

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
SEPTEMBER 7, 2022**

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

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: K. Spertzel and 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; C. Brohawn – Project Coordinator; M. Currens, Library Collections Manager; J Marshall, Systems Manager; A. Knight, Branch Administrator – Middletown Library; A. Whitney, Branch Administrator – Thurmont/Emmitsburg Libraries; R. Frecker, Branch Administrator, Walkersville Library; S. Yates, Branch Administrator – Urbana Regional/Point of Rocks Libraries; R. Cox-Steib, Branch Administrator – Myersville Library; J. Diaz, Branch Administrator – Brunswick Library; B. Brannen, Assistant Branch Administrator – Urbana Regional/Point of Rocks Libraries; and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

CITIZEN REMARKS: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: G. Mayfield made a motion to approve the Minutes of June 1 2022; seconded by S. White. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

CHAIR’S REPORT: Ms. D’Agostino welcomed everyone to the September meeting. She thanked Mr. O’Leary for chairing the FCPL Board of Trustees for a couple of years. She also welcomed Terri Lancaster as a new member of the FCPL Board of Trustees.

She noted that during the summer, there was the groundbreaking for the Middletown Library, the Summer Reading Challenge was going on and it ended with the Read-A-Book Ball. She further noted that there was some updating done in the children’s section of the C Burr Artz Library and it looks great.

Thereafter, Ms. D’Agostino noted that September is Library Card Sign-Up month.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

FCPL – Update: Mr. Kelly introduced Angie Knight. She is the new Branch Administrator at the Middletown Library. Angie worked for 14 years at Carroll County Public Library.

Thereafter Mr. Kelly welcomed everyone to the September meeting noting that this is Jenny's first meeting as Chair and Terri's first meeting with the Board, so this is a big day for both of them.

A lot has happened since we met last. Among the many highlights, we closed a fiscal year, we had a groundbreaking, we provided a summer of great programming, we were awarded an important grant, and we continued to make a big impact in communities across the County. It was a very busy summer.

Taking a look at statistics, Mr. Kelly noted that the May, June, and July dashboards were included in the Board's packet. May and June close out FY22 and we finished the year strong in all categories. June outpaced the previous six months by a considerable margin with almost 200,000 visits and an amazing 300,000 items circulated in a single month. Program attendance, wifi use, and new card registrations also finished the year way up.

As we've noted in past meetings, library statistics nationwide for FY20 and FY21 will always have asterisks beside them, because communities were on lockdown, our doors were closed for part of that time, and our service models, while flexible and responsive, looked a bit different. So, when FY22 came to a close, we asked Courtney Brohawn, our Project Coordinator, to compare FY22 totals with FY19, the last pre-COVID fiscal year, so that we could make note of some trends.

Total circulation eclipsed the 3 million mark in FY22, just as it had back in FY19, so we have definitely bounced back. Trends in borrowing by format type are also interesting. In FY22, borrowing of physical items was down and eContent borrowing continued to climb. The rise of eContent is not surprising as it had been climbing for several years pre-pandemic, but it is still worth noting that we had a lot of first time eContent borrowers during the pandemic and they became comfortable with our platforms and enjoyed the ease of use which contributed to the rise. Even with our buildings fully reopened, eContent borrowing remains high, accounting for 40% of total circulation in FY22. By contrast, eContent accounted for 28% of borrowing in FY19.

Wifi use was up 124% compared to FY19.

New Patron Registrations were up an impressive 37% thanks to several factors including the move to fine-free, the ease of digital card signups, and outreach to new customers.

In-branch visits were down compared to FY19, but we have observed slow increases month-to-month, a trend that should continue as program offerings increase.

Public computing hours continued to follow the downward trend that pre-dated COVID. If the trend holds, we may not see a rebound to pre-pandemic levels; however, with internet access

remaining a critical issue for many folks across our county -- either because of the barrier of cost or the lack of broadband availability in certain communities, FCPL will continue to offer public computing. On a related note, while the number of folks using a library workstation continues to trend down, Wifi Use was up a staggering 124%. An increasing numbers of folks are bringing their own devices to our branches to access the internet.

Mr. Kelly stated that staff will continue to watch these trends throughout FY23 and beyond. He noted that he is interested in finding out what effect increased programming might have on visits, borrowing from the physical collection, and public computer use. We are also interested in discovering to what degree might these trends simply signify our continued emergence from a global pandemic and a return to normal or a more permanent shift in how the community wants to use their library moving forward. In either case, FCPL's team will remain responsive and flexible and adapt our service models to meet community need.

July marked the start of FY23 and the July Dashboard was in the Board's packets. While one month of data is not enough to start forecasting trends, he noted that visits and circulation dipped just slightly compared to June's impressive totals. New card registrations continue to climb. Wifi sessions are still strong and the number of programs offered kept pace with June so we are starting the fiscal year very strong.

Mr. Kelly pointed out the *Expand Access* pull quote on the Dashboard provided to members of the FCPL Board of Trustees. As you may know, Dr. Cheryl Dyson joined Frederick County Public Schools as the new Superintendent in July. Shortly after she arrived, Mr. Kelly noted that he was contacted by a member of her team. They wanted FCPL to join them on a series of community meet-and-greets around the county. Mr. Kelly thanked Bryan Hissong and our team for quickly making this happen on top of all of their other outreach commitments ensuring we could be a part of Dr. Dyson's tour. We met a lot of community members for the first time. It is worth noting that FCPL was the only organization FCPS sought to partner with for the tour. Dr. Dyson clearly understands the value of public libraries for families in our community and Mr. Kelly stated that he looks forward to future partnerships.

Budget/CIP Update: Shifting to budget, Mr. Kelly noted that this is the time of year when we are starting to consider priorities for FCPL's FY24 draft operating budget. As a reminder of the budget timeline, Mr. Kelly noted that he offers the Board Budget Refresher Training in early January, we present the draft budget to the Board's Finance Committee a few weeks later, then the budget is presented to the full Board for a vote at the February meeting.

On the capital side of things, staff met with DPW last Monday to talk through the pending library projects as outlined in our Facilities Master Plan. This is the first step in the development of the County's FY24 CIP budget. With Middletown in the construction phase this year, the remaining projects are West Frederick, Northwest Frederick City, the relocation of Library Operations, East County Regional, and the C. Burr Artz renovation. Mr. Kelly added that all of this was discussed at last week's meeting.

These projects could be accelerated or pushed back in the CIP based on many factors like site acquisition, but also some unknowns; the biggest being the funding priorities of the incoming

County Executive whoever that may be. Mr. Kelly noted that he will keep members of the FCPL Board of Trustees informed as things unfold.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly reviewed a few of the upcoming projects. He thanked everyone who was able to attend the Middletown groundbreaking. We are only a couple of weeks into construction, but so far, there are no delays.

On West Frederick, as we've discussed, there are a pair of locations under consideration. In late June, Mr. Kelly noted that he was invited to attend a roundtable discussion between City and County officials about a potential West Frederick library. Mr. Kelly added that he may be overly optimistic, but he left that meeting feeling hopeful, having had the opportunity to advocate for the community, to answer questions from elected officials, to hear from members of the community, and to articulate the specific needs regarding parcel size. After that meeting, Mr. Kelly advised that he had a conversation with the County Executive. She indicated that she planned to follow up with the Mayor on whether the city would be able to provide an appropriately-sized parcel in the area of Butterfly Ridge Elementary School. If the City is able to provide this, Mr. Kelly explained that it would be his preference to put the library there even if that meant that the project might be pushed out a few years in the CIP. He noted that until we hear back from the City, there remains only one appropriately-sized parcel under consideration and that is the Himes Avenue building. The Himes Avenue property would potentially house the West Frederick branch library and the County graciously offered to consider relocating the FCPL's operations departments there as well. Mr. Kelly noted that if we were able to relocate library operations to the Himes Avenue location, we could advocate to have the CBA remodel moved up in the CIP.

Conversations about Himes continued throughout the Summer. Most recently last week, we met with an architect who had been hired by the County to conduct a space study. Their job is to determine whether this facility can house all of the County agencies being considered for the move (and there are many). Mr. Kelly advised that he left that meeting confident that a library branch could be accommodated on site, but less confident about the Library Operations piece. With so many competing needs for workspace in that building, the proposed space plan does not adequately accommodate our Operations Departments or put us in close enough proximity to the loading dock. Mr. Kelly noted that he invited the architects to tour our current location to get a better idea of the unique workflow within our operations departments, but they have not followed up yet.

Mr. Kelly shared news about a \$25,000 grant that FCPL was recently awarded from the Maryland State Library. The goal of the "Equitable Heritage" project will be to produce video walking tours highlighting the history contributions and landmarks of Frederick County's African-American community. These videos will be created in collaboration with the AARCH Society and they will be produced by a local award-winning company, 88 Visual. Once the videos are complete, they will be hosted on a number of sites including AARCH and Visit Frederick enabling us to reach a much wider audience. This great project connects a lot of important local partners, aligns with the priorities of our new strategic plan, and we are proud of the team that envisioned the project and are working to carry it through. Those individuals are Bryan Hissong, Jenny Diaz, Marian Currens, Mary Mannix and Derek Gee.

Mr. Kelly thereafter shared a few important dates and noted that they all happen to fall in the same week.

- Monday, October 10th is FCPL's Staff Development Day and Board Members are welcome to attend. Mr. Kelly noted that he sent out information about the event recently and if you would like to attend just let him know.
- Wednesday, October 12th is the date of our next Board meeting. This is one week later than normal so as not to conflict with the Maryland Association of Public Library Administrators meeting that he and his team will be attending.
- Saturday, October 15th is the date of the Citizens for Maryland Libraries 2022 Annual Conference for Friends, Trustees, and Library Supporters. This full day conference is being hosted at the Michael E. Busch Library in Annapolis this year. Let us know if you would like to attend and we will help get you registered. Also, let us know if you plan to drive yourself or if you'd like to join a library carpool. Historically, the Chair has attended this annual event along with at least one member of Directors Staff; however, this opportunity is open to any interested member of the Board.

Discussion followed regarding wi-fi access and usage.

Additional discussion followed regarding e-content usage and demand.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Financial Report: Ms. McDermott mentioned that County Finance is working on the FY22 Year-End Financial Audit Report which will be presented to the Board in November. Preliminary numbers, at this time, reflect FCPL's total revenue at 95% and expenditures at 90%, reflecting a promising variance comparing the budget to actuals. She added that everyone should keep in mind that County Finance may continue to post entries for the FY22 year-end as late as October.

Ms. McDermott presented the Fiscal Year 2023 Financial Report. She noted that the data is tentative as of July 31, 2022 and was pulled on August 19, 2022.

Revenues are at 2%. She noted that as we end the first period of the new fiscal year, the year-to-date collected total is \$313,990, which includes library fees (payment for materials that were lost), miscellaneous operating, passport fees and the Maryland State Education Grant. She further added that the transfer from the County General Fund and In-Kind County Revenue is only transferred quarterly and contributions/donations and fund balance revenue is recorded at the end of the fiscal year.

FCPL's expenditures are at 6%. The most significant expenditures are library material purchases at 8% for the annual e-content subscription renewals. Other operating expenditures are at 9%, equipment maintenance and repairs are at 17% and equipment is at 8% which is for several annual technology software, license and hardware agreement renewals. County Finance also posted the monthly personnel and telephone expenses. Ms. McDermott noted that most FCPL

revenue is recorded quarterly or at the end of the fiscal year but expenditures are recorded when the expense is posted to the general ledger.

Grants Awarded are at \$1,005,000. This amount includes the FY23 Middletown Branch Construction Grant of \$1,000,000 from the Maryland State Library to support the construction of the new Middletown Library project. FCPL received \$5,000 from FCWS Technology Partnership Grant. This grant is to support the purchase of technology and services in circulation for mobile hotspots and tablets. This is a continuation of a grant we received last year and they provided \$30,000 last year. They granted FCPL an additional \$5,000 for this year.

Grants Submitted are at \$324,089. Creating Equitable Heritage Resources in Frederick County Grant in the amount of \$25,000 from the Maryland State Library Agency is to support hiring a local production service to film African American heritage sites in Frederick County.

Staff Development and Maryland Library Association Conference Grant in the amount of \$31,100 from the Maryland State Library Agency is to support library staff training throughout the fiscal year and the Maryland Library Association Conference in May, 2023.

Ms. McDermott noted that she is happy to say that both of these grants were just awarded and will be noted under grants awarded next month.

Emergency Connectivity Fund Grant has been submitted in the amount of \$267,989 to the Federal Communications Commission to support the purchase of staff laptops and wifi hotspots.

Donations are at \$3,728. The donations we received include several generous donations for Greatest Need, Summer Reading and the branches.

Other endowment revenue is at \$15.00. This was interest received from the Nallin CD. This endowment is to be used for the purchase of large print books.

The total is currently at \$1,008,743.

b. Holiday Schedule: Mr. Kelly noted that the packet sent to members of the FCPL Board of Trustees includes a proposed holiday schedule for calendar year 2023. The only change for 2023 is a closure on New Year's Eve and that is a Sunday.

M. O'Leary made a motion to approve the holiday schedule for 2023; seconded by S. White. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

c. Reaffirm Policies: Ms. McDuff noted that members of the FCPL Board of Trustees received a proposed, revised Policy Manual along with their agenda package. She noted that staff are asking for the Board to reaffirm all of the policies in the Policy Manual except for the Borrowing Policy and the Fines and Fees Policy. We are requesting to combine the Borrowing Policy and Fines and Fees into one policy called Borrowing and Item Replacement Policy. The new policy we are proposing includes a few changes. One of the changes includes a reduction in the renewal limit from 10 to 5. We are also planning to implement auto-renewal, which is available with the new ILS. Staff is asking to change the process for blocking user accounts when items

are overdue. Currently, blocking starts at 21 days and we are requesting to move that back to 10 days, however, FCPL would not charge for a lost item until 21 days. In addition, Ms. McDuff noted that we are requesting a formal removal of a collection agency and updating our collection schedule to accommodate that change. We are also proposing to remove the processing fee that is currently being charged for items that are lost.

Ms. McDuff stated that when FCPL made the move to fine-free one of the things that was requested was to expand the renewals to 10. Staff have been tracking the data since that change was made. After the first couple of renewals, things start to level off so we felt that 5 renewals would be sufficient since we will be going to auto-renewal and will meet the needs of most customers and will make the auto-renewal piece flow better as to being able to get items back.

Ms. McDuff displayed a PowerPoint slide outlining how FCPL will communicate with the public about how everything will work. Staff are still working on some of the specific details but basically at 3 days before the material is due, the customer will get a notice that the material is coming due. If the material is able to be renewed, the customer will receive a notice that the material was auto-renewed. The customer will also receive notification when no additional auto-renewals are available and the material needs to be returned.

Ms. McDuff noted that most library systems that go fine-free implement auto-renewal policies. She added that she thinks our customers will find this very helpful and make their lives easier. Mr. Kelly added that FCPL took the approach to do fine-free first and then look at data on how many renewals were being made. Having looked at that data, most folks are renewing 2 and 3 times and then returning the items. Mr. Kelly noted that FCPL shares customers with Carroll County and they have had auto-renewal for some time so it will probably not be a surprise to most people that we will be offering this service. He also added that FCPL has not heard from other systems that implemented auto-renewal that their shelves are being wiped out and patrons aren't bringing things back.

Ms. McDuff noted that when FCPL became fine-free, one of the discussions that was had with the Board was when we would block library accounts. What FCPL really wanted to do was to block accounts based on days overdue before we were charging for the cost of the item. FCPL's previous ILS would not allow us to do that but our new ILS does let us do what we want. One of the changes is on Day 10 would be to block the account so the patron could not check-out items and FCPL would be able to get back materials that others are waiting for but it would not change the fact that the patron would be charged on Day 21 for assumed lost items.

She further added that the other piece to the schedule would be on Day 60 a delinquent notice would be sent out to the patron which would take the place of the letter that the collection agency would send when we used them. FCPL has not used the collection agency since COVID for many reasons. It is currently in the policy and FCPL feels like we can take that on in order to replace the collection agency. She added that the collection agency approach does not work well with FCPL values so we feel it is not a good fit for FCPL any longer. The collection agency charged FCPL and charged the customer.

FCPL's "lost rate" is 2.9% which is pretty low. This is reassuring to FCPL that we do not have a very high "lost rate". Also, if we implement this change, we will be able to see if we are losing a lot more items with not using a collection agency. Staff have spoken to a number of other library systems that used to use collection agencies and do not utilize them any longer and they don't seem to have any regrets.

Ms. McDuff noted that FCPL currently charges a \$4.00 processing fee when someone does pay for an item that is lost. Again, FCPL feels like charging that fee is somewhat arbitrary at this time and doesn't align with our approach to fines and fees and customer service. She added that this would be a good time to stop charging the \$4.00 processing fee.

Additional discussion followed about auto-renewals and the elimination of the \$4.00 processing fee.

Ms. D'Agostino made a motion to approve the policy changes as presented. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

d. Urbana Library Update: S. Yates, Branch Administrator for the Urbana Regional Library and the Edward F Fry Memorial Library at Point of Rocks, provided an update on the two libraries. Both libraries are located in the southern end of Frederick County. She advised that the Point of Rocks Library circulated 16,195 items in FY22 and had over 14,000 visits. Urbana Regional Library circulated almost a half million items and had 115,448 visitors. There were over 12,000 people who attended a variety of library events and 3,000 new library cards were issued in FY22. She noted that the numbers are as a result of limited hours, curbside service and a lot of different things. These numbers are very encouraging.

The Point of Rocks Library is open 4 days/week. Often times an event may not be planned every day. Story times and family events are offered at the Point of Rocks Library. One thing that staff offered during COVID, and decided to continue with, is the idea of active programming. Anytime a child comes into the library, there is an activity for them to do (scavenger hunt, a craft, etc). An additional thing that is being continued since COVID is curb-side pick-up.

Ms. Yates noted that Point of Rocks is a close-knit community and we want to showcase that as much as possible with our services at the Point of Rocks Library. Some programs are held outside in the park at the Gazebo but many programs are now being held inside as well. She noted that staff focused a lot on their partners at Point of Rocks and have focused a lot on local, small businesses with family events.

Thereafter, she noted that Urbana Regional Library went through a few changes during the time between curb-side and now. One of those changes is a combined desk on the first floor which provides one point of service.

When staff were not doing in-person programming, we were doing a lot of "bring your programs to us". We had a build your own robot contest and 71 homemade robots were brought in and there were over 832 digital votes from people voting for their favorite robot. This was an inter-generational program. Urbana also hosted the Global Z recording project which allowed any

resident of the State of Maryland to record their story of how COVID affected them. The recordings will be kept in the State archives and some stories will be featured on NPR.

After COVID, we brought back programming. There were 3 storytime events recently featuring local celebrity, Eddie the Pig, and over 700 people attended. We had Family Art Night, STEM nights and Field Days along with numerous other programs.

She noted that Urbana Regional library has a very popular teen volunteer program and most of the events that we do are supported by our teen volunteers, especially during the summer when they are out of school.

This year we brought back the Starlight Film Series. It is an outdoor movie night. We did an Around the World theme this year and we showed Luca, Raya and the Last Dragon and Encanto. Everyone had an awesome time. There were a total of 1,250 people in attendance at these three events. In addition to the movies, there were field games and local vendors.

Ms. Yates added that this past year we had the Summer Reading Challenge and between the two branches, staff registered over 2,000 people for the Summer Reading Challenge and had a 40% completion rate. She displayed a photo of a winner from Point of Rocks who put all 60 of her tickets in to try and win the kayak. When we let her know she was the winner of the kayak, she was so excited. Thereafter, Ms. Yates played a short video of a young patron, Ella, who won The American Girl doll. These are two examples of the joy that FCPL was able to bring to its patrons. We are building a lifetime love of libraries.

She further noted that she is not alone – she has a wonderful staff. She further added that staff are going into the fall with a lot of excitement and planning under their belts. There were a lot of lessons learned these past two years. She stated that the libraries are back to everyday story times starting in September which we have not had in over two years. There will be after school activities for our young patrons and we will begin adult programming again. We are also always trying to reach people that don't come in our doors and have many fun events planned. The Point of Rocks staff will be at Thanksgiving Farm. Staff will also be at two Urbana High School football games (under the press box) signing up people for library cards.

Ms. White praised the Urbana Library staff for all the good work they do. Ms. Sheppard noted that she brought her sons to the Starlight Film Series and everyone had a wonderful time.

e. Committee Assignments: Ms. D'Agostino provided the following names for the various committees:

Finance Committee: S. Sheppard (Chair), K. Spertzel and T. Lancaster

Nominating/Evaluation Committee: G. Mayfield (Chair), M. O'Leary and S. White

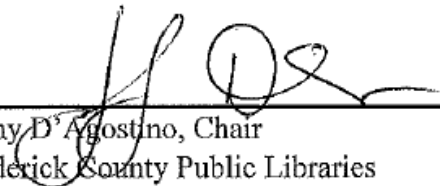
BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS: None

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 October 12, 2022.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.



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