

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
FEBRUARY 1, 2023**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on February 1, 2023 at the C. Burr Artz Library.

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: County Liaison, J. Donald.

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; T. Vorce, Materials Manager; J. Marshall, Manager – Systems; C. Brohawn, Project Coordinator; B. Heltebridle, Branch Administrator – C. Burr Artz Library; A. Knight, Branch Administrator – Middletown Library; S. Yates, Branch Administrator – Urbana Regional/Point of Rocks Libraries; R. Cox-Steib, Branch Administrator – Myersville Library; D. Heller, Library Associate (Children’s) - C. Burr Artz Library; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

CHAIRS REPORT: Ms. D’Agostino noted that libraries have been making headlines in the newspaper lately. She added that she thinks this is wonderful. Many patrons have come out to support having a library on the west side, especially in a time when people are asking about the future viability of libraries and whether or not there is a need for libraries. Community members are really coming out and talking about how libraries improve the quality of life and how necessary they are in our lives.

She also noted that she is currently reading a book entitled The Unwinding of The Miracle. This book was chosen by the Bucket List Book Club which is a book club set up in partnership with Frederick Hospice, Curious Iguana and FCPL. The programs that FCPL creates really connect the community and it is part of building bridges. She added that she really enjoys Mr. Kelly discussing the monthly Dashboard and when Branch Administrators talk to us about how they are building bridges.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: K. Spertzel made a motion to approve the Minutes of January 4, 2023; seconded by S. White. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly welcomed everyone to the February Board meeting. He noted that he will be presenting some highlights from the work of FCPL’s team and will present the FY24 draft Operating Budget for the Board’s consideration.

A few weeks ago, the 2023 General Assembly session started. This year’s Library Legislative Day is two weeks from today on February 15, 2023. He added that he and Sheila will be headed to Annapolis to meet with Frederick County’s newly-expanded delegation. It’s an opportunity to thank them for the State Aid that they provide, which is revenue that accounts for roughly 20% of our annual operating budget. There is legislation cross-filed in both the House and Senate which would preserve state aid and establish per capita funding increases for the next several fiscal years. We will ask for their consideration of those bills. We will also be thanking them for the State’s Capital Grant Program, which has generously provided \$7.5 million in annual funding for library projects across the state. As you know, FCPL have consistently received grant funding from this program for the design and construction phases of our recent building projects including Walkersville, Myersville, and Middletown.

In news closer to home, our grant-funded EDI audit with Widerstand gets underway next week. As a reminder, Widerstand is a firm that does EDI work specifically with public libraries nationally and they have worked with some of our partners here in Maryland. We will have our first meeting with them on Monday. Their 8-week process includes data gathering, interviews, and focus groups. In their work with other library systems, they have reached out to talk to the Board of Trustees. At this point, Mr. Kelly stated that he does not know if that will take the form of a survey or a focus group or interviews, but we will share those details, when we have them, and Mr. Kelly stated that he hopes members of the FCPL Board of Trustees will consider providing them with your perspectives.

As you know, FCPL’s strategic priorities are to Expand Access, Build Bridges, and Spark Excitement for our community. Here are some of the ways we’ve done that recently. FCPL is sparking excitement by producing events and undertaking projects that celebrate our community’s diversity and inspire growth...like the “Creating Equitable Heritage” project. Filming for this grant-funded project started recently thanks to ARPA funding awarded to us by the Maryland State Library. FCPL is partnering with AARCH to film and highlight historical black sites in Frederick County. The team who wrote the grant or are currently working on the project include Bryan Hissong, Jenny Diaz, Marian Currens, Mary Mannix, and Derek Gee. The Emmy-award winning agency 88Visual filmed at Buckeystown United Methodist Church and interviewed Pastor Derek Shackelford, various church members, and AARCH President, Protean Gibril . We are excited to see this project moving forward and can’t wait to share the final results with everyone.

We are sparking excitement by creating opportunities in unexpected places. Walkersville staff continue to work to bring their community together. The team held an event prior to the town tree-lighting in December and over 300 people attended. They also held a German-style holiday market in partnership with the town and had over 600 attendees. There was a holiday parade, staff dressed up as Santa, Mrs. Claus, and reindeer, and the team hosted Santa pictures. In this community, there was not another similar holiday event nearby, so people were thrilled to have the library host these events.

We are building bridges by creating new and fostering existing partnerships. Erika at the C. Burr Artz Library strengthened our connection with “On Our Own”, a local peer recovery support group, that also provides services in filling out forms and applications and navigating social assistance resources to anyone in need. They will soon begin holding drop-in service at the library during the weeks when Lawyers in the Library are not scheduled. ...and, if you’re unfamiliar with the Lawyers in the Library program, this is another amazing partnership where Maryland Legal Aid attorneys provide pro bono, one-on-one advice on a variety of topics including record expungement, housing issues, and more.

FCPL is expanding access to relevant technologies and fostering digital literacy. At the Thurmont Library, Penny, Tammy, and Matt arranged “tech cafes” at the Thurmont Senior Center using our new outreach laptops so community members can learn and practice new tech skills. Tammy worked to strengthen this partnership and coordinated several partner-led programs with HUMANA Health and SOAR (Supporting Older Adults through Resources). These programs are being held both at the Senior Center and at the library in alternate months.

These are great examples of how FCPL is expanding access to technology and fostering digital literacy to communities, but as Mr. Kelly has noted in the past, a great deal of our work happens quietly in one-on-one interactions. Recently at the Brunswick branch, Shelley noticed a patron getting frustrated while attempting to apply for unemployment services on a computer. After helping him with login and authentication challenges, Shelley learned that due to a recent stroke and speech impediment, the patron had been unable to successfully get assistance with his application over the phone and was feeling overwhelmed with the complicated process. Shelly took the time to explore several accessibility resource options for the customer, including an online chat feature, and he was finally able to communicate with someone to get his application successfully submitted.

Pivoting to statistics, Mr. Kelly noted that the packets received by the FCPL Board of Trustees include the December numbers and, in addition, a Dashboard with an overview of the second quarter.

Starting with the monthly Dashboard he advised that one December trend that stands out is the increase in physical material circulation that we have seen since November, when we initiated auto-renewals. As you look earlier in the fiscal year, August through October, circulation was already slightly outpacing the record FY19 trend – thanks, in part, to increases in eContent circulation but that coupled with the launch of auto-renewals on physical materials has resulted in a 7% gain in our year-to-date circulation as shown on the second page. It will be interesting to see if these early trends hold through the end of the year.

Mr. Kelly added that while we are seeing record circulation, wifi use, and card registrations, traffic into branches is down slightly as compared to FY19. He noted that he suspects that FCPL will gain ground as time goes on.

As for programming, Mr. Kelly stated that, as mentioned at our last meeting, FCPL is offering fewer total programs but attendance at the programs FCPL is offering has been on pace with FY19 totals throughout the second quarter exceeding FY19 program attendance in December.

Mr. Kelly advised that later this evening, you'll hear a presentation from Marian providing a snapshot of the publishing market place with a focus on eContent and she will be sharing budget details by collection format. So, as a tie-in, the second quarter Dashboard is a deeper dive on eContent use. Total customer borrowing of eContent is up and now accounts for between 37% to 41% of all library checkouts depending on the month. In FY19, eContent accounted for about 26% of total borrowing.

Budget/CIP Update: On the Operating side of things, Brandy will report on the current year's actuals. But, regarding FY24 planning, February is an important time in the budget planning process. We met with the Board's Finance Committee a couple of weeks ago to present next year's proposed operating budget. Mr. Kelly noted that at tonight's meeting, he will make a presentation to the full board and you will be asked to vote.

On the capital side of things, Middletown construction remains on track and there has been some further discussion on the West Frederick library. As you may have read in The Frederick News-Post, County Executive Fitzwater has been hosting budget town halls in every council district. At the District 3 meeting last week, residents again advocated for the West Frederick library. The County Executive noted that her administration is committed to a stand-alone branch and would like to see it on the parcel adjacent to Butterfly Ridge Elementary School which many in the community have advocated for. She also noted, based on a conversation we shared, that FCPL was fully supportive of this plan. The County has drafted an MOU which is currently under consideration by the City. The outcome of these ongoing talks will be something that the County Executive considers as she sets her priorities for the FY24 Capital Budget. As a reminder, the CIP budget outlines her vision for capital projects across all divisions and component units over the next several fiscal years. Library projects currently under consideration include the final phase of Middletown construction, the West Frederick branch, East County Regional library, Northwest Frederick City Library, and the CBA remodel.

Additionally, Mr. Kelly reminded members of the FCPL Board of Trustees that every library building project follows a minimum 3-year timeline, per County Public Works. If a project is assigned a fiscal year for design work to begin, Public Works estimates a year and a half for design followed by a year and a half for construction. Mr. Kelly further noted that he will continue to keep everyone informed of any developments.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly reminded everyone that the next FCPL Board of Trustees meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 1, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Next is a follow-up on the issue of reappointments and the proposal from the FCPL Board of Trustees Nominations Committee to open a dialogue with the County about streamlining existing processes. Galen has asked me to provide this update. As the Board is aware, Maryland Code permits you to fill vacancies on the Board or recommend reappointments for existing members wishing to serve a second term. Based on your recommendations, the County Executive then appoints members with confirmation by the Council.

Mr. Kelly noted that this is the state code and county policy but the tension, in his opinion, is procedural. In practice, there is no distinction between the County's process for announcing a

vacancy or handling a reappointment. Currently, under both of these scenarios, an open call is placed to the public asking for resumes and letters of interest and, in the case of a reappointment, the result is that numerous people apply for a supposed vacancy which is actually a simple reappointment working its way through the County process and each of the applicants must then be contacted individually to be informed that there is not actually a vacancy. He noted that he recently had a meeting with the CAO on this issue to share these concerns. He understood and, as a next step, I have been invited to draft a white paper for the County Executive's consideration and Mr. Kelly noted that he hopes to have that submitted by the end of the week. In Frederick County government, the invitation to draft a white paper for the CE is the positive next step on issues like this. In that letter, I will outline the issue and share some recommendations proposed by the Nominations Committee. Mr. Kelly stated that he hopes to have more information on this issue at the next Board meeting.

In closing, Mr. Kelly noted that FCPL's Communications Manager, Sam Jones, will be leaving FCPL at the end of this week. We will miss Sam who, throughout her tenure, was focused on supporting and empowering staff system-wide. She helped move us forward and provided leadership through the pandemic when, as we all remember, our services and messaging seemed to evolve weekly. We wish Sam well.

Mr. Kelly also announced that Kelly Cambrel has accepted the job of Communications Manager and will start at the end of the month. Kelly has worked for Frederick County's Communications Office for the past few years and before that worked in mass media. We are excited to have Kelly join our team. He further noted that he will introduce her to everyone at a future Board meeting.

Further discussion followed regarding the white paper that will be provided to the County Executive regarding vacancies on the library board.

Mr. O'Leary inquired about the senior programs at the Thurmont Regional Library and Senior Center. Mr. Kelly advised that he will get back to him with the number of participants. It was noted that some of the programs took place at the library and senior center.

Additional discussion pursued about the Dashboard and e-content numbers. Mr. Kelly noted that borrowing has returned to the pre-pandemic levels and a high portion of that is digital.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Financial Report: Ms. McDermott reviewed the FY23 Financial Report for February. She noted that the data is tentative as of December 31, 2022.

Revenues are at 48%, an 18% increase from the previous board meeting. There was an increase in County in-kind revenue of \$300K and a transfer from the County General Fund of \$3M. Federal Grant revenue increased by \$43K for reimbursement of expenses related to the ARAP Equity and Engagement Grant. There was also an increase in Passport revenue of \$4,200 and Miscellaneous Operating of \$8,100.

FCPL's expenditures are at 47%. There was a slight increase in each budget line for expenditures. There was an 8% increase in Library Material Purchases and Contracted Services for hosting fees. County Finance posted the in-kind county appropriations, personnel, and telephone expenses, which reflected the most significant percentage change of those three expenditures by 34% for the month. Other operating expenditures and office supplies increased by 4% from the previous month for marketing services and general office supplies. Ms. McDermott noted that she is pleased to report that revenues and expenditures are as expected as FCPL ends the second quarter of the fiscal year.

Grants Awarded are at \$1,064,095 – there has been no change to the grants awarded.

Grants Submitted are at \$270,489. She noted that FCPL, unfortunately, was not selected for The World on the Move and The Rotary Club of Carroll Creek grant applications. Donations are at \$87,966K, which is an increase of \$27K from the previous board meeting update. This includes several generous donations for the Greatest Need, Youth Services, and the Branches.

Other endowment revenues are at \$76,972K; no changes since last month.

This brings the total to \$1,229,033.

b. Budget Presentation: Mr. Kelly noted that each member of the FCPL Board of Trustees has attended budget refresher sessions. The format of tonight's presentation and the revenue and expense lines of the budget will look very familiar. The only thing that will be different are the amounts listed for anticipated revenues and expenses in the upcoming year.

Starting on the revenue side, the County Contribution remains our largest revenue line and is a number provided to us by the County Budget Office. In FY24, the county contribution is anticipated to be higher than the current year.

The State Aid number went up also. He noted that the way we project this revenue line is by using previous year's actuals. In FY23, the State Aid number actually came in higher than what we projected. He added that it is possible that the same thing will happen this year. In June, 2023, we will learn whether or not the State Aid allocation will be higher than the \$2.8M that has been budgeted here. Mr. Kelly reminded everyone about this revenue line by noting that some of it is restricted funding and some is unrestricted. The restricted portion is earmarked for staff retirement expenses. The rest of the revenue is unrestricted.

County In-Kind is up slightly from FY23. This number is provided to FCPL by the County based on the projected costs related to maintenance, utilities, etc. of our county-owned buildings.

The Ending Fund Balance number was provided to FCPL at our audit last November. This number fluctuates and is primarily salary savings from the previous year. The ending fund

balance was up this year which is good news because it is part of the roughly 20% of FCPL's total budget that we have discretion over.

Fines, Gifts and Miscellaneous is FCPL's smallest revenue bucket totaling \$442,339. Mr. Kelly noted that the revenue lines are the same as last year but we have revised our anticipated revenue based on how actuals are coming in in the current year. As an example, while circulation has bounced back to pre-pandemic levels, foot traffic into the branches still lags. As a result, fewer people are using our public copiers so we are projecting that revenue line more conservatively than last year. Similarly, with room rentals and book sales – these are connected to foot traffic. When foot traffic is down, we want to be more conservative. He added that we prudently created a budget that conservatively estimates revenue.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly noted that passport revenue has been strong so the \$80K reflected in the proposed budget reflects a slight increase to what we budgeted in the last fiscal year. He also noted that the \$289,339 revenue line for contributions and donations is where endowment revenue (restricted) comes in and The Greatest Need funds (unrestricted).

Mr. Kelly thereafter pivoted to expenditures. He noted that when the draft budget was presented to the Finance Committee a few weeks ago, we discussed each of our expense lines. Many were flat or showed modest differences year-over-year based on the numbers provided to us by the County or based on our experience in the current fiscal year.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly highlighted three expense lines that show some of the greatest fluctuation year-over-year. He noted that FCPL is making a substantial investment in system-wide programming to position us to be able to support large-scale programs as we more fully emerge from COVID. Mr. Kelly added that while FCPL is not offering as many programs as we did in the past, program attendance has rivaled FY19 attendance numbers. It is our hope that an investment in system-wide programs will help leverage some of the success FCPL is already seeing in program attendance and will help bring more people into our branches.

In addition, Mr. Kelly noted that we are also significantly increasing the non-capital line which is where our technology hardware dollars are clustered. As has been mentioned in the past, when FCPL doors were closed due to COVID, our public PCs did not see the heavy use they did pre-COVID times. For this reason, we felt that we could slow down our normal replacement cycle and get an extra year of life from our computers. We were able to do that successfully, however, with the FY24 proposed budget, we plan to get that replacement cycle back on track, replacing PCs and updating software system-wide that had been paused during the shutdown.

Mr. Kelly added that we are increasing support of training and our workgroups. As noted earlier, the equity audit by Widerstand starts soon. At the conclusion of their work, they will provide recommendations to us and we want to be in a position to undertake some of that work in the upcoming year. This is one of the reasons we have earmarked more money for training.

Expenditures were thereafter reviewed. It was noted that 66% of FCPL's budget is committed to salaries, 23% to general operating expenses and 11% to collections. Mr. Kelly noted that it is always important to remember that, through our per capita funding formula, the County provides \$500K of that \$2.1 million collections budget. Mr. Kelly added that while the dollar amounts are higher year-over-year, each reflects the same percentage as the current year's budget so our growth has been consistent across all segments.

Mr. Kelly thereafter reviewed the collections budget. He noted that we are proposing increases in every format as compared to FY23. These increases are being proposed for a few reasons. As we shared during monthly statistics in FY22, we finished the year at 3.1 million circulations; nearly matching our record for FY19 circulations. This current fiscal year, FCPL is on pace to surpass that total. FCPL will continue to make an investment in our collections. We are doing this first to try and better meet customer demand. Secondly, the cost of items in the marketplace (both digital and print) continues to increase. Finally, the costs for processing of physical materials is also increasing. For all of these reasons, we are proposing across the board increases to our collections budget. Mr. Kelly added that while the physical collections accounts for roughly 60% of total borrowing and e-content accounts for 40%, it costs FCPL more to buy in the digital format. Marian Currens will discuss this later this evening in her presentation.

Mr. Kelly reviewed what is coming in FY24. FCPL will be opening the new Middletown Library. We will be investing in our collections. We look forward to expanding outreach and programming and resuming the PC replacement cycle. Mr. Kelly also noted that FCPL hopes to open a new passport office at the Urbana Regional Library. If this plan gets off the ground, revenues for passports will come in even higher than the conservative projections noted earlier. Finally, we will be increasing funding for workgroups and training to support strategic priorities for the reasons outlined earlier.

K. Spertzel made a motion to approve the proposed FY24 budget; seconded by T. Lancaster. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

c. Publishing Snapshot: M. Currens, Library Collections Manager, shared a PowerPoint snapshot of the publishing landscape focusing on digital collections. Demand for digital resources continues to grow, services evolve and change, and the budget always comes into play – so there are lots of challenges.

Demand for eContent has been going up for the last several years, but, of course, during the pandemic, when our branches were closed, there was a huge jump in our eContent circulation. She noted that, as can be seen in the blue column on the displayed graph, you can see the increase that shows FCPL's overall digital circulation. During the pandemic we did reallocate some funds from physical formats to digital formats, and we continue to budget for this increased demand. The demand for digital resources continues to be robust even as the rate of growth slows from pandemic levels. She thereafter displayed another slide and noted that even though circulation appears to be evening out, the budget has continued to increase as we try to better meet demand. This is particularly true for ebooks and e-audiobooks. OverDrive is FCPL's main

provider of ebooks and e-audiobooks, and their app, Libby, continues to be very popular in our community.

She thereafter reviewed some of the challenges that staff face. Stephen King's latest novel Fairy Tale, came out in September. We knew this would be a big title that needed to be purchased in every format. We continue to buy most titles in multiple formats – both print and digital. Often the cost of digital is much higher than the print counterpart, and, in addition, many digital titles are metered and may need to be re-purchased after they expire. There are several purchasing models for eContent, however the big publishers sell all their front list titles using a metered access model. This means that copies expire after a set number of circulations, a set period of time, or a combination of both.

The print copy of Fairy Tale, costs \$17.39 after FCPL's vendor discount. The ebook costs \$67.99 and each copy expires 24 months from the purchase date. There is no discount – ebooks prices are set by the publishers. Ms. Currens noted that FCPL did purchase this popular title in CD audiobook and Playaway, even though the use of these formats is declining somewhat. But of course, this title was very popular as an e-audiobook. The cost for one e-audiobook copy was \$129.99. Again, copies of this e-audio title expire after 24 months, and there is no discount as the publisher sets the price. This is an example of when our budget just did not allow us to keep up with demand. We just could not buy enough copies to meet our goal of providing a 5 to 1 ratio of hold to copies. And this is a title that will need to re-purchased after copies expire.

Ms. Currens thereafter noted that she wanted to share with everyone the trend toward digital magazines and newspapers. For several years FCPL has been gradually reducing our number of print magazines and newspapers. Some of this was natural attrition as many print magazines, and some newspapers, have ceased publication. The pandemic accelerated the shrinking of print media. Many publishers reduced frequency of issues, some went to digital only or ceased publication. When our branches closed due to COVID, our digital collections provided access to these materials. FCPL started digital subscriptions to The Washington Post, The New York Times, and, most recently, The Wall Street Journal. These subscriptions provide valuable news and current events (free with an FCPL library card) from anywhere our customers happen to be. OverDrive is our largest magazine collection – about 3,000 magazine titles that include popular titles with wide appeal, niche titles, and many world language magazines. Our other magazine provider, Flipster, provides 27 popular magazines, such as People and Real Simple. Flipster offers magazines not found in OverDrive as Flipster has exclusive agreements with some publishers. As FCPL branches reopened, we reintroduced smaller browsing collections of magazines and newspapers. FCPL sometimes encountered limitations to providing print. For example, when we wanted to restart The Washington Post subscriptions for all branches, we found that The Washington Post no longer provided delivery to some zip codes in Frederick County. Our focus now is on providing digital access to magazines and newspapers to help fill the gap.

She added that FCPL is proud of the robust collection that we offer Frederick County. We are grateful for the yearly formula increase from the county that we advocated for, and the increases in state funding that allows us to provide the best possible collections for Frederick County. In FY24 with a new budget, and new increases, we expect to provide even more. We are excited to

be adding PressReader to our offerings, which will broaden access to news and current events from Maryland and all over the world. We will also be opening a new Middletown branch and since we expect circulation to increase, we also view that as an opportunity to increase our funding for both print and digital collections. Ms. Currens noted that although there are challenges, as she outlined earlier, we will continue to focus on meeting demand with a measured approach and professional lens.

Thereafter discussion followed regarding e-content, the expiration of material after 24 months, access to The New York Times, and the Maryland State Consortium.

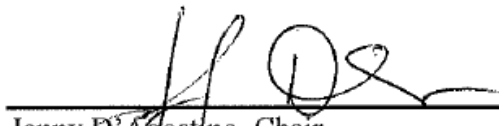
BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS: None.

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 March 1, 2023.

S. Sheppard made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by M. O’Leary. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.



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