

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
JANUARY 4, 2023**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on January 4, 2023 at the C. Burr Artz Library.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: J. D’Agostino, T. Lancaster, G. Mayfield, M. O’Leary, S. Sheppard, S. White and County Liaison, J. Donald.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: K. Spertzel.

STAFF PRESENT: J. Kelly, Director; S. McDuff, Associate Director; C. Hall, Associate Director; B. McDermott, Finance Manager; J. El-Zeftawy, Development Manager; B. Hissong, Community Engagement Manager; M. Currens, Library Collections Manager; S. Jones, Communications Manager; C. Brohawn, Project Coordinator; B. Heltebridle, Branch Administrator – C. Burr Artz Library; A. Knight, Branch Administrator – Middletown Library; A. Whitney, Branch Administrator – Thurmont/Emmitsburg Libraries; R. Frecker, Branch Administrator, Walkersville Library; S. Yates, Branch Administrator – Urbana Regional/Point of Rocks Libraries; J. Diaz, Branch Administrator – Brunswick Library, Josephine Incolla-Moore, Library Technician – Adult, Urbana Regional Library; Rachel Kurtz, Library Associate Generalist – Myersville Library, Susan Wells, Library Associate Generalist – Point of Rocks Library; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: S. White made a motion to approve the Minutes of November 16, 2022; seconded by S. Sheppard. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly stated that during regular Board meetings, you see a lot of familiar faces and, over time, you get to know the members of FCPL’s team; however, we don’t often have visiting colleagues from other County divisions. Mr. Kelly thereafter introduced Janice Spiegel. Janice is the Special Project Manager for the County Budget Office, a new position in that department. Janice is attending the FCPL Board of Trustees Meeting this evening in this new role.

This past weekend, FCPL welcomed 2023 at Noon Year’s Eve events across branch libraries systemwide. You may have attended one of these family-friendly events or read about them when they were profiled in the Frederick News Post. Our Children’s Services Supervisor, Deb Spurrier, was quoted in the piece, saying that these kinds of programs are a great example of the role FCPL’s branches play as ‘community hubs’ in the neighborhoods that we serve. Mr. Kelly stated that he couldn’t agree more and this was a great way to kick off the year for our libraries.

Since our last Board meeting in November, the team has remained focused on the priorities of our Strategic Plan -- Expanding Access, Building Bridges, and Sparking Excitement. They continue to work on expanding access by helping under-served communities overcome barriers to service.

C Burr Artz staff began outreach with Butterfly Ridge Inclusive Pre-K Classrooms. These classes do not receive library services at the elementary school and staff were looking for a way that FCPL could support these youngest students. Our team developed “classroom libraries” which they created with discarded books. In addition, the team will offer storytimes once a month.

Meanwhile down in Brunswick, staff attended a Transit Open House forum to learn about shuttle services and access issues related to transportation in the Brunswick community. They learned that Transit staff have plans to change a route, adding a stop directly in front of the library. In addition, our Systems Department pulled “heat maps” to reflect hourly door counts indicating the branch’s busiest hours. This data, along with general feedback from library staff, will be considered for new transit schedules to make the library an even more accessible destination for the community.

Staff have also been working to increase access to relevant technologies and foster digital literacy. The November issue of Frederick Magazine featured an article highlighting FCPL’s popular Memory Lab service. Since the service started just a few years ago, hundreds of customers have been trained in the image scanning and audio-visual equipment helping users convert and preserve precious family memories in a digital format. The Memory Lab is a mobile service which travels to different branches and we have also partnered with local organizations, like AARCH and Frederick Health Hospice, expanding access to this technology for more members of our community through outreach programming.

The FCPL team built bridges by leveraging existing partnerships. Our Civil War program series with “The History Consortium” was a huge success. This Consortium is based in Southern Pennsylvania but includes partners in Maryland’s Carroll, Frederick, Washington, and Allegheny Counties. FCPL hosted two programs that week. Between folks attending the in-person lectures, live streaming on Facebook and YouTube, or watching the programs asynchronously, we reached over 1300 people. Hats off to Derek Gee from our Maryland Room, who coordinated the programs and ensured that the technology for the hybrid programs went off without a hitch.

The Myersville staff deepened their connection to the local Music and Trolley Festival. They hosted trolley talks and lawn games and created a Trolley Art Competition. They connected with over 150 members of our community.

Walkersville staff facilitated connections to community services, hosting two Thursday evening vaccine clinics in partnership with the Health Department who administered over 100 vaccines.

Mr. Kelly noted that in just these three examples, FCPL reached thousands of people, but it is also true that we make a difference in individual lives, one interaction at a time, every single day. Recently, staff at our Emmitsburg branch noticed a young couple sleeping in their car in the parking lot. The couple explained to one of our staff members, Penny, that they were currently experiencing homelessness. Our team connected them with a local shelter. The customer also told our staff that she was pregnant, so they connected her to other community services including the Health Department's WIC program and a local organization that provided free clothing. The woman returned a few weeks later to let the Emmitsburg team know that her partner has since gotten a job and, after two weeks of job training, they were finally moving into a place of their own. Sometimes you hear us say that libraries are about more than just books. Penny and the Emmitsburg team are a great example of that.

Finally, FCPL staff are sparking excitement by creating opportunities to engage with the library in unexpected places. The Maryland STEM Festival takes place from mid-October through mid-November and is a celebration of science, technology, engineering, and math. Over the course of the month, there are hundreds of events focused on fun, interactive science-learning opportunities. This year, our Youth Services Coordinator, Erin Gambrill, served as President of the Maryland STEM Festival Board of Directors. She guided this state-wide initiative through the planning and presentation of numerous programs related to science and technology, culminating in the Maryland STEM Festival Parade in downtown Frederick, on November 5th. Participants marched from West Frederick Middle School to Baker Park where a pop-up STEM Festival with many booths awaited the community. Thanks to this year's success, the Fall 2023 Festival will again include a parade in Frederick.

Mr. Kelly noted that sometimes we are building bridges and sparking excitement with hundreds of folks at our programs and sometimes we are doing this in one-on-one interactions. Recently, at Urbana Regional Library, a customer contacted the branch to ask the brand name of the toy trains we have available in our new play kits in the Children's Department. She shared that her son had benefitted greatly from engaging with the play kits in the library. She explained that "they have been good for his autism journey," adding that she was working on replicating the same play kit system at home because of observing her son's positive interactions with the kits. When library staff offered to email her links to the toys, the customer was overjoyed and shared that the library has been transformative for her son. She told our team that "One year ago, my son was non-verbal. But we started coming to the library and discovered launchpads. Hearing the words for him and taking out books each Sunday and returning them has been life changing. He is now 5 in kindergarten and has been placed in an advanced reading group." She said that she "tells all of her friends in her mom's group about the library."

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly reviewed statistics. He noted that since we did not meet in December, he will be highlighting two months of statistics. He added that previous Dashboards have compared the current month's use to a 3-year average; however, recently, we found ourselves increasingly comparing current use to FY19, our last pre-COVID year and a highwater mark for the system. With these new dashboards, we went ahead and made that change and it tells a more compelling story. On the October Dashboard, we noticed that while we are offering fewer total programs as

compared to FY19, our attendance totals are nearly the same. This is encouraging. The Community is coming out in the same numbers for the programs that we offer.

You can see that current visits follow the month-to-month trend seen in FY19 and we are just slightly below YTD totals.

In terms of circulation, we are currently outpacing FY19's record borrowing. If circulation remains strong in the 2nd half of the fiscal year, then FCPL could see its highest circulation to date.

While our physical collection still accounts for a majority of borrowing, circulation of digital materials is gaining ground as a percentage of total circulation, accounting for almost 40% of borrowing year-to-date. This will be important to keep in mind when we consider the draft operating budget in the coming weeks and you see anticipated spending across formats.

At our next meeting, we will also present a snapshot of the current publishing landscape and you'll see how the cost of individual titles across various formats compare. The challenge for us remains the same -- keeping up with increasing demand across multiple formats.

Wifi use continues to dwarf FY19 use, leveraging last year's grant-funded investment in hardware to expand and boost our signal at every branch, helping bridge the gap in broadband accessibility faced by many in our county.

New library card registrations remain strong. While this is a number you see every month on the Dashboard, Jenny D'Agostino had a great question at our last board meeting about our total cardholder number. The total cardholder number does fluctuate, but as of late September, our total cardholders were 122,099, roughly 45% of the county.

Mr. Kelly noted that he is proud of the work our team did during Library Card Sign up month and the outreach work they continue to do, getting the word out about our collections, programs, and services, engaging new users, and getting more cards into more hands. This number will continue to grow.

Budget/CIP Update: Mr. Kelly stated that January is a big month for budget planning. As a reminder, he noted that he will provide the annual budget refresher training to the Board's Finance Committee next Thursday, January 12, 2023 at Noon. This virtual training is open to any member of the Board who wishes to attend. Thereafter, he will then present FCPL's FY24 proposed operating budget to the Finance Committee on the evening of January 18th and to the full Board on February 1, 2023.

On the capital side of things, FCPL staff had a meeting this morning with the County's CIP Committee. This is the group tasked with making recommendations to County Executive Fitzwater on all proposed capital projects as she considers her upcoming CIP budget. That budget will set priorities for design and construction of projects county-wide between FY24 and FY29.

Middletown Library construction is already underway and, barring any unforeseen delays, DPW is projecting the work to be completed by the end of this calendar year. After Middletown, there are 4 remaining projects outlined in our facilities master plan – West Frederick, North Frederick, the East County Regional library at Linganore Town Center, and the remodel of our C Burr Artz Library. We were given an opportunity to advocate for all 4 today. As the next step, the Committee will make a recommendation to the County Executive on capital projects across all divisions, and once she has set priorities, we will have a better idea of the timing of these projects. Mr. Kelly advised that he will keep everyone abreast of any developments as well as opportunities for advocacy on the FY24 operating and capital budgets.

Ms. D’Agostino inquired whether there have been any changes with regard to the costs that the publishers are charging for books. Mr. Kelly advised that nothing has changed. The legislation that was passed by The Maryland General Assembly, was challenged by the publishers subsequent to the vote and was struck down so not much has changed on the publisher’s side of pricing models. Some of the items can be cost prohibitive and it is a challenge for FCPL to meet that need.

She further inquired whether the number provided for library cards includes school cards. Mr. Kelly stated that Student Success Cards are included in the total number.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Recognition of LATI Graduates: The Library Associate Training Institute is a 90-hour training program that all Library Associates in the State of Maryland must complete. Through this program, staff gain a greater understanding of the principles and value of public libraries and about the profession in general. They learn about print and online resources, the reference interview and excellent customer service. The program involves online learning sessions, independent work, and coaching sessions. It is an intense program and they balance 90-hours of coursework with their day-to-day responsibilities. Library Associates are critical to our operation, providing so much of our reference assistance to the community. They, along with our Circulation staff, are the backbone of public service. The LATI program ensures that our Library Associates are trained to a high standard state-wide and completing this program is a huge achievement.

Mr. Kelly thereafter recognized the three individuals attending tonight’s meeting that recently completed the LATI training. Those individuals are: Ninna Incolla-Moore, Rachel Kurtz, and Carly Wells.

Members of the FCPL Board of Trustees congratulated the recent graduates as well.

b. Financial Report: Ms. McDermott presented the Fiscal Year 2023 Financial Report for the month of December. She noted that the data is tentative as of November 30, 2022.

Revenues collected are at 30%. FCPL received revenue from the Maryland State Education Grant in the amount of \$300,000. She noted that there was also an increase in county in-kind

revenue in the amount of \$510,000, passport revenue in the amount of \$8,190 and Federal grant revenue of \$2,715. Miscellaneous operating revenue was up \$18,000.

FCPL's expenditures are at 37%. Ms. McDermott noted that there was a slight increase in each budget line for expenditures. There was a 15% increase in library material purchases. County Finance posted the in-kind county appropriations, personnel and telephone expenses, which reflected the most significant percentage change of those three expenditures by 53% for the month. Equipment maintenance and repair expenditures increased by 43% for our ILS annual renewal. Other operating expenditures increased by 17% from the previous month, primarily for advertising, programming and postal expenses.

Ms. McDermott noted that since we are about five months into the fiscal year, it is expected that expenditures would be at about 40% so FCPL is actually under budget at this time in the fiscal year.

Grants Awarded are at \$1,064,095. Ms. McDermott stated that since the last board meeting, the Ausherman Family Foundation General Grant was awarded for \$2,995 to support the Foundation Center Network's annual subscription renewal to provide access to valuable resources at no cost to grant seekers and non-profit professionals. Grants submitted are at \$270,489. Two new grants have been submitted. The World on the Move 2022 from the American Library Association, if awarded, will support \$500 in programming-related supplies to host a physical exhibit at FCPL. The Community Service Committee Funding Grant from The Rotary Club of Carroll Creek in the amount of \$2,000, if awarded, will support a community-centered event for expecting families.

Donations are at \$60,627, which is an increase of \$31,000 from the previous board meeting update. This includes several generous donations that were received for Greatest Need and the branches. The Maryland Room also received its annual endowment fund of \$15,000. These funds are received each year and are solely for the use and operation of The Maryland Room.

Other endowment revenue is at \$76,972. There has been no change to other endowment revenue since the previous board meeting.

Ms. McDermott noted that this brings the total to \$1,201,693.

c. Thurmont/Emmitsburg Library Update: A. Whitney, Branch Administrator at the Thurmont/Emmitsburg libraries noted that staff provide service to the entire northern part of Frederick County. During last year's report, she shared many of the physical changes that occurred inside our buildings during the pandemic as we refreshed spaces with new flooring, service desks and more. She noted that since that time, staff have really been in transition as we moved back to our normal operating schedule, resumed live programming and brought new staff members onto the team. She thereafter displayed a photo of some of the staff of the North County team.

Ms. Whitney also noted that FCPL transitioned to a new Strategic Plan. She advised that some of the ways that we have worked to expand access as part of our branch plan is: In Emmitsburg,

we have a working relationship with Seton Center, Mount St. Mary's and the Town of Emmitsburg and we often work together on community events. Staff works with Camp Journey and On the Mark, both organizations which provide age-appropriate activities and peer support to adolescents. Staff make regular monthly visits to the Thurmont Senior Center, which is no longer a part of the County Department of Aging, and we work with two partners, SOAR and Humana Health to bring more programming both to the center and the library. Staff are very excited to take new outreach laptops to the seniors later this month so they can pick up some new tech skills. In addition, we recently had a SOAR panel discussion at Thurmont Regional Library and learned of some transportation options that are available through Transit so we are investigating how that might be helpful to expanding access to the people in the northern part of the County.

In addition, Ms. Whitney noted that there are two other services that we began offering this year. There were vaccination clinics through the County Health Department. Health Department staff administered 897 vaccinations since January. A notary service was launched in April and we have seen a lot of new customers in the building who have never visited before as a result of both of these services. Notary service has the extra benefit of being free, if you have a FCPL library card.

Ms. Whitney advised that this year, one of our system-wide goals is to engage our newest residents. We are pitching a "Welcome Home" postcard to local realtors to be distributed to their clients. There are some new housing developments in the pipeline for Thurmont and Emmitsburg and we want to be ready to welcome our newest customers.

Throughout this past year, staff have been getting back out into the community, to schools, community events, and partnering with outside organizations to make connections that will be impactful for our customers. Some of those events include Opening day at Thurmont Little League, National Night Out sponsored by the police department and Sheriff's Office, Thurmont Business Expo, The Maryland Iron Festival, Brookfield Farms Pumpkin Patch and the local state and national parks are all places we have visited to promote our services and engage our community.

This past year we visited Mount St. Mary's during the Freshman Orientation. It was a great event and we signed up lots of students. Our Teen Librarian, Alli, works with the Mount Librarian to coordinate books for the Mount Book Club and provides QR codes that link students to our online resources like Hoopla.

The Emmitsburg Community Center, home of the Emmitsburg Library, celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2022. Staff put together a historic photo display and a party in coordination with the Town of Emmitsburg and the Emmitsburg High School Alumni Association.

Continuously during the year staff have been taking their own personal equity, diversity and inclusion education journey, and we have an EDI conversation at our all-hands meetings. There is a greater awareness of trying to represent everyone in our community as we are doing displays, choosing titles and topics for the programs, and how we interact with our customers.

Our third priority is to spark excitement. All of our branches have amazing programs beloved by the community and nothing sparks excitement more than programs featuring live animals.

Ms. Whitney noted that because Thurmont Regional Library houses the Agricultural History Room, staff do a lot of environmental and agricultural programming. This year our branch adopted a cow named Sally through the Adopt-A-Cow Program sponsored by Discovery Dairy. Sally lives on a dairy farm in Havre de Grace and staff are provided information, updates and pictures of the calf from October through April since Sally is too far away to visit the Thurmont Regional Library. Thurmont staff worked with the Catocin High School FFA to find a local dairy. Owen Cook, a Junior at Catocin High School has raised his cow, Roxanne, since birth and he was able to answer all the kid's questions about raising a dairy cow.

Spring brings the Annual Thurmont Greenfest which we host in coordination with the Town of Thurmont and the Thurmont Green Team. We invite lots of organizations who focus on sustainability, environmentalism and preservation to come to promote their services. This year, staff won a grant for Bee and Pollinator education, and we were able to use those funds to create lots of programming opportunities. Seed packets, honey sticks and pollinator informational cards were some of the take-aways that families received at Greenfest. Staff also took the pollinator program to our new FCPS Magnet School, Sabillasville Environmental School.

Thereafter, Ms. Whitney noted that storytimes are at the heart of our services. Besides indoor storytimes, we frequently take the show on the road. She displayed a photo of one of the programs that took place at Catocin Mountain Park. She also noted that they work with Catocin Falls and have various hikes.

The Celtic Concert resumed at Mount St. Mary's in March. The Music on the Deck series of concerts at the Thurmont Regional Library resumed this past summer also.

Halloween always generates a lot of excitement and opportunities for fun. At our second Annual Trunk or Treat we saw some growth. Seven businesses participated and we had about 400 people in line moving through the parking lot and onto the spooky trail to play games and show off their costumes. This event is a fundraiser for our Friends of the Library and it also gives the local business community a chance to interact with our clientele. The most creative business was Catocin Vet Clinic. They brought a giant Operation game where you had to successfully remove the furball from the cat in order to get your treat.

Ms. Whitney advised that system-wide kids were invited to read as much as possible about Dinosaurs in Dinovember and were challenged to find the golden dino in one of the books from the library which entitled them to win a prize. These kinds of creative system-wide programs, which are promoted heavily on social media, generate a lot of excitement among our families and encourage kids to keep reading.

Thereafter she provided a snapshot of statistics. She noted that the numbers are starting to come back. Evenings are still a little bit slow as meeting room bookings have not come back to the pre-pandemic level for whatever reason. She added that connectivity is still an issue and noted that staff hear from their customers how much they value our fast, free and reliable wi-fi service.

She further noted that they have heavy use of study rooms and they see lots of people working and studying during the daytime hours.

In closure she noted that these are just a few of the ways we have worked to meet our strategic priorities and goals in the past year, and we are excited for the new year ahead.

Further discussion followed about providing library information to new residents as a “welcome” to their new neighborhood.

Internet accessibility was also discussed.


BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS: None.

OTHER CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

The next FCPL Board of Trustees meeting will be held at the C. Burr Artz Library – Community Room at 7:00 p.m. on February 1, 2023.

S. Sheppard made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by S. White. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.



Jenny D'Agostino, Chair
Frederick County Public Libraries
Board of Trustees