

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
APRIL 7, 2021**

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

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: J. Donald, County Liaison

STAFF PRESENT: J. Kelly, Director; S. McDuff, Associate Director; C. Hall, Associate Director; B. McDermott, Finance Manager; J. El-Zeftawy, Development Officer, J. Marshall – Systems Manager; D. Frank-Rice, IT Coordinator; H. Hart, Children’s Supervisor – Walkersville Library; K. Quick, Library Associate – Thurmont Regional Library; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: C. Smith made a motion to approve the Minutes of March 3, 2021; seconded by S. White. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

CHAIR’S REPORT: None

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

a. FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly noted that, as he mentioned at the last meeting, in addition to providing curbside service, personalized picks, chat reference, virtual programming and an array of library services and collections, our staff are also assisting at the County’s vaccine clinics.

The Governor announced expansion of eligibility, and as of yesterday, anyone 16 and over became eligible at the state’s mass vaccination sites. Starting Monday, other providers -- like county health departments and pharmacies – are required to expand eligibility. With this ramp-

up, the County's need for staff volunteers at clinics is only increasing and we are happy to be able to help in this way. The vaccination efforts remain County Executive Gardner's top priority.

This increase in vaccinations brings us even closer to being able to move into the next phase of our tiered reopening plan. Mr. Kelly advised that he continues to talk to the County Executive, not only about vaccine efforts, but about the desire our team and the community have to see libraries reopen at a level that ensures safety. He noted that he and the County Executive were in touch this morning on this topic. When the green light is given to reopen county buildings, we are ready and excited to move into the next phase of our plan. Until that time, our team will continue to provide all of the aforementioned library services --- while also volunteering to assist the County's vaccination clinics, food delivery services, etc.

On a related note, Mr. Kelly advised that he, Catie Hall and Sheila McDuff have been hosting monthly Ask Me Anything sessions with our team. These sessions are an informal way for our 200+ member team to connect with Director's Staff and have proven to be very popular. This Friday, Frederick County Public Health Officer Dr. Barbara Brookmeyer has agreed to be our guest. She will provide the team with updates on the County's efforts and will field any COVID-related questions our team might have. We are grateful for Dr. Brookmeyer's leadership over the past year and for her willingness to join us this Friday.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly reviewed statistics. He noted that February visits were consistently strong when compared with the last 6 months. The current trend for visits mirror the 3-year average which is the line plotted on the dashboard. This trend follows for circulation as well.

With regard to circulation last month, our Ancestry and Heritage Quest databases announced that their site was under-reporting usage statistics from July, 2020 through mid-January, 2021. We have made the necessary adjustments and the dashboard is now accurate. The result is an additional 23k visits added to our e-Content totals, translating to a 3.5% increase in e-Content circulation and a 2% increase in overall circulation for the year.

Wi-fi use remains strong. You may have seen the signage at our branches or media mentions announcing the wi-fi expansion. The WDVM story, in fact, was picked up by Geek the Library and featured on their Facebook page. In its current iteration, Geek the Library is an online community that brings attention to the vital role of public libraries in communities and raises awareness about funding challenges that libraries face.

Social media engagement continues to climb. Most recently, we've been celebrating National Library Week and National Poetry Month in addition to our always popular virtual programming. On the programming front, you can see our numbers on the dashboard. Mr. Kelly noted that FCPL is continuing to follow the trend line with attendance down slightly month-to-month. He added that it is hard to believe, but when we bring you the March numbers at our next meeting, we will be $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through our Fiscal year.

b. Budget/CIP Update: Mr. Kelly advised that the County Executive held a public hearing on her draft FY22 budget. She gathered public feedback via a number of channels. As you're aware, she launched the *Balancing Act* platform which asked community members to rank actual

budget appeals that she received. Hundreds of community members completed the exercise and the #1 appeal item selected was Library Collections – 53% of respondents selected that item.

The CE also accepted emailed testimony, voicemails, and comments via a real-time chat during the session. She noted that over 90 emails were received in support of library appeals, the most on any topic. In addition, most of the voicemails and comments on the portal expressed the need for a West Frederick City library.

It was clear to everyone watching the proceedings that Frederick County loves their libraries. Judging by the comments of those who spoke, the public recognizes our value and the hard work of our team, they see libraries as a good community investment, and they are in favor of increased support.

Pivoting to the capital side of the budget, the County Executive proposed accelerating the East County Regional library by a year and included funding for a feasibility study for a West Frederick City project.

All of this is excellent news and Mr. Kelly stated that he looks forward to seeing the details of her budget when it is unveiled next Thursday. From there, it is submitted to the County Council for consideration. The Council will have a hearing on the budget before finalizing and adopting the budget in May.

Next, Mr. Kelly noted that he wanted to share some great news on the capital grant front and then invited Sheila McDuff to give an update on the Middletown project. Last week, the Maryland State Library was informed by the Office of Capital Budgeting that the Governor's 5th Supplemental Budget includes an additional \$2.5 million for the Library Capital Grant Program in FY22. Subsequently, we were informed by MSL that they are granting us an additional \$1,309,000 for Middletown construction. When combined with the \$1 million we were already granted, the total FY22 award will be \$2,309,000. Ms. McDuff has been our liaison to MSL on library capital grant projects and this additional disbursement is due to her hard work on the Walkersville, Myersville, and now Middletown projects. Thereafter, Mr. Kelly invited Sheila McDuff to provide an update on the Middletown design.

Ms. McDuff thereafter provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding the Middletown Library Construction Project. The first slide she presented was an outside graphic of the building and parking area. She noted that the parking lot was shifted slightly to the east with some added space in front of the library which includes a garden space. She thereafter presented a slide with some landscaping so everyone could see what it will look like with some greenery. There will be a bike path on the far eastern side of the property.

Thereafter, Ms. McDuff displayed some updated, exterior elevation diagrams of the Middletown Library. She noted that the roof line was changed as well as the front porch piece. The angled roofs were removed.

Ms. Greenway inquired how much square footage will be at the Middletown Library. Ms. McDuff advised that it will be 15,000 square feet – same as Brunswick and Walkersville Libraries.

Ms. White inquired whether there were any other additional fees to make these changes other than architectural fees. Ms. McDuff stated that the exterior changes will not impact the budget in any significant way.

She displayed the exterior materials that will be used and noted the exterior materials will be very neutral. They are more of a brown color rather than gray.

Thereafter, Ms. McDuff displayed a slide which showed the back of the building. With the elevation of the building on the west side, there should be some beautiful views of the mountains. There will be two screened-in porches on the west side as well. She also noted that the bottom picture shows the elevation on the north side of the building which is where the drive-up book drop will be located. The staff entrance is also located on this side of the building. Maintenance equipment will be located in the basement and there is an entrance for maintenance staff as well.

Ms. Greenway inquired if all the parking is on the south side. Ms. McDuff advised that the parking is on the east and north side of the building. Ms. Greenway further inquired if staff have to walk around the building to get into the building. Ms. McDuff advised that there is parking near the staff entrance.

Ms. Smith asked if there would be any outside public areas such as benches, etc. Ms. McDuff advised that there is an area that is a slightly sloped that we can possibly install something in that area such as a children's area. She also added that this is one reason we added the wall garden space so the front of the wall is a seating space. Ms. McDuff noted that we will evaluate further as to where we can possibly install some benches in strategic places.

Mr. O'Leary inquired how many parking spaces are at the Walkersville Library. Ms. McDuff stated that there are 39 parking spaces at the Walkersville Library. Mr. O'Leary noted that the Middletown Library will have almost double the amount of parking as the Walkersville Library. Ms. McDuff noted that this is intentional because we have a serious parking issue at the Walkersville Library so we wanted to be sure to address that issue.

Thereafter, Ms. McDuff displayed an image of the interior of the Middletown Library. There will be an open entrance. She pointed out where the restrooms will be located. Self-checkouts and holds will be at the front of the library. She noted the location of the main service points. The workroom will be in the rear. There will be cubicles for supervisory staff and shared worked stations for other staff. She noted the location where the exterior book drop will be located so books can be easily accessed by staff. There will also be lockers on the exterior of the building near the main entrance so patrons can pick up holds after hours. She noted the location of the delivery area and staff restrooms. Public computers will be located near the service desk. There will be a closed off space for those that require a quiet space. There will also be a reading nook.

The next slide Ms. McDuff displayed showed the large meeting room area. The meeting room will accommodate 150 people and can be split in half, if needed. There will also be a wall that

can be opened up into the children's area. She noted the location of the adult collection area. There will be a lot of flexible seating areas. There will be three study rooms. One study room will have a solid wall behind it and the other two will have glass walls.

Ms. Sheppard inquired whether there will be technology in the study rooms in case patrons want to practice a presentation. Ms. McDuff stated that there will be white boards and electrical data available.

Thereafter, Ms. McDuff noted that there is a mobile desk that can be moved from one location to another, as needed.

There will be a wide opening into the teen area so it is a very welcoming area. There will be computers and a gaming center in the teen area as well as a power bar.

There will be a family play space that can be used for multiple purposes. It will have a garage door that can be opened to provide additional seating, if needed.

There will be some mobile shelving throughout the library. There will also be some fixed shelving as well. Ms. McDuff also noted that the ipads will be moved further away from the entrance in the children's department. FCPL received some feedback from parents that they would like the ipads moved away from the entrance because they distract the children from getting to the books.

Ms. Greenway stated that she thinks it is fabulous that you can move things around and make spaces when needed. She noted that it is the most flexible plan she has seen in the last five years. Ms. McDuff stated we have been lucky enough to work with HBM Architects and they brought a lot of newer trends and ideas that we could incorporate. Ms. Greenway inquired whether the Middletown Library will be a one-floor building. Ms. McDuff advised that everything is on one floor.

Ms. Spertzel inquired whether the west windows will really heat up the library. The architects are working on some shading to prevent that from happening. There will also be some venting in the floors. Ms. Greenway inquired whether the heating/cooling has ever been an issue at the C. Burr Artz Library. Mr. Kelly advised that it is an ongoing issue at all buildings.

Mr. O'Leary inquired as to how the size of the multi-purpose meeting room compares to the same room at other locations. Ms. McDuff advised that it is a larger room. The capacity of the meeting room at Brunswick and Walkersville Libraries is 100 so we made the Middletown meeting room's capacity at 150.

Ms. Greenway inquired about the opening date for the Middletown Library. Ms. McDuff advised that it will be in the late summer or early fall of 2023.

S. White stated that she was so glad to hear about the additional funding for the Middletown Library. Mr. Kelly noted that Sheila McDuff has been very diligent and her experience in past projects is the reason we were granted these extra funds.

Mr. Kelly added that the May Board meeting will be on May 12, 2021 at 7:00 pm. Please note this is the 2nd Wednesday of the month to accommodate the Maryland Library Association's annual conference, held virtually this year, the first week in May.

Ms. White inquired about a tiered reopening plan and asked what that would look like. Mr. Kelly advised that the plan is already set. The next phase, as currently written, allows for point-of-base service and passports. We hope to be in that phase for a short time and thereafter we would open for browsing. He noted this is in a perfect world. The County Executive's main priority is vaccinations. The clinics and the support that is provided to the clinics is the priority. He noted that it is hoped that by the next meeting, he will be able to provide an update. Mr. Kelly thanked Heidi Keeney in the County Executive's Office who has been tasked with managing the vaccine clinics. She has done a remarkable job.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Financial Report: B. McDermott presented the Fiscal Year 2021 financial statement for April, 2021. The data is as of February 28, 2021 and was pulled on March 18, 2021. Revenue is at 53%. There was an increase in miscellaneous operating expenses of \$1,000 and federal grant revenue of \$7,000. Ms. McDermott pointed out the collected percentage of federal grants and library fines is over 100% but this is due to the fact that the revenue received is over the proposed budget which is positive for FCPL. Contribution/donations and ending fund balance are not reported until the end of the fiscal year.

Ms. McDermott thereafter reviewed expenditures. She noted that expenditures are at 62%. As far as expenditures are concerned, there have been a few slight changes from the previous month. There was a 4% increase in library material purchases. County finance posted personnel and telephone expenses which reflect the most significant percentage changes for this month. She further noted that, as she has mentioned in previous months, the amount noted for office supplies/expenditures is reflected as 86%. The percentage includes \$6,000 that will be reimbursed from the County Human Resources Department for safety/wellness supplies. We should see that amount posted to our account within the next few months. She noted that the revenue/expenditures are right where they should be for this time of year.

She noted that there have been no new grants awarded at this time. Staff have been busy with a lot of activities and attending virtual training sessions. Grants awarded remains at \$338,000. Ms. McDermott noted that she only reflected \$1,000,000 for the Middletown Branch Construction Grant in her slide but she is glad to hear that FCPL was awarded an additional \$1.3 million. Sponsors/contributions is at \$73,000 which includes an increase to the Greatest Needs Account. Other endowment revenue is at \$75,000 which includes a \$2,000 increase. Funds were received from the C. Burr Artz Trust to be used for the sole benefit of the C. Burr Artz Library. This brings the total to \$487,000.

C. Greenway inquired whether funds were received last month from the C. Burr Artz Trust. Ms. McDermott noted that the C. Burr Artz Trust gave FCPL \$58,000 last month. They have been very generous this year in support of the reimagine project of the C. Burr Artz Library.

b. Development Update: Ms. El-Zeftawy introduced herself as the Development Officer for FCPL. She noted that members of the FCPL Board of Trustees know her but those watching from home may not. She added that if you are on FCPL's e-mail list, you have surely received an e-mail or two from her sweetly asking for support. She stated that her job is a professional fundraiser and she spends most of her time working with library donors and supporters to fund important projects and programs that enable FCPL to offer the best possible library services to the people of Frederick County.

She advised that she is going to give everyone a brief update on the library's fundraising efforts over the last year and she will highlight just a few of FCPL's remarkable donors. She acknowledged how challenging but also inspiring this past year has been. In a time that was filled with stress and worry, FCPL supporters showed up in big ways. The fact that they cared about others in a time like this speaks volumes about who they are. Our donors are kind, generous and neighborly. They love the library and know just how much it means to our community.

Ms. El-Zeftawy reviewed a few of the FCPL fundraising campaigns for the past year. The first event reviewed was the Stay Home and Read a Book Ball Event. In 2019, she and Mr. Kelly started talking about doing a virtual fundraising event before virtual events were a "thing". And, in fact, she noted that they had planned that FCPL would host one in the spring of 2021. The global health crisis and the sudden shift and popularity of virtual events accelerated our timeline. Basically we thought, if we were going to do this we need to do it now – so we did. The premise behind this event was simple – stay home and read a book and have a ball benefiting the Library's Greatest Need Fund. This fund was selected specifically because unrestricted funding gives the library the maximum amount of flexibility in responding quickly to the evolving needs of the community.

Library supporters were invited to RSVP to the virtual gala by making a gift in any amount and they would then celebrate with us on August 15th at home on their couch with wine and cocktails wearing a ball gown or with milk and cookies wearing their jammies. The best thing about this event is that people would be connected through their shared love of reading and the library, but also not have to do anything they didn't want to - no awkward small talk with strangers - no lengthy and vaguely inspiration remarks - just you and your books, celebrating with FCPL, in any way you want.

The event took place on August 15th and, in the weeks leading up to it, 318 donors raised over \$20,000. This event was incredibly successful in terms of new donor acquisition, and 44% of our Book Ball donors were first-time donors. She added that it is worth mentioning that typical in-person fundraising events and galas can be extremely expensive in both cost and human capital, meaning the staff time it takes to host them is astronomical. This event was not just successful in fundraising and friend-raising, but it was also extremely cost effective. It cost just 19 cents to raise a dollar.

Ms. El-Zeftawy stated that she thinks everyone will agree with her when she says that this is all good to know but data points and statistics don't ever really tell the whole story. The photos and the feedback do. She thereafter displayed a photo of Sarah Lynn, one of our Book Ball guests, dressed in a gown drinking champagne and reading Over the Top by Jonathan Van Ness with her date for the evening, Mr. Chip. She thereafter displayed a few additional photos that give a snapshot of the Read a Book Ball. She noted that you can tell from looking at Ruby, the pug, and James, the Librarian, that the feel of the event was fun.

Most of our communications happened digitally which gave us a lot of latitude to be playful. On social media we put up silly poll questions and sparked conversations about reading recommendations to help people feel a bit of joy during a very stressful time but also to feel connected when we were isolated. Ms. El-Zeftawy noted that one of the guests on Facebook said after the event "This is the best book ball I've ever been to." And, Ms. El-Zeftawy agreed.

Ms. El-Zeftawy noted that she is most proud of the photo in the upper corner that shows a family reading together and celebrating with FCPL. From babies to seniors in retirement, we always say the library is for everyone – and this picture proves it. This was a fun event that people could get behind.

Thereafter, Ms. El-Zeftawy gave a special shout out to one of our little library customers, Kaitlyn Chen, who read 75 picture books throughout the day as she celebrated with us. And another nod of recognition goes to our very own Mick O'Leary who was exceedingly generous with his time and served as the event Chairperson. She further added that she would be remiss if she didn't also say how proud she was that she managed to get James in a tuxedo t-shirt.

She noted that before the question is asked, the answer is YES. The first ever FCPL Read a Book Ball was a roaring success and we have plans to continue. She has a team who will start working on the second edition of the event this month. Be on the lookout for a save the date invitation soon.

Mr. O'Leary inquired whether the next Book Ball will be about the same time of year. Ms. El-Zeftawy stated that a date has not been chosen yet but we are thinking about July or August.

Ms. El-Zeftawy noted that FCPL's next campaign is not a new one – it is an oldie but a goodie. She stated that our more tenured Board Members have heard her talk about this event for several years. FCPL has celebrated and promoted #GivingTuesday since 2017, but the event is actually much older and was started in 2011 when "giving days" started to take off as a new phenomenon in the nonprofit community. Celebrated on the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving, during the peak of consumer driven shopping frenzy, #GivingTuesday is a world-wide movement that allows ordinary donors and organizations to do extraordinary things through a global day of giving centered on the transformational power of philanthropy. And, she noted that everyone who is within hearing distance of her knows that her favorite November holiday is not Thanksgiving – it is #GivingTuesday. She thereafter took a look at what donors accomplished on #GivingTuesday over the past few years.

In 2017 – 23 donors raised \$1,529 on #GivingTuesday

In 2018 – 47 donors raised \$3,180 on #GivingTuesday

In 2019 – 69 donors raised \$3,430 on #GivingTuesday. Note: There was a slight increase in revenue but a significant increase in new donors.

In 2020, 88 donors raised \$6,084 on #GivingTuesday, a 28% increase in donor engagement and a 77% increase in funds raised compared to 2019.

Again, the success of this campaign is due entirely to the libraries, the library staff, and the donors who love them.

Thereafter, she displayed a photo received of a library customer named Zephyr who hosted a candy fundraising sale with support from her little brother, Perrin, to benefit the library. Her Mom told Ms. El-Zeftawy that her efforts were supported by the local homeschool community (and their amazing grandmas). Zephyr raised \$67.54 and her Mom said that Zephyr did this fundraiser because she wanted to thank the library for not only making homeschooling possible for her, but also for making it easy and fun – even while they’ve been stuck at home. She also said that talking to the librarians at curbside-pickup has been a consistent highlight of the kids’ day and they wanted to say “thank you” and give a little back. She stated that she shared this story because the library’s fundraising efforts, and our #GivingTuesday campaigns are not successful because of big mega donors. They’re a success because of kind and generous supporters like Zephyr.

While #GivingTuesday is a singular day of giving it really serves as a starting point that kicks off our year-end fundraising campaign. Nationally most non-profits will see 30-40% (and sometimes as high as 50%) of contributed revenue for the year come in during the months of November and December – making it a peak fundraising season. This is due to a few different things - one being that people generally feel more generous around the holiday season but also for tax purposes (the year-end deadline is a reminder to folks to get their charitable contributions in before the New Year).

To give you an idea of scale, nonprofits raised 449.64 billion dollars in 2019 and a national average of 38% raised in year-end would be 170.86 billion dollars in charitable giving during this time. So, each year the library, like many organizations, asks our supporters to consider the library as a worthwhile philanthropic investment. We send a direct mail appeal that details the work the library is doing and how donations to the library positively impact our community. She displayed a sample of the letter.

Thereafter, Ms. El-Zeftawy outlined how FCPL has done at year-end.

In 2017 – 191 donors raised \$15,093 in the month of December.

In 2018 – 170 donors raised \$20,516 in the month of December. There were fewer donors but larger gifts were received.

In 2019 – 267 donors raised \$27,430 in the month of December.

In 2020, 405 donors raised \$33,420 in the month of December, which is a 52% increase in donor engagement and a 37% increase in funds raised compared to 2019

There was a great deal of uncertainty among her fundraising peers about what we'd see this year given the negative effects of the pandemic. We knew that there was a dramatic increase in newly dislocated workers and single income households so we braced ourselves to see a decline in revenue and donor engagement - similar to what we saw during the 2008 recession - but that didn't happen. Our fundraising efforts were successful despite the economic uncertainty and despite our branches being closed because FCPL donors know the true value of public libraries. They gave because they are grateful for the new and innovative services, dramatic and immediate changes to our digital collections, virtual programs and daily story times that are lifelines for families feeling frazzled. FCPL was working hard to support our community when they needed us the most.

Ms. El-Zeftawy shared a quote from one of FCPL's donors, Shirley, who said... "The library has been a Godsend. Thank you for figuring out how to open to the public and keep yourselves and us safe." Additionally, another quote came in today from another donor, Diane, who said "I read more than 100 books during the worst of the COVID-year – both hardcover and electronic sources. I cannot praise enough the hardy souls who cheerfully brought out my hardcover books in every kind of weather always with a friendly and encouraging smile. Truly I don't know if I could have survived COVID emotionally without their companionship and my books." Ms. El-Zeftawy noted that Shirley and Diane are just a few of the 1,778 FCPL donors who support FCPL even more so in times of hardship and we are grateful for them.

Ms. El-Zeftawy noted that today is National Library Giving Day and it has her feeling sentimental about the work our donors do to support our libraries. In closing, she mentioned two more donors although all 1,778 donors deserve a shout-out. These two stories show the resilience of our community. Each one of the libraries has a Friends of the Library group who volunteer their time and effort to make improvements to the buildings, enhance our programs and services and support our library team. Each summer the Friends of the Library groups ban together to support the annual summer reading program, Summer Challenge. What everyone may not know is most of these groups host an annual book sale to generate the earned revenue that they then donate back to the library but, like everything else, that could not happen this past year. And, many of FCPL's longtime corporate partners were unable to weather the storm and have sadly gone out of business or won't be able to provide the same financial support that they provided in years past leaving us to anticipate a funding gap. These sponsorship funds help to provide programming enhancements and it also helps FCPL to offer prizes to encourage our summer readers to reach their goal. Ms. El-Zeftawy stated that she went to each of the Friends of the Library virtual meetings and asked for their support and requested that they give the most generous gift, if they are able, because anything at all would help close the funding gap. She noted that although she expected smaller donations than in years past, the Friends showed up.

She acknowledged the Friends of the Brunswick Library, Friends of the Myersville Community Library and the Friends of the Urbana Regional Library who significantly increased their support this year. Many of them doubling what they gave in 2019. Because of FCPL's Friends, the Summer Challenge will continue to bring joy and excitement to everyone who participates and she thanked them.

Thereafter, she recognized Maureen who is 78 years old and she recently became a first-time FCPL donor with a gift of \$25.00. Ms. El-Zeftawy noted that when she called Maureen to thank her for her donation and asked her what motivated her to make this gift (something she asks all of FCPL's donors), she said "Honey, I don't have a lot to give but I give what I can because the library has given me a lot." Ms. El-Zeftawy noted that it struck her that if you watch other charitable organizations you hear them offer accolades and recognitions to donors based on the size of the gift that they receive but at the library, our donors are loyal, kind and neighborly and that is what we like to celebrate. On this special day, National Library Giving Day, Ms. El-Zeftawy stated that she would like to thank all of our donors. At FCPL we love all of our donors and especially ones like Zephyr, Maureen and the Friends of the Library groups. We would be so lucky if everyone thought like they did.

Mr. O'Leary stated that the information Ms. El-Zeftawy provided is immensely gratifying. He noted that he thinks her understanding and analysis of these trends is exactly spot-on. In a year when many people are facing financial difficulties, the big increases in donations represents what our folks are saying. They recognize everything the library has done over this period. There is a literal pay-off and this is wonderful. He added that FCPL is seeing new donors but he also noted that FCPL has a good retention ratio of donors so we are looking forward to those folks being around for the long run.

c. Summer Reading Challenge: Heather Hart and Kim Quick provided an overview of this year's Summer Reading Challenge.

Ms. Hart noted that there is no doubt that it has been a trying year for all of us. With this year's Summer's Reading Challenge, we hope to inspire our patrons to reconnect and rediscover all the new and old magical wonders found right here in their own backyard and throughout all of Frederick County.

The Summer Reading Challenge starts June 1, 2021 and ends August 31, 2021. Not only are we asking players to virtually rediscover Frederick County, we are challenging players to help us reach our community minutes reading goal of 3,000,000 minutes. She noted that, as with our previous Challenge, all activities and reading can be logged in using our user-friendly Beanstack app or game board that will be available via our website or at curbside pick-up.

She added that no summer would be complete without an FCPL program. From author events, story paths or curbside summer lunch, everyone can be sure that FCPL's programming staff are planning a variety of fun.

She noted that if a Summer Reading Challenge has programs then it has to have destinations. Community destinations are businesses found throughout Frederick County and surrounding areas who support our Summer Challenge program by becoming community partners. As with previous Summer Reading Challenges, staff will once again encourage Challenge players to build bridges with community partners by learning more about the partner via their website or, if they are comfortable and following all COVID precautions, visiting the destination in person.

Thereafter a slide was displayed which highlighted all 149 community partners from 2020. It was noted that last year's participants virtually visited these partners over 10,000 times.

She thanked local artist, Ellen Byrne, for designing this year's Challenge graphics. She noted that you may recognize her work from various contributions for local community organizations, events and even on the side of Candy Kitchen in downtown Frederick.

In addition, she thanked the sponsors including the Friends of the Library Groups. She noted that, as Ms. El-Zeftawy pointed out, it is with their continued support that provides the enhancements that help to create a modern, innovative and magical summer reading program.

Ms. Smith noted that the graphic, We Are Frederick, is charming. Ms. Hart advised that this was a graphic created by Ellen Byrne for a community event. She added that there will be more graphics to come and they are specifically made for FCPL. Ms. Smith inquired whether we can sell or use the graphic more broadly because she thinks a lot of people would like to have something like that. Ms. Hart noted that this subject has been talked about to see how to connect Ellen's work with the public.

Mr. O'Leary noted that it is hoped that circumstances will be favorable this year.

d. Fine Free Discussion: Mr. O'Leary noted library staff have been planting the seeds for a while as far as this is concerned. Now, we are heading into a substantial discussion about this. Members of the FCPL Board of Trustees had an opportunity to exchange information and the plan is to have discussion possibly leading to a vote at the May meeting.

Mr. Kelly stated that as was talked about at the March meeting and in between when we were sharing information regarding questions related to the topic, it was decided that we would put this item as a placeholder on the agenda in case there were any further questions. He added that he noted that he answered questions he received and shared his responses with everyone on the Library Board. As was noted, there was not to be any discussion between Board Members about a policy issue; we just wanted to share information so this discussion this evening would be an on-the-record account of any questions for FCPL staff or debate that may need to happen between members of the FCPL Board of Trustees. The agenda indicates we set aside 15 minutes for this discussion but if that time is not needed, that is fine too.

Ms. Greenway noted that she read the March Minutes and all the comments that were made. She stated that she thought Mr. Kelly took a tremendous amount of latitude in the comments that were made. However, there is one thing that upset her. She stated that percentages were stated (10% increase since going to fine-free) but the information failed to give the time of when that occurred. She stated that she did not know if the 10% referred to was in a day, a week, a month, a year or two years. She also noted that she did not know if the 10% increase was during the pandemic. The information provided was not relevant because there was no time associated with it.

Mr. Kelly advised that he did not intend to anger Ms. Greenway. He stated that he was not sure which 10% Ms. Greenway was referring to but stated that he can go back to the Minutes and e-mail Ms. Greenway with any clarification that she may be looking for.

Ms. Greenway further noted that the minutes stated that 8% of cardholders are minors which means that a large percent of our community is not getting their children their own card because they are worried about fines and overdue fines. Mr. Kelly responded that this is what libraries were finding based upon the research that was performed by other libraries that went fine-free. Anecdotally, this is what we are finding. Even members of the FCPL Board of Trustees have noted that they use one card to check out items for multiple members of the household to keep track of the items. There may be any number of reasons why that numbers is low. Mr. Kelly advised that in the minutes it states that FCPL has work to do in that area to try and increase cardholders for minors. Ms. Greenway inquired whether we know the number of percentages in our county that have library cards. Mr. Kelly advised that the last number he can remember off the top of his head is that we had 126,000 card holders. This number may be over a year old but he can get the most up-to-date information. As a percentage, there are approximately 260,000 people in the county so if there are 126,000 card holders, there is a lot of work to do.

Ms. Greenway added that the minutes from last month stated that “Mr. Kelly mentioned that some families are not currently using the library out of fear of incurring fines and they would not be in a position to pay.” She noted that she finds that statement highly unusual. Mr. Kelly advised that this is a very typical situation. It has been our experience through conversations between staff and public and it has also been the experience across multiple library systems. Ms. Greenway further inquired if Mr. Kelly is saying that people don’t use the library because they are afraid they might incur a fine. Mr. Kelly noted that people use the library but they don’t check materials out. People come in and use the materials within the building but they are apprehensive about taking items out of the building.

Ms. Greenway stated that when someone checks out a book a receipt is placed in the book that states the return date. Mr. Kelly stated that is correct or a patron can check their account online and they can determine when their books are due as well. Ms. Greenway added that a person may not have access to a computer. The main focus is to get to people that may not be able to afford what other people can. Mr. Kelly advised that it is all about access and that is one of our three top priorities and this is just one example of a move to improve access. Ms. Greenway

stated that if FCPL goes to fine-free, we are obviously targeting those people that cannot pay a fine.

Ms. Greenway requested clarification about the State law that says fines cannot be charged on children's libraries cards. She inquired that if she, as an adult, would check out something from the children's department, she would not be charged a fine. Mr. Kelly stated that the FCPL Board of Trustees made a decision that materials from the children's department would become fine-free and that was done some time ago. On top of that, the State law was passed which prohibited fines on a minor's card. As an example, Mr. Kelly stated that if you are an adult and check out materials from the children's department, it would not incur a fine. She inquired whether this is two different things. Mr. Kelly stated that these are two different things. She further noted that if you are a minor, you will not be charged a fine and if you are an adult and check out children's material, you do not get charged. Mr. Kelly advised that both of those statements are true. Ms. Greenway requested clarification that the new State law is only for minors that have cards and check out materials. Mr. Kelly confirmed that is correct, which is the 8% of the population that was discussed earlier.

Ms. Greenway noted that she was not overly impressed with the presentation and profusely regrets having to miss the March meeting. She stated that one sentence would have made her decide to vote in favor of this and that is – if you have an overdue book and you don't bring it back on time, you cannot get another book until you return the overdue book. No fines or fees are necessary but the book needs to be returned before any other material can be checked out. She stated that she thinks this is brilliant and this is all that needs to be said. She inquired whether this is the policy that would be in place, if we would take away all of the fines. Mr. Kelly advised that if members of the FCPL Board of Trustees would vote to remove all fines, people would still be responsible for the replacement cost of an item and, after items pass a certain overdue amount, the patron's account is set to a replacement fee and their card would be blocked.

Ms. White noted that she believes someone can have a book checked out for up to 45 days. Mr. Kelly stated that there has been discussion about narrowing that window. The State law for the minor's policy states not sooner than 21 days. Discussion has been had, if we move forward with this, that operationally we may narrow our own window, if we move to a fine-free model so that patron's cards are blocked sooner and the replacement charge appears on their card sooner. Ms. Greenway inquired that if FCPL goes to a totally fine-free system that if she, as an adult, checks out a book and she doesn't return it on time, would she still be allowed to check out material. Mr. Kelly stated that if you have not been charged a replacement cost and your record does not have bills that exceed a specific threshold amount, your card would not be blocked and you could check out additional materials. Ms. White stated that a patron could have five overdue books that are 10 days overdue but they would still be allowed to check out material. Mr. Kelly stated that a patron can have one book that is overdue by a few days and the patron's account has not been assessed a replacement cost for that book at that point.

Ms. Greenway stated that she loves the concept that if a patron checks out a book and it is overdue, then you can't check out any additional books. Ms. Smith inquired whether FCPL could go to an auto-renewal system. Mr. Kelly advised that auto-renewal is a separate idea and this could be done separately. Many libraries that make a move to go fine-free make a move also for auto-renewal. These changes are done in tandem. As an example, Carroll County Libraries just went fine-free and they also went to auto-renewal. He believes they allow five times to renew materials but he would need to check that out to be sure he is correct. Ms. Greenway stated that you can't renew materials, if someone else has a hold on the book. Mr. Kelly advised that this is correct. If a hold is placed on material, then an auto-renewal will not work. If FCPL would decide to do auto-renewal or a manual process, an item would not be able to be renewed if there is a hold placed on that item. Ms. White inquired as to how many days it would be if five renewals were allowed. Mr. Kelly advised that it would 21 days times 5, or 105 days. He added that some libraries are doing more and some are doing less. FCPL has not made a determination yet as to what we would do for auto-renewal. The time would be right to do these two things in tandem. Ms. White further inquired that if someone did an auto-renewal and the item was not on hold, a patron could have an item for 100+ days and their account would not be charged a fine until after that time. Mr. Kelly stated that it is his understanding that if FCPL did auto-renewal and no one had an item on hold, it wouldn't become actively overdue after 21 days because it would automatically renew. There wouldn't be an overdue item because it would have automatically renewed on day 21. Ms. White noted that if a person does not return an item after the fifth renewal, their account would then be charged. Ms. Greenway inquired if a patron would want to renew a book, they would not have to renew the book themselves because FCPL will do it for them. Mr. Kelly advised that those are two separate tasks: fine-free is separate from the auto-renewal. If FCPL would go to auto-renewal, it would be automatic renewal.

Ms. Greenway stated that she didn't see anything in the minutes from last month's meeting where FCPL would be able to make up the \$100,000 in lost fines. Mr. Kelly advised that this past year FCPL only received \$5,000 in fines so when the budget was presented and approved by the Board in January, it was noted that we would only receive \$5,000 in fine revenue next year. It is likely that if FCPL would move to a fine-free model, fines received would be in excess of the \$5,000. As we try to do every year, we try to budget the next year based on the current year. In the current year, we have had a significant hit to fine revenue. Next year's budget, the one that was approved by the Board, we budgeted anticipated fine revenue at \$5,000. Ms. Greenway noted that FCPL has made the necessary cuts to cover the lost fine revenue. Mr. Kelly stated that we only budgeted the revenue that was anticipated and the revenue for fines was estimated at only \$5,000. He added that this is one reason we brought this issue before the Board because it is an opportune time to have this discussion. If FCPL was consistently receiving \$250,000 in fine revenue and we were having this conversation with the Board, then finding \$250,000 would be tricky. What we are currently budgeting for is \$5,000.

K. Spertzel inquired whether a patron has a fine on the books and FCPL goes to fine-free, would the existing fines be forgiven. Mr. Kelly stated that is how it typically works when library systems go fine-free.

Ms. Greenway noted that it was noted last month that libraries who went fine-free had a 10% increase in circulation. She inquired as to what time frame is being talked about. Mr. Kelly advised that he can send members of the FCPL Board of Trustees a copy of the study that he was quoting from and a study that was conducted at libraries that recently went fine-free. He added that typically there was an increase in people requesting library cards or were already on the books but not using their cards because of the risk of fines and the fact that fines had gone away. He further stated that some library systems saw an increase of more than 10%.

Ms. Greenway noted that these numbers were not included in the budget so that is not why FCPL has such an aggressive fundraising situation going on. She stated that she receives at least two e-mails per month asking her for money. She advised that she has given a lot of money to the library and raised a lot of money for the library through the Friends of the Library and it has been her pleasure but constantly being dunned for a donation to the library is a little offensive to her. She inquired whether FCPL, as a county department, should continually ask people for money. Mr. Kelly advised that FCPL has a development program to help raise those funds. FCPL doesn't currently have a foundation. Many other libraries who have independent foundations who do fundraising for them have much larger budgets than FCPL has. Mr. Kelly noted that in a perfect world, we would have the county's support that we would need to be able to provide services to the community but for a number of reasons that support is at the level it is at so in order to expand, we fundraise to provide the best level of library service that we can provide. Ms. Greenway stated that FCPL staff do an excellent job but she suggested that maybe there could be some statistics that would show how many people are taking advantage of some of the online opportunities that are being provided. She further noted that she has been on the library board for ten years and probably does not take advantage of 50% of the programs that are offered online and bets that most people in the county don't even know the services that FCPL provides.

Mr. Kelly stated that FCPL could do a better job of marketing. Our Communications Department does a magnificent job engaging with the community. He noted that Ms. Greenway's feedback is well-taken. Mr. Kelly stated that we can always reach out to communities that may not be aware of all of the services that we are providing with programming but also the depth of our collection/formats. This is something that we can continue to work on. Ms. Greenway inquired whether FCPL has any idea how many people are taking advantage of Rosetta Stone as an example. Mr. Kelly stated that FCPL tracks that information all of the time. This information is reflected on the Dashboard that is provided each month but not as granular as may be expected. E-content use is shown on the Dashboard. It is shown month-to-month and year-to-year. There is opportunity on the Dashboard to highlight some of those resources. Ms. Greenway stated that she didn't realize that Rosetta Stone was included in e-content. Mr. Kelly stated that FCPL staff do their best to count everything.

Ms. Greenway wanted to confirm that on a monthly basis, FCPL is looking at how many people take advantage of each of the databases that FCPL is supplying. Mr. Kelly stated that this is

correct. Ms. Lauchner's group looks at the numbers each month and those numbers help us determine if FCPL will continue the subscription for each database.

Mr. Kelly stated that he thinks he has addressed everyone's concerns but if anyone has any further questions, he suggested that an e-mail be sent to him. Ms. Greenway stated that she was thrilled to go fine-free for everyone when she thought that if a book was overdue, you couldn't get another book. She thinks that is a great idea – all a person has to do is return the book – but that is not the case. FCPL will still let people check out books. Ms. Smith noted that it is only for a limited time. Mr. Kelly stated that Ms. Smith is correct.

Ms. White stated that she read online that Carroll County went fine-free on September 1, 2020. Their policy states that if materials are not returned within 35 days, materials are considered lost and customers will be charged a replacement cost and processing fee for materials not returned. It also states that any customer's account that reflects \$25.00 or more, will not be able to use their library card. She inquired that if a patron owes \$15.00, their card would not be blocked from usage. Mr. Kelly advised that if a patron's account has not met the threshold, they would still be able to use their library card. Ms. White inquired whether this is included in the recent law that was passed. Mr. Kelly noted that the only thing in the legislation was about materials checked out on minor's cards and it says that they cannot be charged a replacement fee any earlier than 21 days. The item has to be overdue by 21 days before a replacement fee can be assessed. Mr. Kelly reiterated that Carroll County also allows auto-renewal five times on items so overdue fines are not being incurred on the item unless the item has a hold on it.

Ms. Greenway inquired whether FCPL is planning on doing auto-renewals. Mr. Kelly advised that this has not been decided yet. The conversation this evening is about the fine-free piece.

Ms. Smith asked if and when the fine-free policy is brought to members of the FCPL Board of Trustees to vote on, will some of the details also be included in the policy such as what will be done with existing fines and whether or not an auto-renewal process is going to be part of the fine-free policy. Mr. Kelly stated that we will work on a proposal to bring forward auto-renewal. Our focus has only been on the fine-free aspect. As mentioned earlier, the common practice for library systems that have gone fine-free is to wipe the slate clean for existing patrons. This is also the case regarding minors with the new legislation. Ms. Smith further inquired if a patron's account is assessed a replacement fee for an overdue item and it is under the \$25.00 threshold, would that mean the library patron's card is not block. Mr. Kelly stated that is his understanding. Ms. Smith further inquired what the threshold amount is for sending an account to collections. Ms. McDuff stated that we are not currently utilizing collections right now. Ms. McDuff advised that the card is blocked at \$20.00 and the account goes to collections at \$25.00. Ms. Hall confirmed that information. Ms. McDuff stated that these procedures are all in effect right now but all of this would be revisited, if we would go fine-free.

Ms. Smith asked if the procedure would be that members of the FCPL Board of Trustees would be brought the fine-free policy to vote on and then staff would revisit the operational procedures

and keep the Board informed. Mr. Kelly noted that we would definitely keep the Board informed of operational changes that we would be making in-house as a result of the Board's approval of the policy to go fine-free.

Ms. Greenway inquired about the length of time a patron has when they check out a book. Mr. Kelly responded that it is a 21-day period. Ms. Smith stated that a patron can renew a book 10 times and keep a book for 200+ days. Ms. Greenway stated that is crazy. Ms. Smith stated that this was approved by the FCPL Board of Trustees years ago.

Ms. Greenway further inquired whether anyone is in agreement with her that instead of fining people for overdue books that we say you can't get another book until you have returned the one that is overdue. This would take away the whole layer of people that can't afford to pay fines and that is why they don't use the library. This would provide an incentive to return books.

Ms. Sheppard stated that she is not in agreement with what Ms. Greenway proposed. She noted that she does not see the logic for someone being punished for not bringing back the book. This defeats the purpose of going fine-free. C. Smith agreed with Ms. Sheppard. Mr. Kelly stated that if you are looking for an accountability piece, the patron is charged a replacement cost. Ms. Greenway stated that she would not want to be charged a replacement fee just because she was late in returning an item. Mr. Kelly stated that the patron would not be charged a replacement fee, if the item is returned.

Ms. White stated that she wants to give people access to the library but there is a part of her that also wants accountability. She noted that she is not sure she agrees with the \$25.00 threshold. She has mixed emotions about cutting access off, if a book is overdue but she knows we need to balance accountability. She added that she knows we need to promote literacy for all people.

Ms. Smith stated that having one overdue book out is different than a chronic abuser that has fifty overdue books. This is part of the nuance of the policy that we need to address.

Mr. O'Leary stated that we could look at the financial implications of losing the fine revenue and the other aspects of not having fines in place. As far as the reduction in revenue, Mr. Kelly and his staff have that figured that out. He noted that the question of reduction in revenue includes reduction in collection spending but has the advantage of increased access - how do you compare and measure those two values? This is an equation that, as a member of the Library Board, lands in our laps as well as that of James and his team. What is the value here? Mr. O'Leary is proposing that members of the FCPL Board of Trustees think about this. Going totally fine-free is a much bigger step than just going fine-free for children's materials. We need to feel comfortable in taking funds from one purpose (collections) and putting it towards something else. These are values that are hard to measure.

Ms. Spertzel inquired as to what the mission is of the library. Is the mission to have a great collection or to promote literacy and love of reading? We cannot put a financial value on that but we can put an ethical value on it.

Mr. O'Leary stated that he has his own thoughts on this but he wants everyone on the FCPL Board of Trustees and James Kelly and his team to think about this and each individual come to their own individual opinion and come to a specific "yes" or "no" as to charging fees or going fine-free. That vote is scheduled to take place at our next meeting in May.

Thereafter, Mr. O'Leary noted that he tries to look at fines in a larger context – overall circulation. He stated that C. Greenway and S. White made some very good points about this balance and it seems to him that if FCPL goes fine-free, it will be difficult to go back to charging fines. The other aspects of the collection policy – number of check-outs/duration of check-outs/when do we block/costs of books – these are all parts of the circulation conditions in addition to no fines. No fines is the shiny object we are talking about. He noted that if he is correct and this is a one way street, there are lots of other levers that can be moved to get accountability. We can vote on fine-free and let's say that is passed, there are levers and dials that can be turned in different ways to achieve this balance of circulation.

Ms. Greenway noted that FCPL should have went fine-free the minute the pandemic happened. Ms. Smith stated that fines were suspended when the pandemic hit. Mr. Kelly stated that fines were relaxed at the beginning of the pandemic but fines were then reinstated. Ms. Greenway stated that she thinks FCPL needs to go fine-free because of the pandemic. She added that she thinks the way to do this is that a patron can't check out additional books, if they don't return the book.

Mr. O'Leary stated that this is one of the levers/dials that can be turned up or turned back but because of the high profile of a fine-free decision, that is the biggest item on the table right now. If FCPL goes fine-free, that is not the end of the consideration of the overall set of circulation conditions.

Ms. White agrees that we can't go back if we go fine free; there is no path back but maybe things could be tighter. Maybe we don't do auto-renewals right away or just do one auto-renewal. These are things that can be changed so we don't have to go full throttle on everything. She likes what Mr. O'Leary said earlier as far as the levers/dials that can be changed. Mr. O'Leary stated that if the Board would pass the fine-free policy, that is not the end of the recipe. Maybe the experience and numbers over time will reflect information that we can review. This is an ongoing thing. We will need to consider what will be the best mix of circulation conditions.

Mr. Kelly advised that we don't need to make the operational changes in the dark. He noted that there are many library systems in our own backyard that have already made this decision. The operational model that we put forward will be based on their experiences as well. The study that was discussed during last month's presentation gives us a good indication as to what some of the

outcomes of this have been. We have connections to talk to the other library systems and develop the operational choices that we need to make to be sure we get items back.

Ms. White stated that Mr. Kelly mentioned that there has been increased circulation in systems that went fine-free but there are many situations that could have caused an increase in circulation as well. She said she could ask for data from 10 counties that didn't go fine free and determine if their circulation went up/down. She gets what is being said and a lot of it is anecdotal but we just have to believe this to be the case. She does think there is a relationship but how much there is, she does not know.

Ms. D'Agostino stated that, for the most part, members of the FCPL Board of Trustees like the idea of going fine-free. She inquired how do members of the Library Board vote on it and how we would implement it with the different levers behind it. Mr. Kelly advised that we would offer what the operational model would look like. The Board's responsibility is to vote "yay" or "nay" on the policy of fine-free. The implementation of that policy is FCPL's responsibility. In the interest of transparency, staff would share with members of the Board, what operational model we would move forward with. He noted that, as Mr. O'Leary mentioned earlier, as data comes in, if we need to tweak some of those operational things, we could do that. This is what we do now in other aspects of our work. He added that although the operational model does not require the vote of the Board, we would share that information with members of the FCPL Board of Trustees.

Mr. Kelly thanked members of the FCPL Board of Trustees for their consideration of going fine-free. It is a big decision and is not being taken lightly. He hopes that he has answered everyone's questions. The next step will be to add the vote to the agenda for the May meeting and it can be decided whether to be taken up or not. He added that he will work with his group to see what that operational model will look like should it be decided to go fine-free.

Mr. O'Leary encouraged members of the FCPL Board of Trustees to go to Google and google fine-free public libraries. There is an immense body of information about that. He added that if anyone has any other questions, please e-mail James Kelly. He further noted that each member of the FCPL Board of Trustees has the responsibility to understand the whole decision so that each person feels comfortable in voting on the fine-free policy and also continuing the on-going evolution of the circulation policies. He further stated that this has been a very good discussion.

Ms. Greenway thanked Mr. Kelly and everyone for their feedback.

BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS: None

OTHER CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

The next meeting will be held virtually on May 12, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

C. Greenway made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by C. Smith. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. O'Leary', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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