

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
MAY 11, 2022**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on May 11, 2022 at the C. Burr Artz Library.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: G. Mayfield, M. O’Leary, S. Sheppard, C. Smith, and K. Spertzel.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: J. D’Agostino, S. White and 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 Manager; S. Jones, Communications Manager; B. Heltebridle, Branch Administrator – C. Burr Artz Library; J. Diaz, Branch Administrator – Brunswick Library; A. Whitney, Branch Administrator – Thurmont/Emmitsburg Libraries; R. Frecker, Branch Administrator, Walkersville, Library; S. Yates, Branch Administrator – Urbana Regional Library; R. Cox-Steib, Branch Administrator – Myersville Library; M. Currens, Library Collections Manager; J. Marshall – Systems Manager; C. Brohawn, Project Coordinator; R. Goetz, Children’s Supervisor – Myersville Library; R. Gulino, Library Technician – Thurmont Regional Library; R. Kurtz, Library Associate – Myersville Library; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: G. Mayfield made a motion to approve the Minutes of April 6, 2022; seconded by C. Smith. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

CHAIR’S REPORT: Mr. O’Leary noted that this is C. Smith’s last meeting. He thanked her for her valuable service to FCPL.

Thereafter, Mr. O’Leary noted that he and James Kelly attended the Town Hall about a new library on the west end. The situation is still open-ended. He added that members of the FCPL Board of Trustees are not directly involved in selecting the location for a library on the west end. In terms of what the prospects and possibilities are goes back to Mr. Kelly and his team as to how best to provide library services to the public. Mr. O’Leary noted that the Library Board has a secondary role in site selection. He thereafter read a portion of Maryland Code 23-405(f)(4) as it pertains to site locations for libraries. He noted that the Board’s responsibility would be that we act upon a recommendation of the grass roots process.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly introduced Rorie Cox-Steib as the new Branch Administrator for the Myersville Library. Many may know her in her capacity as the Children's Services Supervisor at the C. Burr Artz Library. Rorie has been with FCPL for a little over three years. Before that she worked in Loudoun County, Virginia as both a teen and children's librarian. FCPL is lucky to have her leadership in Myersville.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly noted that we are meeting a week later than normal this month and he thanked the Board for its flexibility. Pushing our meeting out one week allowed members of our team to attend the Maryland Library Association Annual Conference. Mr. Kelly advised that thanks to a generous staff development grant from the State Library, FCPL was able to send over 20 staff to this year's conference, several of whom were invited to lead sessions or serve on panels. Our team shared best practices on a wide range of topics from hiring for organizational success to community partnerships to digital communication strategies. He stated that staff are grateful for the opportunity to learn and share while attending the first in-person state library conference since 2019.

Mr. Kelly thereafter provided an update on the statewide Board Effectiveness Survey. As you'll recall, this was a survey of Board Members and Library Directors across the state that was completed last year. Since that time, we've been waiting to hear the results. At the April meeting of MAPLA (the Maryland Association of Public Library Administrators), attendees were provided with a briefing from the head of the project team. Based on the survey responses across all counties, five key findings were shared:

1. To be an effective team, a shared understanding of the governing responsibilities of the Board and the operational responsibilities of the Director is needed.
2. More frequent education and training opportunities for Board members are desired to equip Board members with the understanding needed to perform their functions effectively. Key areas mentioned included – board roles, fiduciary responsibilities, strategic planning, and succession planning.
3. Board recruitment and retention strategies are pivotal areas of importance to ensure diversity and a Board's ability to represent and reflect their community.
4. Few Boards currently conduct self-evaluation - opportunities for Board members to provide feedback and discuss options to improve Board processes is recommended.
5. Boards should consider their composition as it relates to Board member experience, background, and demographics. Training opportunities should be customized to best meet the needs of their members. Similarly, Boards should consider their geographic and political setting and how that may impact the training needs of their Board.

There is a much more substantial report that is in development which will dig down into each of these 5 key findings and provide more targeted recommendations. Mr. Kelly noted that FCPL will be partnering with the State to provide that training not only to Directors and Administrators but to board members as well. State Librarian, Irene Padilla, stated that they were planning a training session for library administrators to walk us through the findings and that this survey

will likely inform future trainings offered by the State Library for everyone. Mr. Kelly advised that he will keep members of the Board informed of future developments.

Pivoting to statistics, Mr. Kelly noted that there are a few items in the Board packet this month (the usual monthly and YTD dashboards and a 3rd quarter review). Starting with the monthly numbers first. Our visits are on trend for this time of year and circulation continues to out-pace the 3-year average, as it has throughout the past 6 months. On the year, visits are still lower than pre-pandemic levels, but circulation continues to edge toward what they were pre-pandemic.

New cardholders continue to significantly out-pace the 3-year average and March, 2022 was FCPL's highest monthly total over the past 6 months. Mr. Kelly stated that as everyone may recall, when we were exploring the experiences of other public libraries who had moved to a fine free model, they reported increased card sign-ups following their policy change. The numbers tell us that we are seeing that same upward trend in new library card registrations since the decision was made to remove barriers and simplify access.

Mr. Kelly highlighted that under social media followers, we have a new platform, TikTok. We continue to look for ways to meet people where they are and establishing FCPL's presence on this platform is only the most recent example of that.

We saw a significant spike in programs offered and program attendance compared to the last two months. Our Strategic Plan call-outs highlight two of the well-attended stand-alone programs in March -- the Celtic Concert and the Spelling Bee. Additionally, our Walkersville team participated in STEM night at their nearby elementary school and saw almost 250 people. Even some of our regularly scheduled program events, like storytimes, are seeing remarkable attendance. As an example, two of the storytimes held by Urbana in March each had over 125 attendees.

Another impressive statistic is WiFi usage. FCPL had 30,516 sessions in March. This is the highest monthly total to date and speaks to the success of last year's grant-funded WiFi expansion project at every branch.

Finally, attached is the 3rd quarter report which shows YTD trends by format. FY21 continues to be the highwater-mark for circulation of things like eBooks, eAudiobooks, and streaming video. That was the year our doors were closed for almost the entire fiscal year and FCPL was heavily marketing our digital collections. Interestingly, database use has been very strong in the current year. Mr. Kelly also stated that it is exciting to see the trend in check-out of physical materials. As a reminder, when FCPL closed its doors in March of 2020, we were on pace to have our strongest annual circulation ever. By comparison, you can see our current year in red which is encouraging. We spend a lot of time talking about the cost and popularity of eContent which is very important, but as you can see, folks have by no means abandoned print. Finding a way to meet community need with a finite budget and balance print and electronic collections is the hard work that public libraries nationwide wrestle with. Here at FCPL, it is Marian Currens and her materials team that do a great job day-to-day finding that balance and, when necessary, adjusting budgets.

Budget/CIP Update: Starting on the capital side of things, Mr. Kelly advised that at last month's meeting, he noted that the Middletown design is complete and DPW has put out the RFP (Request For Proposal) for a construction firm. We should have one on board soon and are looking at July as a possible date for groundbreaking. Mr. Kelly noted that he received a request from Councilmember Donald's office for a rendering of the new building and have reached out to the architect for an image. We should have something soon. Additionally, Sheila McDuff will be on the June agenda to share a more thorough update on the Middletown project.

The other news on the capital side of things is the County Executive's May 2nd Community Conversation on a proposed West End library project that Mr. O'Leary mentioned in his Chair's report. As Mr. O'Leary noted, it was a very well attended meeting. There were lots of folks from the community including many parents of students from Waverly, Hillcrest, and Butterfly Ridge elementary schools who provided public comment. The community raised wide-ranging concerns about accessibility, transportation, poverty, public safety, education, and equity. They talked about a need for not only more library services but also general services on the west end. Mr. Kelly noted that while we are aware of these challenges it was still a valuable opportunity to hear directly from those in the community. To be clear, the need for a branch has never been the question and everyone at the public meeting shared a common vision for a library branch on the west end. The challenge has been about what opportunities exist to locate a branch in an area of town that is already so developed. As we heard from a commercial real estate professional who opened the meeting, complicating this issue is the fact that so few properties in this area are for sale and none of the parcels that are for sale offer the 4-5 acres needed for a 15,000 square foot library.

Mr. Kelly noted that heading into Monday's meeting, there were two options on the table. First, an offer by the County to provide space in the recently-acquired Himes Avenue building and, second, a site generously offered by the City on Contender Way. There are pros and cons to both. The City's parcel is in a more central location – walkable to Hillcrest and Butterfly Ridge elementary schools, but still a hike for those on the Northside of 40. Unfortunately, the 3.24 acre parcel is too small. Additionally, not all of the 3.24 acres are buildable because a stream runs through it. The County site by contrast is an adaptive re-use project that can be completed for less money and on a faster timeline, but it is in the Southeast quadrant of the area. While it is on a transit line and the transit line is free to ride, some members of the community would like to see the library site more centrally located, so that it is walkable to their homes.

Interestingly, while the County Executive's meeting was going on at Butterfly Ridge, the Mayor and Aldermen were having a budget meeting at Town Hall and the Mayor stated in that meeting that larger parcels may be available if Contender Way would not meet the needs of the County. Mr. Kelly stated that his conversations with the County Executive are ongoing and he can envision a few different scenarios for moving forward. As these talks unfold, Mr. Kelly noted that he will continue to keep the Board informed.

On the Operating side of things, Mr. Kelly noted that he was given an opportunity to provide testimony on the FY23 budget before the County Council on April 29th. He advised that he thinks the meeting went well and shared with the Board that many of the questions he received

were about the great work of FCPL's team throughout the pandemic and the team's work that will continue in the coming months.

After 3 days of testimony from all divisions and component units, the Council is considering the budget and then they will finalize and adopt the FY23 Operating Budget.

Mr. Kelly advised that the next Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 1, 2022.

In closing, Mr. Kelly thanked Cheryl Smith for her 12 years of service on the Board. The commitment of time that Board members make to represent our community and advocate for their needs is critical to the work that we do. Cheryl's time on our Board saw the construction of several branches, working with many elected officials, the retirement of our previous Director, the commitment to a new set of core values, and the evolution of our policies and services to be more people-focused and better meet community need. He noted that Cheryl is leaving big shoes to fill and he thanked her for her leadership and guidance to make the library system better than it was when she found it.

S. Sheppard thanked library staff for participating in FCC's Hip Hop Appreciation Week festivities. Staff were signing up FCC students for library cards during this event and she noted that she will be working with library staff to have a more consistent presence at FCC. Mr. Kelly stated that he appreciates the opportunity and noted that it was an opportunity for FCPL to bring out the Street Lab.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Financial Report: B. McDermott presented the Fiscal Year 2022 financial statement. The data is tentative as of March 31, 2022. Revenues are at 55%, a 3% increase from the previous board meeting. FCPL received a transfer to the County In-Kind of \$283,813 and a MD State Education Grant of \$276,812. There was an increase of \$1,300 to miscellaneous operating and a \$6,425 increase to Passport Fee Revenue. The percentage collected for passport fee revenue is 106% due to the revenue collected being over the proposed budget.

As mentioned last month regarding revenues, as we move towards the end of the fiscal year, please keep in mind that our ending fund balance and contributions/donations do not get recorded until the end of the fiscal year.

FCPL's expenditures are at 67%, an 8% increase from the previous board meeting. There was a slight increase in most of the line items for expenditures. The most significant percentage changes were a 12% increase in In-Kind County Appropriations, 7% in personnel, and 9% in telephones. There was also an 8% increase in library material purchases.

As FCPL ends the third quarter of the FY22 fiscal year, the report reflects a 12% difference between revenues and expenditures primarily due to the timing of when revenue and expenditures post to the general ledger.

Grants awarded are at \$2,460,595 and grants submitted are at \$1,000,000. There are currently no new grants awarded or submitted at this time.

Donations are at \$133,281. Since the last board meeting, there was an increase of \$17,436 with several generous donations to the Greatest Need, Summer Reading Challenge, MD Room, and the Branches.

Other endowment revenues are at \$276,387. There was an increase of \$102,110 from the previous month. The funds were from interest received from the Churney and Nallin CD, the Glassman Trust, and the C Burr Artz Trust.

This brings the total to \$2,870,262.

b. Brunswick Library Update: J. Diaz provided an update on the Brunswick Library. She noted that the very first thing that patrons say when they walk in is “Is this library new?” Many say they didn’t even know the library was here and it looks brand new. The Brunswick Library is 11 years old as of last month. Staff at the Brunswick Library over the past few years have provided all of its services in new and different ways. The notary service at Brunswick Library is very popular. The Brunswick Library is now open on Sundays from 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Curbside service is also provided. Brunswick Library also provides space for vaccine clinics, which are scheduled at least through the end of May at this time.

Ms. Diaz noted that during the COVID lockdown, Brunswick Library staff started doing scavenger hunts. People loved them so we are continuing them now that the library is open. In April, for National Poetry Month, staff did a “Poem in your Pocket” exhibition at Othello Park and some of the city parks. Brunswick Library also hosts outdoor programming such as Storytime at the Park. Staff are going to the park to let everyone know about the library and let them know about all of the programs that are going on at the Brunswick Library. She noted that the C&O Canal is very special to the Brunswick community and it is a great place for library staff to connect to visitors and residents. Last month staff presented two programs on the C&O Canal and, again, this was a great way to connect to people.

In the fall, Brunswick Library staff participated in the City’s Trunk or Treat event. We had an outdoor pumpkin decorating contest. At the Trunk or Treat event, Brunswick Library had 1,109 participants (924 of which were children) and they all received goodies.

Ms. Diaz advised that the Brunswick Library hosted a Memory Lab. This is a conversion of VHS tapes or physical photos/negatives into a digital format. Since FCPL was not doing any other programs during the lockdown, we were able to set up the equipment and leave it up for a week or two and patrons could come back and work with it on a daily basis instead of a day here and a day there. Over time, staff got to know its customers. More importantly, the customers are experiencing their stories and sharing them with staff.

She noted that the Brunswick Library also has fishing rods from the Department of Natural Resources. There are many programs being provided that promote the fact that the Brunswick Library has fishing rods.

Storytime is back. Last month, FCPL staff were able to hold indoor storytimes again.

c. FY23-FY25 Strategic Plan Proposal: S. Jones and A. Whitney provided an overview of the Strategic Plan proposal for FY2023 – FY2025. Ms. Whitney noted that in February, 2022, we presented the results of our research, which informed the strategic priorities that we will now present. Through continued research and your survey results, we have outlined the priorities, goals, and directions to inform our plan and guide staff at every level over the next three years. This proposal mirrors the board’s survey results.

As was shared with you previously, we have some new terminology to delineate between the steps of our plan.

Priority is the succinct goal at the top of each slide. These terms will be widely used in our public language and internal planning. These broad terms give us the flexibility to adapt to unexpected changes in circumstances that proved so effective with our last plan.

Goal elaborates on the priority to give context to what we wish to achieve. This language will also be public-facing and used when further explanation behind our priorities is required, such as in our Annual Report, staff presentations, website, and press releases.

Directions are new additions to our plan. These are the elements the board voted on and your feedback directly reflects the order in which they are organized. Directions are purposely broad to give staff flexibility in their workplans and individual performance plans. Directions are mostly for internal purposes. They will be published in our Strategic Plan document on our website but otherwise they are mostly for internal use.

Actions are the quantifiable steps we will take to complete our directions, goals, and priorities. Actions will not be shared publicly and are only intended for internal purposes.

Three strategic priorities were thereafter reviewed by Ms. Whitney and Ms. Jones. So much was accomplished over the past three years but because of the pandemic, it was found that there are still so many opportunities for FCPL in the current Strategic Plan and the research supported that belief. While these priorities are the same, or very similar, these were strategically selected because of the work that remains to be done. We’ve heard overwhelmingly that we can achieve more, and with new goals and directions, we believe we will have the framework required to succeed.

First Priority: Expanding Access— We will build on our work to simplify access by creating more expansive opportunities for the community to find and use our resources. We are going to focus on reaching under-served communities and increase access to the technology that is most needed and develop new and innovative services. An example of this is taking the sprinter van out to provide mobile library services to areas of the county with limited access to libraries or to communities with a high percentage of non-English-speaking residents.

Second Priority: Building Bridges—We made good progress in this area over the last 3 years, but through providing a collection more reflective of our community, outreach and connections to community services, and making space for conversations, we can continue this good work. What would this look like in practice? Programs like the Human Library are an excellent way to

cultivate enduring relationships and empower a strong community. Our inward directions to Build Bridges will see us expand our partnerships. We will continue our EDI work by aligning with county initiatives to build a culture of antiracism and inclusion. And, we will allocate resources intentionally to empower staff to be fully prepared to serve community members from all backgrounds. One example of an internal action would be to audit our hiring practices and workflow to discover opportunities for building a workforce that better reflects the demographics of our community as well as allocating resources intentionally to empower staff to be fully prepared to serve community members from all backgrounds.

Third Priority: Sparking Excitement—this is all about surprising and delighting our community and enabling us to tell our story. Celebrating the diversity of the community with vibrant events like Hispanic Heritage Month or Lunar New Year, and creating opportunities in unexpected places, such as riding our new book bike to an under-served neighborhood in Frederick City and providing materials, Wi-Fi, and library cards will go a long way to broadening people's understanding of the positive role the library plays in the community. We want to provide opportunities for staff to submit new ideas and proposals as a way of nurturing staff creativity and ingenuity—all of which lead to staff well-being and ultimately more responsive customer service.

A. Whitney and S. Jones recognized the other members of the Strategic Plan workgroup who worked so hard on this process. Those individuals are: Beth Heltebridle, Robin Frecker, Bryan Hisson, Joe Dacey, Robin Goetz, Courtney Brohawn, and Levi Branson.

It was noted that the next step would be for the FCPL Board of Trustees to vote to accept this plan and, once approved, the Communications Department and the Strategic Plan workgroup will create a complete communications plan announcing the new strategic plan to staff and customers. This would be rolled out in June/July.

S. Shemica inquired about what FCPL's plans are for building bridges and diversification of staff. Mr. Kelly advised that FCPL has a relationship with the County Equity Officer and we are one of the first organizations to do an equity audit. Tackling an issue like that is going to involve a lot of interaction. There is a lot of work to do with the County Equity Officer and the Head of Human Resources as to how our job descriptions are written and marketed. It will also entail which partners we get the word out to in order to get a wider recruitment. Mr. Kelly stated that FCPL does not have specific actions yet but it is a priority for FCPL. Ms. Sheppard noted that you don't see many people of color in the libraries because they don't feel comfortable and see people like them. Mr. Kelly stated that this is important to FCPL and it will include a number of actions over time. Ms. Spertzel agreed with Ms. Sheppard on the issues at hand. Mr. O'Leary added that this is an important initiative, and we will follow along as things progress. Mr. Kelly noted that this is not just something we received from the Board but it was also noted by staff and the community.

A discussion followed about possibly streaming Board Meetings or having a hybrid (in person and streaming the meeting). Mr. Kelly stated that he will continue to work with County staff about this issue.

K. Spertzel made a motion to approve the Strategic Plan; seconded by S. Shemica. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

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 Wednesday, June 1, 2022

K. Spertzel made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by C. Smith. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

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

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