

**FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES OF MEETING  
OCTOBER 12, 2022**

The Frederick County Public Libraries Board of Trustees Meeting convened at 7:00 p.m. on October 12, 2022 at the C. Burr Artz Library.

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

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** K. Spertzel.

**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; J Marshall, Systems Manager; E. Gambrill, Youth Services Coordinator; S. Jones, Communications Manager; B. Heltebride, Branch Administrator – C. Burr Artz Library; 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; A. Moser, Assistant Branch Administrator, C. Burr Artz Library; L. Branson, Circulation Supervisor – C. Burr Artz Library; A. Francis, Assistant Circulation Supervisor – C. Burr Artz Library; T. Schneider, Children’s Librarian – C. Burr Artz Library; C. Fitz, Library Specialist/Teens – Walkersville Library; Kathleen Jensen, Library Associate – Walkersville Library; Erin Kilic, Library Associate – Walkersville Library and L. Tibbs, Recording Secretary.

**CITIZEN REMARKS:** Public comment was heard from the following individual: Byron Bustos of Frederick, MD.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** S. White made a motion to approve the Minutes of September 7, 2022; seconded by M. O’Leary. No further discussion. VOTE: Unanimous.

**CHAIR’S REPORT:** Ms. D’Agostino noted that she had the honor, along with some other colleagues, to attend the FCPL Staff Development Day on Monday. Meeting and being able to talk to so many staff members was fantastic. She was truly impressed with the caliber and kindness of everyone she had a chance to speak to and it was very refreshing to be a part of this team. She thanked members of the Staff Development Day Committee. In addition, she noted that she liked the fact that they partnered with many members of the community to help pull together and build and strengthen those bonds as a team. She encouraged members of the

community to visit your local library to meet library staff because they spend a lot of time pulling together programming to fit the needs of our community.

Thereafter, she thanked Jerry Donald, our County Liaison. He has provided invaluable insight and feedback as a member of the Board. Ms. D'Agostino also thanked Jan Gardner for her continued support of FCPL.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

**FCPL – Update:** Mr. Kelly welcomed everyone to tonight's meeting. Thereafter, he thanked members of the Board who were able to join us on Monday for our annual Staff Development Day. As in past years, it was a great opportunity for the team to interact with Board Members in a less structured environment.

Mr. Kelly noted that based on Board feedback that he received from the Board Chair, he understands that the Board is interested in more regular updates about our work on the Strategic Plan priorities. To that end, and as a test, he restructured the Director's Report to highlight FCPL's recent work and how it maps to the priorities of the plan. He noted that his hope is that this new format provides the Board with the information you were seeking; however, we can stay flexible and pivot if it does not. Mr. Kelly encouraged Board Members to share your feedback with Jenny and he will stay flexible to make sure his report meets the needs of the Board.

The Strategic Plan has 3 priorities – to Expand Access, Build Bridges, and Spark Excitement. The work FCPL has done recently has attempted to overcome access barriers to under-served communities and invite new customers to the library. Examples of this work include -- Thurmont and Emmitsburg attending the Mt. St. Mary's freshman orientation fair in August and meeting with over 120 students. They issued new library cards and made some great contacts at the school. The team plans to do a follow up library card sign-up event at the college.

CBA's focus on outreach over this time included visits to a number of Title 1 schools. They also took part in the first pop-up event at the Hillcrest Commons Community Center put on by the Asian American Center of Frederick and they plan to attend each month through the end of the year. September was library card signup month and staff participated in more than 40 unique outreach events and opportunities in September. Sites included outreach at Thanksgiving Farms, Hood College, the Great Frederick Fair, Mount Airy Duck Race, Middletown Heritage Day Festival, and 40 Fest. For the entire month of September, staff issued a record breaking 1,577 new library cards.

The second priority of our strategic plan is to Build Bridges. FCPL sought to do this by meeting communities where they are beyond our bricks and mortar. The Brunswick staff attended the UMC Back to School Block Party for the first time and spoke to over 260 people. They helped event organizers distribute over 10 boxes of donated books to kids, signed folks up for library

cards, and shared library info, including bringing & demonstrating the new workforce services Laptop/Tablet Hotspot Kits.

Tara Lebherz re-organized the fall Early Start Bookmobile schedule so that all institutions on her waiting list were incorporated into her route. This resulted in the addition of five new stops for the Early Start Bookmobile for the school year without sacrificing service to other existing stops.

Staff worked the outreach table and tent at the In the Streets Festival in downtown Frederick on September 10th. They spoke with more than 1,000 people and created 30 new library cards. One person commented --- “The library saved my life during COVID. I’m still using the digital resources. How can I make a donation?”

Another way that staff seek to build bridges is by facilitating connections to community services. Walkersville concluded their summer lunch program in August providing 4,575 lunches this year; a 42% increase over last year! They also processed 127 notary requests that month as well!

The third priority of our Strategic Plan is to Spark Excitement. Staff do this by creating opportunities in unexpected places. For example, at Urbana’s Starlight Film Festival which is hosted off site but near the branch, over 1,200 people came out for the films this Summer! FCPL Staff also worked an outreach tent at the Frederick Community College’s Latino Festival on September 18th. We spoke with almost 200 people and created 33 new library cards.

Mr. Kelly noted that one of the things we focus on is alignment. That is, that our values inform our policies, our priorities, our services, programming and collection. So, in a very real way, all of the work we undertake and the decisions we make to sunset services are determined by our priorities.

Mr. Kelly advised that although he hasn’t worked everywhere, he has worked in public libraries across 5 states and can say that FCPL is unique among most public libraries in the emphasis we place on alignment and having it drive our decision making. He noted that he hopes that the new format of his report demonstrates how some of our daily work maps to our organizational priorities.

Pivoting to statistics, the Dashboard reflects the month of August. This month’s numbers showed a continuation of the nice boost in visits, circulation, new cardholders, and programming that we typically see during the summer. These statistics are very encouraging. We are seeing the continuation of the summer increases across the board before we traditionally start to see things slow down in the Fall.

Again, our new library card users are continuing to see extraordinary jumps, our Wi-Fi is holding steady at our new average of 30,000+ users, and our programming numbers are slowly bouncing back.

As noted on the Dashboard, August includes our Summer Challenge programming and participation numbers, as we have done in years past. This translates to 30 additional programs and an additional 7,192 participants in the program attendees.

He noted that the line graph on the social media section has been removed and we've instead highlighted a popular Facebook post for the month. These kinds of engagements tell a great story.

**Budget/CIP Update:** Mr. Kelly noted that we are in the very early stages of the FY24 budget planning cycle.

Mr. Kelly advised that the Middletown Library remains on track at this time.

Thereafter, Mr. Kelly provided a brief update on the West Frederick location. As you know, we were waiting to see whether the City of Frederick might offer a new parcel on the westside. Since our last meeting, and as you may have read in the The Frederick News-Post, the City did propose a site adjacent to the Butterfly Ridge Elementary School. The County is currently evaluating the feasibility of that site.

He noted that the CIP budget is also underway. The first deadline in the FY24 budget process is this Friday, October 14th.

Mr. Kelly advised that the Citizens for Maryland Libraries Annual Conference for Friends, Trustees and Library Supporters is scheduled for October 15<sup>th</sup>. He noted that he and S. Sheppard will be attending the Conference. Mr. Kelly noted that he attended a full day training on the Board Effectiveness Report on September 30<sup>th</sup> and an abbreviated version of that will be on the agenda with the same consultant, Veronda Pitchford, at this Saturday's conference.

Mr. O'Leary inquired whether the report that will be discussed is regarding the survey that we took about a year ago. Mr. Kelly advised that this is correct and he will share the report with members of the FCPL Board of Trustees after the upcoming conference.

Ms. D'Agostino inquired about a timeline for the new, proposed site offered by the City of Frederick. Mr. Kelly advised that the City and County are in a conversation now and the site is being evaluated. He is hopeful that we can move forward soon.

Ms. Sheppard inquired whether there is any further news on the site for North Frederick. Mr. Kelly advised that this is further out in the CIP and a site has not been located for that as conversations are still ongoing.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Financial Report:** Ms. McDermott presented the Fiscal Year 2023 Financial Report for the month of August. She noted that the data is tentative as of August 31, 2022 and was pulled on September 23, 2022.

Revenues collected are at 7%, which is a 5% increase from the previous board meeting. FCPL received the Maryland State Education Contribution for Library Retirement of \$992,000. Library Miscellaneous Operating Revenue increased by \$7,000 and Passport Revenue increased by \$5,500. She noted, as stated in last month's board meeting, the transfer from the county general fund and in-kind county revenue is recorded quarterly. The contributions and donations and fund balance revenue is recorded at the end of the fiscal year so those revenue lines will continue to reflect zero dollars through the fiscal year.

FCPL's expenditures are at 17%, which is an increase of 11% from the previous board meeting. County Finance posted the personnel, security and telephone expenses which reflect the most significant percentage change of 25%. There was also a 12% increase to the office supply line for miscellaneous office supplies, a 10% increase to the Library Material line for e-books, periodicals and book purchases and a 5% increase to the other operating expenditure line for the monthly recurring expenses.

Grants Awarded are at \$1,061,100. Since the last board meeting the Staff Development Grant, MLA Conference Grant and Creating Equitable Heritage Resources in Frederick County Grant were awarded.

Grants Submitted are at \$267,989. Staff is awaiting notice of the application that was submitted for the Emergency Connectivity Fund Grant from the Federal Communication Commission. If those funds are awarded, they will be used to support the purchase of staff laptops and wi-fi hotspots.

Donations increased to \$20,377 from the previous month. The increase is due in part to the Read- A-Book Ball campaign and several generous donations throughout the month.

Other endowment revenue is at \$1,665 which is from interest earned from the Glassman Trust. These funds are restricted to the purchase of material for specific fields of study.

The total is currently at \$1,086,885.

**b. Summer Reading Challenge:** Erin Gambrill and Theresa Schneider provided an update on the Summer Reading Challenge. It was noted that Carrie Fitz, Teen Librarian at Walkersville, will be the co-lead on the Summer Reading Challenge in the upcoming year. The total number of Summer Reading Challenge participants was over 7,000. This year there was an all-age gameboard and we received very positive feedback on that. She thereafter displayed several photos from the Book Boogie program at the Urbana Regional Library.

FCPL's return to normalcy was really reflected in FCPL's rise in participation. We are clearly regaining some of the upward trajectory that was lost in the last two years. Folks are happy, not only with being able to physically return to the library, but also by how simple the program was to use. It was noted that this past year was the highest number of finishers with 46% of participants finishing the program; and a 63% increase in finishers over last year. This shows that our program was simple to follow, engaging enough to continue, and that we had great prizes to incentivize folks to finish.

It was noted that tracking was changed this year from minutes read to having participants logging each day that they read. While the total minutes spent reading per day was up to each reader, staff made the recommendation of reading 20 minutes per day and that would support a strong reading habit. Over 3,000,000 minutes were read.

FCPL received a lot of positive feedback this year through the public survey and interactions with patrons and people in the community. Last year's community destination visits were a little over 15,000 and this year we had over 26,000. We will continue to work on this for next year to strengthen our partnerships. Destination/sponsors for the Summer Reading Challenge were provided via PowerPoint. It was noted that those listed in red were both destinations and sponsors.

Families were back at our branches this summer and it was clear how much everyone missed each other. A slide containing photos of many of the programs was displayed.

FCPL owes a lot of thank you(s) to our sponsors this year. The following staff were thanked for their assistance this year with the Summer Reading Challenge: Jess El-Zeftawy, Samantha Jones, Mindy Andros, Kelley Keimig, Bryan Hissong, Courtney Brohawn, Director's Staff and members of the Summer Reading Challenge workgroup. The Summer Reading Challenge supports reducing the summer slide statistics. Now, there is a new literacy hurdle called the COVID slide and this program is a really big success in creating a daily habit of reading, welcoming people back to our library branches and strengthening our relationship with our patrons and community partners.

**c. Development Update:** Ms. El-Zeftawy, Development Officer, introduced herself to everyone. She noted that she is taking a fundraising copywriting class and noted that she is learning that the science of philanthropy is rooted in behavioral economics and that the language we use can reorient our fundraising in a way that genuinely cares for our supporters.

She noted that her job is to talk to donors every single day and this tells a lot about them and who they are. FCPL donors may not be active library users but they give because they know what it means to our community and they care about the people in it.

Although the Summer Reading Program was discussed earlier, she noted that she wanted to spend a few minutes thanking the many folks who helped FCPL host one of the best public library summer reading programs in the State. She displayed a slide and noted that these people and these businesses are amazing. For these sponsors, their support never wavered and a few new businesses stepped in when others couldn't. Their funding and support provided enhancements to our program like giant vinyl banners at our libraries and at the parks around the county, ads in the newspaper, and supported media throughout the summer that helped FCPL reach new and under-served communities in ways we couldn't do before. Collectively, their support totaled \$39,192 which was a mix of both outright and in-kind donations.

She noted that one of FCPL's most loyal sponsors is the Friends of the Library group. This year the Friends of the Library donated over \$8,000, a significant increase over past years, so FCPL

could buy better books – the kind of books that are wildly popular and the kind that go to the top of your to-be-read pile.

The prizes are important too because they motivate our summer readers to reach their goals. She thereafter displayed photos of the prizes selected by the FCPL team to spark excitement. The campaign ran for 25 days and 83 donors raised over \$8,000 so FCPL could provide 3 kayaks, 10 hammocks, 10 Chromebooks, 4 mini kitchens, 14 telescopes, 8 American Girl dolls, 1 wagon and 7 motorized skateboards (with helmets). She noted that the most important point is that this campaign isn't really about the things; it is about the people. She thereafter displayed some photos of winners of the prizes. The opportunity to spark excitement for reading and the love for public libraries is a priceless gift. In addition, she shared some quotes from some of the winners of the prizes.

Ms. El-Zeftawy thanked her colleagues and board members and the donors at home who helped to make reading a little more exciting this year.

Thereafter, Ms. El-Zeftawy spoke about the Read-A-Book Ball, a Dolly Parton inspired fundraising event. She noted that in the three years since this campaign began, FCPL has raised a total of over \$50,000, which is astounding. The premise behind this event is simple. To participate, you make a gift to the library in any amount to RSVP and then on the day of the event, you stay home, read a book, and have a ball benefitting FCPL's Greatest Need Fund. This fund was selected specifically because unrestricted funding gives the library the maximum flexibility in responding quickly to the evolving needs of the community. This event connects people through their shared love of reading. This year 208 donors raised over \$10,000 in honor of public libraries and we are so grateful for their support.

A notable change from 2021 to 2022 was the introduction of in-person Book Ball. We had over 428 people attend our programs. We had a Crafts and Country Music Program in partnership with the Frederick Book Arts Center. There was a square dance program in Urbana that over 100 people attended. And, there was a Dolly Parton Karaoke Happy Hour in partnership with the Tenth Ward Distilling Company.

The signature event was a virtual author talk with Sarah Smarsh who wrote [She Come By It Natural: Dolly Parton and the Women Who Lived Her Songs](#). A Read-A-Book Ball Spotify playlist was curated by J. Kelly so FCPL customers could listen and celebrate with FCPL from wherever they were.

She noted that much of the campaign marketing takes place on social media and digital platforms. Inspired by Dolly Parton, the FCPL team selected strong women in positions of leadership and invited them to share what they were reading in celebration of the Book Ball. Jan Gardner, County Executive and Dr. Cheryl Dyson, Superintendent for Frederick County Public Schools jumped at the opportunity.

Ms. El-Zeftawy added that FCPL forged new partnerships with local businesses who celebrated with FCPL by offering special "Dolly" inspired products that were available for purchase with a

percentage benefitting FCPL. My team and FCPL staff were tremendously supportive of this campaign. She thereafter shared photos of families reading together.

Thereafter, Ms. El-Zeftawy reviewed the next campaign that will kick off in November. She noted that it may not come as a surprise that we will be fundraising to put space enhancements in the new Middletown Branch Library with a focus on early literacy and learning through play.

Studies show that a third of children in elementary schools across the United States are missing reading benchmarks, which is becoming a literacy emergency made worse by the effects of the pandemic and virtual learning. One study found that early reading skills are at a 20-year low which is causing alarm bells to go off in the literacy community. Although children in every demographic have been affected, Black and Hispanic children, as well as those from low income families, those with disabilities and those who are not native English speakers, have fallen the furthest behind. The good news is that we know that public libraries can play an important role in combatting pandemic learning loss here in Frederick County. With the addition of a new library in Middletown, FCPL plans to add innovative early literacy play and learning space strategically designed to promote skill development for new and reluctant readers. FCPL has spaces like this at the C. Burr Artz Library, Brunswick Library, Thurmont Regional Library, Urbana Regional Library, Walkersville Library and Myersville Library and they have proven to increase library visits, increase circulation and build important early literacy skills. She added that the library exists to level the playing field and we need everyone's help to do that.

Next month we will kick off a significant campaign to fund the installation of space enhancements at the new Middletown Library. She asked "Will you help us in our mission and support the library and the children in our community this year? She hopes everyone will say "yes" and give the most generous gift that you are able to give. When you give, it says something about you, who you are, and the things you care about.

J. Donald inquired whether the library team will be working with the Town of Middletown on this promotion. Ms. El-Zeftawy welcomed the names of anyone who we should be talking to as we launch our campaign.

**d. C. Burr Artz Library Update:** Beth Heltebridle, Branch Administrator for the C. Burr Artz Library, provided an overview of what has been happening at the CBA branch in 2022.

Like all locations of FCPL, 2022 at the C. Burr Artz Library was a year of transition. We started out the year as a very hungry caterpillar – hungry for normalcy, for working together with a full staff, for programming, for a bustling, vibrant building full of community members. Staff were doing all that they could while serving people at a distance in our building, distributing library materials curb-side and presenting storytimes on Carroll Creek. Curb-side and outdoor storytimes have proven to be needed services to our community and are enjoyed by many people weekly to this day.

In the winter, we had a staff-led winter wellness team, recognizing that to get through this journey and these hard transitions, we needed to feel safe, healthy, and needed at work just as we did at home. FCPL began to inch toward regular library service by participating in outreach



events, making connections with partners like the Asian American Center, Downtown Frederick Partnership, Hood College, Sophie and Madigan's Playground, as well as our local FCPL schools and Judy Centers. Through this year we found that our partners are going through their own metamorphosis and are excited to connect with FCPL again. At various events we have signed up folks for Summer Challenge, handed out fun FCPL goodies, demonstrated how to access electronic materials and created many new library cards with ease thanks to our new ILS.

Ms. Heltebridle noted that in April, FCPL started offering indoor programming and meeting room use again. We focused on reconnecting with our young customers, bringing back age-specific storytimes daily. We reintroduced families to favorites like process art and STEAM programs and the much-anticipated Human Library. She added that we continued to offer exciting new experiences, knowing that this was an opportunity to come back to a full service library as something even better than before. We were intentional about the experiences we were offering to our customers, focusing on those that sparked excitement, creativity and conversation. She noted that she hopes everyone has had an opportunity to play with the Everbright in the children's room. She noted that Susan, a circulation clerk, set up a habitat for folks of all ages to watch a caterpillar metamorphose into a chrysalis, and finally a butterfly. It was noted that staff are working with individuals in the community like the Frederick Book Art Center so folks can learn something new and try a skill they can't try anywhere else.

Thereafter, Ms. Heltebridle reviewed statistics:

- 3,200 new library cards
- 270,000 items checked out
- 3,800 curb-side delivery
- 300 programs since March, 2022 with over 10,000 in attendance
- 140 meeting room reservations and over 3,000 study room reservations since March, 2022
- 1,300 passport applications
- 40 outreach visits
- 16 new staff hired and an additional 15 staff were promoted

Staff hirings and promotions were further discussed as well as diversification of employees.

Ms. Heltebridle stated that going forward we are spreading our wings and have big plans to build on our successes of this year. We are in the final year of the CBA Reimaged project. Staff are committed to increasing our base of card holders making sure as many community members as possible know what their library offers and how to take advantage of everything. We will continue to develop partnerships that are intentional and effective – finding new ways to combine our forces to reach new audiences. And, with so much good news to share, we will expand our marketing particularly in local stores, schools and organizations. Everyone is so excited for what the next year will bring.

J. D'Agostino inquired whether the Human Library will continue. Ms. Heltebridle noted that FCPL is planning on bringing that back and looking at making that as impactful as possible.

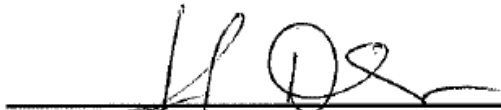
**BOARD QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:** None

**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 November 16, 2022.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.



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