

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
JANUARY 6, 2021**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on January 6, 2021 via a virtual meeting.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: J. D’Agostino, C. Greenway, M. O’Leary, S. Sheppard, C. Smith, K. Spertzel, S. White, and County Liaison, Jerry Donald.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: J. Kelly, Director; S. McDuff, Associate Director; C. Hall, Associate Director; D. Frank-Rice, IT Coordinator; S. Jones, Communications Manager; B. McDermott, Finance Manager; J. Marshall, Manager –Systems, A. Moser – Assistant Branch Administrator – C. Burr Artz Library, Z. Wilson, Inter-Library Loan Coordinator; L. Taft, Administrative Specialist; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: J. D’Agostino made a motion to approve the Minutes of November 4, 2020; seconded by C. Greenway. No further discussion.
VOTE: Unanimous

CHAIR’S REPORT: Mr. O’Leary noted that the virtual library will be the prevalent mode for the foreseeable future based on the trends of the pandemic. We do not see opening the libraries anytime soon. The virtual suite of services and content are working well and are continuing to develop and expand.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

a. FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly wished everyone a Happy New Year and welcomed everyone to the first Board Meeting of the year. He noted that 2020 brought many challenges but the library stayed flexible. FCPL adapted to continually serve the people of Frederick County - evolving services and expanding collections - while keeping our customers and our staff safe.

Mr. Kelly noted that at the November Board Meeting he mentioned that a few public libraries in Maryland had started re-opening their branches – offering services by appointment or with limits based on building capacity. Every one of those libraries have since stepped back and shuttered their doors as they’ve seen cases in their counties climb. At present, every library system in Maryland is offering a model like our own – curbside service, virtual programming, more robust digital resources, and reference services by phone/chat/email or some hybrid of those services.

Frederick County’s positivity rate continues to trend upward exceeding the statewide average.

The county is unlikely to see its caseload peak from exposures over the holidays for at least another couple of weeks.

All of that being said, the protocols that FCPL has developed and put into practice are, for now, working and allows us to continue providing services to the community.

Mr. Kelly thereafter reviewed statistics. Looking at visits on the November dashboard, you will see a line for curbside visits which shows a pretty consistent trend. FCPL had approximately 7,000 curbside appointments across the system in November.

Following a recent conversation Mr. Kelly had with Mr. O'Leary, he wanted to bring to everyone's attention another line on the dashboard and that is virtual visits. This line shows more fluctuation from month-to-month. The traffic shown here measures visits to our website and our online catalog. What is not captured in this line are customers who go directly to our content via third party vendors. As an example, Mr. Kelly stated that as a regular library user, he goes directly to the Libby app on his phone to access FCPL's audiobook collection and uses a Roku device to access Kanopy films on his TV. He stated that he does these things far more frequently than he visits FCPL's website or online catalog. He added that he trusts this is the case for many of our users once they become familiar with our collections.

Mr. Kelly further noted that visits tracked are meaningful for us, but understand that they only tell part of the story. He stated that he is bringing this to everyone's attention to remind everyone that low-level volatility within a narrow band is no cause for alarm. If, however, we were to see a huge spike or precipitous drop in this line across a few months, and we were unsure of the cause, we would certainly find out why.

Circulation, as you see, has been consistent. E-Content accounts for 55% of total circulation for the year and the physical collection accounts for the other 45% - a strong showing given that all of that circulation of physical items is happening curbside.

You may have noticed the "New at Your Library" list is now featured on the front page of FCPL's website. These also help with discoverability and have led to some increased circulation.

In past months, wifi trends have been discussed. Customers were using this service by stationing themselves in close proximity to the buildings. As a result, between spring and fall, we saw 7 months of increased wifi use. However, that number dipped for the first time in November. We suspect changing weather could be a contributing factor. It has gotten more uncomfortable to sit outside of a branch for a prolonged period of time. We'll have a better idea when the December numbers come out to determine if this month was an anomaly or the start of a trend.

Mr. Kelly noted that programming dipped slightly in November, but as he further noted at one of the recent meetings, the trends we are seeing with regard to programming this year follow the typical monthly trends we would see in pre-COVID times.

Finally, a word about social media followers which continued to trend upward. Samantha Jones, our Communications Manager, is on the agenda this evening and will take a deeper dive into some of our social media engagements and strategy. Mr. Kelly took a moment to thank the Communications Department and their partners across the system for their hard work.

As you can see, followers are tracked across 3 platforms, but it is important to note that, by their nature, each of these platforms has its own voice, each tells a story in a different way, and each engages and cultivates relationships with a different core demographic. It is hard work. Managing social media is both an art and a science and thanked FCPL's entire team for the success reflected here.

b. CIP/Budget – Update: Mr. Kelly noted that on the operating side of things, he will begin with the current Fiscal Year. He stated that at the last meeting he advised that revenues were down and some adjustments were made to deal with those shortfalls. He added that FCPL is not alone in this as some other county divisions find themselves in similar circumstances.

At the County level, there is a chance that the County Executive could bring a mid-year budget adjustment to the Council for consideration. If that happens, then some divisions could see support to help offset the aforementioned shortfalls. Mr. Kelly noted that he shared FCPL's current situation with the Head of Budget and it was an opportunity to again stress the importance of our proposed funding formulas for collections and general operating expenses.

Additionally, on December 14th, Mr. Kelly advised that he and Mr. O'Leary attended the County Executive's first public hearing on the FY 2022 budget where we were able to advocate for the funding formulas yet again.

Mr. Kelly thereafter shared a few upcoming, important dates:

- January 8th - Mr. Kelly will lead a budget refresher for the Board's Finance Committee. He added that this training is open to any member of the Board who would wish to attend as well.
- January 19th – Library staff will present the FY 2022 proposed operating budget to the Board's Finance Committee.
- February 3rd – the full Board will vote on the operating budget.

Mr. Kelly then moved to the capital side of things. He noted that the design for the Middletown Library is underway. The design firm led two public input sessions and developed an online form to gather feedback from the community. Utilizing that information, the architect developed preliminary design elements. Those elements were then shared with the Middletown Planning Commission. For some context, every municipality is different, so the process can look a little different from one library construction project to the next.

In Middletown, the Planning Commission signs off on the site plan (parking, storm water management, etc.) and, because of their unique zoning ordinances, they also approve some external elements of design -- like colors, materials, and massing (shape/form).

There were things that Middletown's Planning Commission did not like about the architect's preliminary design. Mr. Kelly added that it is still early in the process so he is hopeful that the project will remain on track. At the February Board meeting, S. McDuff will share the latest design with members of the FCPL Board of Trustees.

Shifting to the Fiscal Year 2022 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget, Mr. Kelly noted that FCPL staff will be meeting with the County's CIP Committee on Friday, January 8, 2021. During this meeting we will be discussing library projects that are in the current CIP budget and proposed projects for out-years of the plan. The committee then makes recommendations to the County Executive and she develops her proposed CIP budget.

The only building project in the current CIP is the Middletown construction project. In the out-years of the plan the East County Regional Library is scheduled and is planned for development at Route 144 and Eaglehead Drive. Mr. Kelly added that this year we will also resubmit for the West Frederick Library which will be a 15,000 square foot facility in the area of the Golden Mile. In addition, Mr. Kelly added that we will resubmit for the North Frederick Library, a 40,000 square foot facility which would accommodate a 15,000 square foot library branch and a 25,000 square foot area for system-wide operational functions. He added that ideally this facility would be in the vicinity of the Clover Ridge development. There is also a proposal for an elementary school in that same area. And, finally, he advised that staff will be submitting a new project which will be the C. Burr Artz remodel plan. He further added that by the time this project finds its way into the CIP, the C. Burr Artz Library will be 25-30 years old.

Each of the aforementioned projects were outlined in FCPL's Facility Master Plan, a grant-funded report, completed in 2019 by an outside architecture firm that outlines community needs.

Mr. Donald inquired when construction would begin on the Middletown Library. Mr. Kelly stated construction will be in 2022-2023. Mr. Donald further inquired whether a Senior Center will be separate from the Middletown Library. Mr. Kelly advised that the Senior Center is looking for a separate site.

Additionally, each of these projects fall within designated 'primary growth areas' as outlined in the County's own Livable Frederick comprehensive plan. He noted that there is a need for each of these projects but added that it can take years to get capital projects into the CIP, but these annual meetings are the first step.

Ms. Greenway asked if there is a priority as far as these projects are concerned. Mr. Kelly stated that the Middletown Library is a definite priority. The Middletown Library is currently listed in the CIP. In addition, the East County Regional Library is a priority and it is now listed in the out-years of the CIP. Mr. Kelly added that the other projects were outlined in order as to priority. The West Frederick Library along the Golden Mile should have been in the CIP 10 – 20 years ago. He further noted that if he can get this into the CIP, it would be a huge benefit for the community.

The North County Library will be resubmitted as well. As noted earlier, part of that space would be for operations. By having this space, we could then remodel the C. Burr Artz Library.

Ms. Greenway asked where the North County Library would be located. Mr. Kelly advised that ideally it would be in the Clover Ridge development. Ms. Greenway further inquired whether the Clover Ridge facility would be a brand new building and have a larger footprint because administrative services would be located at that facility. Mr. Kelly advised that the public portion of that facility would be a 15,000 square foot facility for the public library and 25,000 square feet for operational space. Ms. Greenway further inquired whether FCPL has received donated land for the Clover Ridge facility. Mr. Kelly advised that we do not have donated land at this time. He added that it would be ideal if land would be donated, of course, but included in the cost of acquisition would be that cost for the land, if needed. Ms. Greenway asked if FCPL has ever had to provide their own property. Mr. Kelly stated that he has been with FCPL for 10 years and to his knowledge the answer is “no”. He added that since he has been here at FCPL, all new library facilities have been built on donated land.

Ms. White noted that it is a smart way to do this by having the Clover Ridge facility built in order to move administrative functions to that library before renovating the C. Burr Artz Library. She inquired whether the remodel of the C. Burr Artz Library will include the entire space for customers. Mr. Kelly clarified that administration and operational services are two separate things. He added that the administrative wing, where his office is located, houses a few administrative staff. He noted that what he was referring to as operational services would include collections, IT/Systems, and other system-wide operations that are supervised by Associate Director, Catie Hall. Mr. Kelly noted that we are very early in this process but he would envision some small amount of space could be retained at the current location for administration. He added that at the C. Burr Artz Library we currently have approximately 45,000 square feet that is devoted to the public but if we can get the operational services out of that building, that would give them an additional 20,000 square feet for the public. The C. Burr Artz Library would be remodeled and go from a 45,000 square foot facility for the public to a 65,000 square foot facility for the public. He further noted that not much can be done with the current footprint of the C. Burr Artz Library so the remodel of the C. Burr Artz Library and moving operational services to the North County Library would be the way to go.

Ms. Greenway inquired whether someone has been secured to do the remodel of the C. Burr Artz Library. Mr. Kelly noted that the projects he outlined are years and years away so we do not have a design firm or architect yet. Ms. Greenway asked if we are dreaming. Mr. Kelly stated that you could call it that but he noted that his job is to think about the library 10 – 20 years from now. It could be seen as dreaming but the Facilities Master Plan itself included the proposed projects. Mr. Kelly stated that if we can make this happen, it would be great but the priority is to commit more space to the public in the downtown community. However the chips fall for administration and operations, that is the way they will fall. It is our goal to give the public more space at the downtown location. As we look at a remodel, Mr. Kelly stated that we are looking at the facility and to use the best space we can. Ms. Greenway stated that it is so difficult for staff to park downtown and staff are taking up parking that customers could be using. Mr. Kelly

stated that the parking is run by the City but the C. Burr Artz Library is a county-owned facility.

Ms. D'Agostino inquired whether there is a count of visitors by branch. Mr. Kelly inquired whether Ms. D'Agostino was asking about the number of customers that visit each library branch. She stated that she was wondering if the downtown facility merits the remodel and how much it is being used. Mr. Kelly stated that staff do track those figures and he will provide that information. With this information you will be able to track the traffic at the downtown library currently and over the years.

Ms. Smith stated that the C. Burr Artz Library is prime real estate on East Patrick Street and a showcase in downtown Frederick and we should capitalize on that more than we are at this time. Mr. Kelly stated that he can envision an entrance on Patrick Street as well.

Ms. Greenway commented that as you drive down Rosemont Avenue towards the Clover Ridge area, it is extraordinary. Mr. Kelly stated that HBM not only looked at the community as to what it is now and the growth factor but also what planned developments are in the future in that area.

Ms. White noted that we do not know what things will look like post-pandemic so we will have to get through COVID because many things could change. The library is such a vibrant place to gather with all the programs that are provided and with everything being virtual right now, we will have to see how things unfold. Mr. Kelly noted that libraries have always been adaptable in that way. As we envision new spaces, we need to be flexible to meet that demand. We are not proposing to remodel every five years but we need a space that we can adapt to the ever changing needs of the community. When the downtown library was built 20-25 years ago, libraries were very different. As we look at an update for the downtown location, there are several factors that need to be considered in the design.

Ms. Greenway inquired if FCPL will reopen this year. Mr. Kelly stated that it all depends on how the deployment of the vaccine goes. The likelihood of us reopening depends on the public. If we can get the vaccine distributed and a lot of people take the vaccine, it may be safe to reopen. He further noted that he would love to reopen in this calendar year but making those projections at this point is a little early. He stated that he is hopeful that FCPL will be able to reopen by the end of the year. Ms. Greenway further inquired whether FCPL will have a way to test people as they come into the library. Mr. Kelly stated that all avenues are open at this point. No decisions have been made yet because we are not ready to open to the public. He added that we are constantly in touch with the County Executive and Public Health Officer about when it would be safe to reopen county buildings and move to the next phase. Ms. Greenway inquired of Mr. Donald whether he could add anything to that about vaccinations in the county. Mr. Donald responded that he does not know anything more than anyone else in the county. We get our information from the Governor and the Health Department. They have changed the order of who will be getting the vaccine and in order for the library to reopen, the entire general public will need to get the vaccine. Schools can probably go back once staff is vaccinated but his guess is that it will be at least summer before the library will reopen. It will take time for the general public to get the vaccine. He noted that this is a total guess on his part.

Ms. D'Agostino inquired whether there have been any issues with staff getting COVID or having to shut down services such as curbside pick-up or any other thing that is being offered. Mr. Kelly responded that we have had some staff report that they either had contact with someone who had COVID or came down with a positive test result. In those cases, individuals quarantine before they can come back according to CDC regulations. FCPL has a staffing model right now where staff are in small teams so they are working in the same groups all the time. When a staff member does get a positive test, it is easy to notify other staff members that may have had contact with that staff member. We have not seen any spread between staff.

Ms. Greenway inquired as to what percentage of staff are coming into the building. Ms. White noted that she would like to know that information too. Mr. Kelly stated that staff work in small teams and everybody has particular days that they work. He added that depending on the size of the library branch, it might be a smaller or larger team. For example, at Point of Rocks, it will be two people because that is how many people actually work there. They are providing curbside services two days per week. He added that at a place like the C. Burr Artz Library, the teams could be generally larger – 5 or 6 people – but there are places for staff to spread out. He noted that at any branch the protocol is to maintain a six foot distance, wash hands frequently, etc., and this is why we haven't seen any spread among our own staff. Ms. Greenway further inquired about whether or not the executive staff is coming in. Mr. Kelly stated that we have divided things up so that we are not all in the building at the same time. Mr. Kelly advised that he teleworks four days a week and goes into the office on Fridays. This is so administrative staff do not make each other sick and go out all at one time. Mr. Kelly added that this is how Winchester Hall is operating as well. Ms. Greenway inquired of Mr. Donald whether all of the Council Members and Jan Gardner work from home. Mr. Donald stated that all of their meetings are virtual. He stated that you can go into the office to get things but they have only had one in-person meeting since the break-out of COVID. That meeting was a land use issue over the summer and the attorneys were very concerned about a lawsuit so everyone came into the office. We social distanced throughout the big meeting room and we wore masks. That is the only time we have met since March.

As a reminder, Mr. Kelly reminded everyone that the next Board meeting is scheduled for February 3, 2021. Mr. Kelly welcomed any questions from members of the FCPL Board of Trustees.

Ms. Smith stated that she thinks the curbside service has been very creative and is hoping staff are having the best experience that they can doing what they are doing. Mr. Kelly advised that we have received a lot of good feedback from the community as well.

Mr. O'Leary noted that although the physical locations are denoted as being closed, they are not completely closed because the curbside pickup is a type of opening at each location. The data shows that the number of check-outs and visits are extremely robust and it occurs across all of the locations. It also enables people to get to physical items. People are using curbside pick-up at very high levels. As far as that goes, the physical locations are open and working very

effectively.

Ms. Greenway inquired whether the library is offering support like Zoom for some programs that used to be offered at the library such as the CBA Adult Book Club. Does the library help facilitate those Zoom meetings? Mr. Kelly does not have information about specific programs but all of the program numbers that you see on the Dashboard, as to how many programs and the number of attendees, reflect all virtual programming. There are no in-person programs. Mr. Kelly stated that FCPL staff are still providing virtual programming. Ms. Greenway asked if FCPL is facilitating the book club for the adults. Mr. Kelly stated that he is not sure as to whether that was a service we provided before or after COVID. He stated that he will look into it to see if it is a program we provide. Ms. Greenway stated that she has been in that group for 20 years and it was a standard program offered to adults by CBA. Mr. Kelly inquired whether they have been meeting since the libraries have been closed. Ms. Greenway advised that they always had a book club at CBA. It was facilitated by CBA and the book club members met at CBA every Wednesday once a month. She stated that she just didn't know if FCPL was providing help since a lot of the participants are elderly and they don't know how to use Zoom. Mr. Kelly mentioned that possibly Ms. Greenway and he could talk off-line to get a better idea of what services and support she is after and he will find out if any services are being provided. He added that the reason he asked if the group was still meeting is that Ms. Greenway, as an attendee, would know whether that was something that was still being facilitated by CBA. He noted that if there are ways we can help the community, we certainly want to be open to that. Ms. Greenway stated that she has never heard any discussion about all of the people that used to meet at the library and was wondering if FCPL was extending services to help people that used to meet at the library. Mr. Kelly stated that he misunderstood what Ms. Greenway was asking. He noted that he thought Ms. Greenway was speaking about library programs but noted that she was talking about community programs that met at the library. Ms. Greenway answered "yes" and "yes". Mr. Kelly stated that he now understands what Ms. Greenway's question was.

Mr. O'Leary stated that members of the Finance Committee were proposed ways in which the information flow about budget and budget proposals could be improved to provide more time between the point at which the information is distributed and acted upon. He noted that Mr. Kelly advised that there is an informational event on Friday, January 8, 2021 and Mr. O'Leary advised that he will be attending that event. Mr. O'Leary encouraged everyone on the Library Board to attend that meeting. The FCPL Board of Trustees deal with the budget once a year so it would be good for everyone to be refreshed so that members of the Board are keen on the operation so that folks have a refresher on the basic system and the presentation will not precede the vote at the same meeting. There should be an interval between the presentation of the proposed budget and the meeting upon which it is acted upon. Mr. O'Leary inquired of the members of the Finance Committee whether this seems to address the ideas that were brought up in November. Ms. White stated that she thinks it does but we will know more when we meet on Friday and see what that does on the overall budget and then we have to talk about the schedule for the year's meetings knowing that the meetings are almost always the first Wednesday of the month. She noted that there was some discussion about the November Board Meeting being moved to the second or third Wednesday of the month. Mr. O'Leary noted that there was a

discussion about changing the meeting date for next fall so that there is an interval between the presentation of the information and action upon it. Mr. Kelly stated that there was discussion about the presentation of the audit would happen on the first Wednesday of the month in November, as in the past, but instead of having the Board vote on that same day, the actual board meeting would happen a week or two later which is what S. White described earlier. Ms. Greenway inquired whether members of the Finance Committee could get the audit presentation in September and then we would not have to change the schedule in November. Mr. Kelly noted that this was the topic that was discussed in November with the audit folks and they advised that they give us the audit as soon as they can. This is why we discussed moving the board meeting date in November since we knew that we could not get the presentation in September. Ms. White reiterated that the audit folks stated that there is no way to get the audit presentation to FCPL by September. Mr. O'Leary stated that after discussions in November it appeared that there was no way to push the audit presentation back any further so the alternative was to push the November Board Meeting to a couple weeks later and that seemed to be the most efficient way to do it. Ms. Greenway noted since the end of the fiscal year ends on June 30th they should potentially have the data to the Board in September. Mr. O'Leary stated that the Board needs to work with the audit team. He noted that as long as members of the Finance Committee get the data by the end of October or early November, the Board can then change its schedule.

C. Greenway inquired of Mr. Kelly whether he has sent the invitation to the meeting on Friday. Mr. Kelly stated that he did send the invitation to members of the FCPL Board of Trustees but he will resend it out to everyone again. C. Greenway inquired whether the meeting is from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. Mr. Kelly confirmed that the meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m.

Mr. O'Leary stated that he has one more thing to discuss. He noted that when Mr. Kelly was describing the presentation that was made to the County Executive regarding the upcoming budget deliberations, Mr. O'Leary added that FCPL has two different models of library operations. The one operation was suspended in March and the virtual model was initiated within a couple of days of the shutdown. During that time and up to the present, the virtual model has flourished and expanded services. Curbside pick-up is very labor intensive. He noted that, as Mr. Kelly stated, at some point the physical locations will begin to open and that will continue over time. Mr. O'Leary stated that we now have the situation where we have two important, robust models. We had the physical model working very effectively until the shutdown in March and then the robust, virtual model was developed, which is flourishing now. He added that at some point, within the next year, both will resume and discussions were had about resource allocations and how to maintain the best of both operations. Mr. O'Leary stated that all members of the FCPL Board of Trustees need to be looking ahead because it may not be that far off when we consider how we will maintain two robust models, each of which has proven its worth, at the same time. He stated that this is a good challenge to have.

NEW BUSINESS:

a. Recognition of LATI Graduates: Mr. Kelly advised that LATI is a 90 hour program that all Library Associates in Maryland must complete. Library Associates gain a better understanding

of the principles and values of public libraries. They also learn about print and online resources and good customer service. The program involves online learning sessions, independent work, coaching sessions and, in pre-COVID times, there was face-to-face learning. There was not much of that this last time because of the pandemic. Mr. Kelly stated that he has worked in libraries across five states and Maryland has the best public libraries by far. A big part of that is the LATI program and the fact that Library Associates are trained to a high state-wide standard. The LATI program is a great program. Mr. Kelly recognized four recent graduates of LATI and those graduates are: Heather Hart, Amy Moser, Zachary Wilson, and Jillian Bleggi. Mr. Kelly noted that this program can be intense and each of these individuals have balanced these responsibilities with their day-to-day work so it is a big-time commitment. Mr. Kelly thanked each of them for their commitment and hard work. Certificates of Completion are being mailed to them this week. He also wanted to give members of the Library Board a chance to offer their congratulations as well.

Mr. O'Leary offered his congratulations to these folks. He stated that his career, before joining the Library Board, was in academic libraries. There were a lot of things that he had to learn regarding the difference of the academic and public sector. One of the things that impressed him heavily was the robust, professional development infrastructure the State Public Libraries have. He noted that the academic libraries could learn a lot from these folks. If you look at the strength of the system, it ultimately comes down to the skill and commitment of the people that work at the library. The professional development programs for all levels of employees is remarkable so when questions come up, the folks have the abilities, skills and knowledge to really provide first-rate service. This is extremely important. Mr. O'Leary congratulated every employee who has taken the time and effort to go through the LATI program. This program manifests itself in better service to the public and a more robust library service overall.

Ms. Greenway inquired whether the LATI program was done virtually. Mr. Kelly stated that this particular LATI program was entirely virtual. He advised that in normal times there is an online component instruction and one of the benefits of the program is for them to go to other libraries and see how their operations are different than the one they work in. Once the libraries reopen after this is over, the subsequent LATI students will continue that piece. Ms. Greenway offered her congratulations.

b. Financial Report: B. McDermott welcomed everyone to the January Board Meeting and wished everyone a Happy New Year. She advised that she will be presenting the Fiscal Year 2021 Financial Statement for January. The data is tentative as of November 30, 2020. The data was pulled December 17, 2020.

Revenues are at 27%. The percentage is a little low due to contributions/donations and the fund balance which are not reported until the end of the fiscal year. FCPL received revenue from the Maryland State Education Grant in the amount of \$1.4 million. In-kind revenue was received in the amount of \$226,000 and \$4,000 was received from miscellaneous operating revenue. She stated that everyone should keep in mind that County and State funding sources are received quarterly.

Ms. McDermott thereafter reviewed expenditures. FCPL expenditures are at 35%. She advised that since we are about 5 months into the fiscal year, it would be expected that the expenditures would be at approximately 40% so FCPL is actually under budget at this time. Most expenditure lines have had a slight increase. She pointed out that library material purchases continue to increase due to the increased demand for e-content. There was also an increase in personnel and telephones as those expenditures are posted quarterly.

She noted that Grants Awarded are at \$332,000. Since the previous board meeting, the Technology Act Grant has been awarded in the amount of \$16,983. The Technology Act Grant is a collaborative grant and will be used to support system-wide programming for teens. The funds will be used to secure mobile computer devices and teen programming throughout the library system.

Ms. McDermott noted that there are no Grants Submitted at this time. She mentioned that staff is preparing an application to submit for the Ausherman Family Foundation General Grant to support the renewal of the Foundation Center Network Annual Subscription (Grant Seekers Software). FCPL received notification that the Delaplaine Foundation has awarded \$1,500 to FCPL's endowment fund at the Community Foundation to support Frederick Reads 2021.

She thereafter advised that donations are at \$40,000, which is an increase of \$18,000 since the previous board meeting. The Maryland Room received its annual endowment fund donation of \$15,000. These funds are received each year and are used solely to support the operation of The Maryland Room. Grants/Donations increased by \$2,000. Other Endowment Revenue is at \$666. This is from interest earned from the Nallin CD and the Glassman Trust. These funds are restricted for the purchase of materials. This brings the total to \$373,000.

c. Communications Update: S. Jones stated that she will be presenting some of the feel-good moments over the last few months and how we are working to keep the positive press coverage and feedback coming. Since our closure in March, we have seen a dramatic outpouring of appreciation and support from our customers and our community. Before our doors closed, our communications team had begun working on changing the tone of our messaging so that we are not solely programmatic. Previously, about 95% of our communications were about new programs and failed to highlight the human element of the library. If you visited our pages before, it was a flurry of event listings across all of our branches, which while impressive in breadth, were not very interesting for social content. In FY 2020, FCPL set a mandate for itself to flip this and achieve a new content balance with 60% of content dedicated to promoting programming as we had done previously and 40% was reserved to telling our story in a human-interest approach. This new angle prioritized putting faces and names to the hard work of our staff and sharing behind the scenes photos so that customers can realize the human side of our work. She shared a post that showed the holds at the Urbana Regional Library which took up the entire children's section of the library. Everyone really enjoyed seeing that.

When COVID hit, our approach to programming changed overnight with social media becoming the new “home” for everything but we still maintained our 60/40 split. COVID has created a lot of noise on social media, making it all the more difficult to stand out among the crowd. But our staff has risen to the challenge. Through all of this we’ve increased our social following, found our audience for programming online, and told our story.

While our doors are closed its been imperative that customers still “see” FCPL and understand the work being done behind the scenes to keep things going. Our staff has done an amazing job of launching new services and resources but so much of that work is invisible to the public. Through posts like these our customers see the staff they so dearly miss and get a peek at what it takes to keep their books coming.

We’ve also achieved an enormous reach with many of our posts – like our initial post advertising our temporary online card. This post was shared 123 times and seen by over 15,000 people. Early on in the pandemic we targeted specific posts like the temporary online card and promoted it with Facebook ad dollars, which expanded our audience exponentially as we targeted people in the county who were not previously following our pages. But even without these “boosted” posts we still reached unprecedented numbers for our content and saw more and more positive feedback through the comments. Ms. Jones shared a post, which is just one of many, where our customers have expressed their deep gratitude for our services.

Ms. Greenway inquired as to what that thing was on the middle of the slide which says Discovery Meadow. Ms. Jones stated that is someone holding up their hold receipt – how many items they picked up in one curbside appointment.

Ms. Jones advised that this isn’t just about sharing behind-the-scenes photos. Since March, we’ve tracked the impact of every post and program on our social platforms to monitor trends and inform our decisions about what our customers are interested in. This has also dictated when and where to post particular content and has greatly helped to guide our programmatic decisions as we have real-time data that shows us what works and what doesn’t.

Because our staff acted so quickly at the start of the pandemic, our social following and program attendance increased drastically as we provided virtual content before many other systems in Maryland. Our constant evaluation of trends has helped us to maintain our growth across all of our social channels, especially Facebook which has always been our predominate platform.

Beyond social media, we have also been hard at work in getting the word out about our services and programs through every avenue available to us. She displayed a selection of some of the videos and public service announcements that staff have co-created with County Video Services. These videos have been shown on the county channel and have been shared widely through various county social accounts, including the County Executive and obviously our own channels as well.

One of the most impactful ways we've worked to spread the news of services and offerings has been through the press. We have had a lot of great things to share since we've closed our doors and we've made a point of pitching news outlets on these positive stories at every turn. Since we've closed we've received 15 articles, features, and interviews with local press outlets. Some of these opportunities have come from press releases and other have come from direct pitches to reporters. We've had great success with building strong relationships with our local reporters and it has paid off during COVID. When we pitch our stories we have interview candidates lined up, along with b-roll footage, and images that the press can use which is especially helpful now when reporters or staff photographers can't stop by with a camera and capture our work in action. This proactive approach has helped us maintain our narrative and become a trusted source for positive content in the area, which is what a lot of these stations are looking for these days.

She shared a few additional interviews and features from local news outlets. When we launched the Learn from Home initiative, we had feature-level coverage from The Frederick News Post, DVM in Hagerstown, and WFMD radio station. The idea for "Curbside in Costume" was a joint effort by the communications and programming teams as a way to spark excitement with our customers and get the library's name back in the headlines and out in the community. This was extremely successful on both fronts - customers loved it and the story was picked up by The Frederick News Post, WJZ Baltimore, WMAR Baltimore, DVM Hagerstown, and NBC4 Washington. She further mentioned that two days after these two pieces aired on Baltimore news stations, the Baltimore County Public Libraries announced their own "Curbside in Costume" service – which they clearly copied from FCPL. Their service was only offered on Halloween but ours was for two full weeks.

The Frederick News Post has always been kind to the library but they have been especially great in these past few months. In total, they have featured FCPL in 6 articles, many of which ran as front page featured stories. Although there is a high turnover rate with reporters at FNP, we have successfully maintained positive relationships with all of them, which has led to all of our coverage regarding updates.

Ms. Jones noted that the other part of our job in the communications department is sharing the positive feedback that has poured in from our customers with our staff. Every other week we send out a staff email called "The Same Page" which, in pre-COVID times, was dedicated to sharing timely updates for all staff. Since our closure, we've amended the format to always start with the latest customer feedback. She shared one of the nuggets FCPL received in the past few weeks. She added that she is happy to say that we often have so much positive feedback that we have to narrow it down to 4-5 quotes for the staff email but it stands as a true testament to our community that 10 months into all of this we are still receiving so much positive feedback that we need to be selective about it.

Ms. Greenway inquired whether anything is being done to promote book reviews on Facebook and try to create dialog between users. Ms. Jones stated that FCPL has been doing more and more on the Instagram account by posting book reviews and using that to have an opportunity to

have a little bit of dialogue back and forth. Ms. Greenway stated that she thought it would be a fun way to get everyone involved, even at a younger level.

Mr. O'Leary noted that there are a lot of comments and feedback on social media from customers and inquired whether this is all synthesized and used as an evaluation. Ms. Jones advised that all comments are shared with our programming team and certainly helps dictate our decision making process as we consider new programs for each season. Mr. O'Leary asked how this is done. Ms. Jones stated that it is done on a weekly basis. A report is shared with staff and helps us move forward and review things as we consider new programs. In addition, B. Hissong and the programming team review this information on a seasonal basis as well. Mr. O'Leary stated that he feels that this is a very rich source of information on what works and what doesn't. In addition, Mr. O'Leary inquired whether FCPL staff approach the media or do they approach FCPL. Ms. Jones stated that it works both ways because they trust us as a positive and responsive source. Early on in the pandemic we pitched them stories by reaching out to the reporters and sending out press releases. It has certainly evolved since then. The most recent story that appeared in The Frederick News-Post was about two weeks ago and they did a deep dive, feature article about what libraries have been going through. They reached out to us on a Sunday evening for a couple of supplementary facts. We provided them with information and they decided to focus the entire story on FCPL. She reiterated that it goes both ways but it only goes both ways because they trust FCPL staff and they know who to contact.

Ms. Smith stated that she noticed on her own Facebook feed that they seem to be changing their algorithms all the time. She advised that FCPL was set as one of the sites she would get first and they changed that. She inquired whether that kind of activity is monitored on social media sites to make sure the information is being pushed out to the right places. Ms. Jones stated that we do as much as possible. Facebook is constantly changing things, especially in the current political climate, and they disabled hashtags which impacted FCPL quite a bit. It is an ever-changing and ever-revolving thing. Staff do as much as they can to stay on top of it. She added that as long as you keep going to FCPL's page, it should continue to provide that content early on in your feed. Ms. Smith stated that she noticed today that they disabled the "like" function on certain accounts.

BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS: Ms. D'Agostino stated that she has been very impressed with the curbside pick-up services. She noted that she picked up three huge boxes of books. Staff has done such a great job and we have really been enjoying having physical materials. Ms. Greenway inquired of Ms. D'Agostino whether staff put the books directly in her trunk. Ms. D'Agostino advised that they offered to but she has a huge truck. Staff were great. Mr. Kelly noted that he will share those comments with the rest of the team.

Ms. Sheppard stated that she wanted to give a shout out, on behalf of her mother, to the Walkersville Library. During COVID, her mother developed an addiction to some show that was on HBO. She would call the library and pick up the DVDs of that show. After a while they began to know what she liked and started making suggestions to her. Her mother always raves about going to the library. She feels special. She pointed out that staff did not know that she was her mother – that is just who they are. She thanked staff at the Walkersville Library, on behalf of

her mother. Staff have been great. She added that her sons have enjoyed Hoopla and have requested more check-outs.

Mr. O'Leary stated that hearing these stories one-by one builds up to a remarkable resource for the whole county.

Mr. O'Leary noted that budget thinking/decision/choices going into the rest of this fiscal year and into the next, might be more difficult and important than anytime he can remember because we have this new, larger and more complex content/service environment. To manage that will require ongoing attention to resource allocations by not only approving the budget but choices made in response to transitions over time in this year and the next. There will be some very important discussions that will be had about just how to do that.

OTHER CITIZEN REMARKS: None

The next meeting will be held virtually on Wednesday, February 3, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

M. O'Leary stated that he will entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by C. Greenway. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. O'Leary', is written over a horizontal line.

M. O'Leary, Chair
Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees