
1. While the Mayor gave the library permission to reopen, we have no timeline. The Mayor is relaxing some standards, and enacting other standards. Mr. Settoon asked Dr. Morley to expand on what the Mayor's plan is. Dr. Morley responded that the Mayor has enacted stricter protocols than Gov. Edwards has set such as requiring that all patrons wear a mask in the library. Many of the Mayor's protocols are basic things such as maintaining social distancing, staying home when sick, regular handwashing, and no large public gatherings. The library is considering conducting business by appointment. Dr. Morley is working diligently with the HR department to get as many staff back to work as possible while complying with Health Department guidelines, and he hopes to have more answers by the end of the week. Staff and board members will receive communication through email or telephone call either from HR or through branch managers. Dr. Morley objected to taking temperatures and contact tracing such as recording the names of library patrons as they visit.
 2. Marketing Director, John Marc Sharpe will make the dashboard of statistics available to the public on the library webpage
 3. Ms. Neighbours asked Dr. Morley to expound on what will happen at the end of the week when staff members' civil leave expires and how much input he has in developing reopening plans. Dr. Morley responded that we are only limited to what the Mayor's mandates are. As of 6:01 Saturday, the Mayor is initiating her "Safest at Home" proclamation with which we must comply. This is an attempt by Mayor Cantrell to balance business, commercial, and public interests. The majority of city employees leave expires this week. The city is researching to figure out what the next steps will be. The library has looked at models that other libraries have adopted.
 4. Ms. Neighbours inquired about what our library staff will do once they run out of available leave. Dr. Morley responded that is unknown. As of this morning, the city's response is that they are going to research possible outcomes. Ms. Kimbrough Mire asked Dr. Morley to keep the board informed of any new information from the Mayor's office and thanked him for his leadership during this difficult time.
 5. Cynthia Nelson, a library patron, asked if the library could go beyond safety measures the Mayor is adopting such as continued paid civil leave so staff could remain home. Dr. Morley responded that all available paid leave has expired so that is not an option. Ms. Nelson asked if civil leave policy could be changed to adapt to the pandemic situation. Dr. Morley responded that he has no additional knowledge of any changes that are being considered.

VI. Discussion Items—5:12 PM

A. Strategic Planning Retreat

1. Ms. Neighbours brought forth some points for the board to consider in regards to our strategic plan. First, the pandemic has exposed many inequities within the City that the board is well suited to address. We need to be thoughtful in the services we deliver amid the “new normal.” Second, we have a director who is well-versed in data and technology so we need to rethink how we engage data and technology to best serve the public, i.e. hours of operation and how best to reach all of our constituents. Third, we need to discuss what the role of the librarian is. Some staff feel they should not be social workers for the public yet staff must be willing to go beyond doing more than information science. The board and Executive Director need to work together to determine what the library looks like in the 21st Century and a post-pandemic world. Furthermore, the board needs to discuss future financial planning as there is pressure on the library to spend down some of its reserves. There is a huge digital divide in the City so perhaps this gap can be bridged through extra funding. Finally, the Strategic Planning committee needs to discuss the millage to determine a realistic millage request and work with City Council members to keep an independent millage.
2. Additionally, the Council member Ms. Neighbours spoke to said that the Council needs to hear from Library Board members immediately regarding the library’s needs due to the immense budget pressures the City is facing. Any strategic planning decisions need to be conducted in collaboration with our Equity Task Force to ensure inequities are not exacerbated. Ms. Neighbors will work with the Executive Director and Board Chair to prepare an agenda for the upcoming Strategic Planning Retreat.
3. Dr. Morley asked Ms. Neighbours if the City Council member she spoke to mentioned a specific amount of mills we would need to give up to keep an individual millage. Ms. Neighbours responded that the Council member did not give a specific amount but stressed the need for the library to effectively calculate our financial needs and bring that data to the City Council. She also got an indication that the Council would like the library to collaborate with other city departments to utilize combined resources, especially technology.

VII. Attachments

VIII. Adjournment

- A. A motion was moved to adjourn the May 12th Board meeting by Bill Settoon. Andrea Neighbours seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. The May 12, 2020 Board meeting adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
Secretary, Laurance Eustis III

DATE: _____