

Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting
of the Board of Directors
HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY
December 4, 2008

Present: Gregory Davis, Anne Melissa Dowling, Stephen Goddard, Connie Green, William Large, Jackie Lilly, Enid Rey, Cynthia Reik, Annette Sanderson, Romulo Samaniego, Paul Shipman, and Geraldine Sullivan.

Also present: Louise Blalock, chief librarian; Jenny Benedict, deputy chief librarian for Public Services; Matt Poland, deputy administrator; Steve Goode, *Hartford Courant* reporter.

Absent: Thea Montanez, Carlos Valinho

President Geraldine Sullivan called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

Nominating Committee

Board Action: Motion to approve the appointment of Anne Melissa Dowling and Michael Gannon to the Board of Directors was made, seconded and passed.

1. Approval of Minutes

Board Action: Motions to approve the minutes of the September 4, and October 23 meetings were made, seconded, and approved.

2. Announcements and Communications

William Large made a recommendation that those who had not yet made a donation to the Chair Fund, from which lunch is paid, do so before the end of the calendar year.

Chief Librarian Louise Blalock announced that a letter of thanks had been received from the East Hartford Police Department for research assistance.

The Community Builders (TCB) thanked the library for its role in helping teens create artwork for the Dutch Point Apartments.

The Southside Neighborhood News/The Hartford News has donated its photographic collection from 1977-2008 to the Hartford History Center.

Blalock announced that the Connecticut State Library has granted a one-year extension for the state construction grant on the Central Library. The amount of \$250,000 will only be released once the architect can certify substantial

completion, which has been delayed due to litigation between the city and M.A. New England.

3. President's Report

President Geraldine Sullivan drew attention to two recent newspaper articles. One a letter from Mary-Ann Tirone Smith in the *Hartford Courant* in which she emphasized the importance of Saturday hours at the branches, suggested that a study be done on exactly how much it would cost to open the branch libraries on Saturdays, and offered to keynote the first fundraiser, no charge. She suggested following up on the offer.

Sullivan also mentioned the *New York Times* article that referenced the well known ALA study, which documented the trend of public library usage during economic downturns. More than ever, people will be turning to public libraries for free entertainment, free after-school child care, to help with employment, for free access to the public use computers and to help them save money by doing things themselves, such as home and auto repairs. Sullivan emphasized the importance of conveying this information to our public officials in advance of the budget process.

Sullivan noted that this board meeting was Chief Librarian Blalock's last. She thanked the chief librarian for her service to the library, including her vision and substantial accomplishments in the renovation of the Central Library. The board responded with a standing ovation. Blalock thanked the board for the opportunity, stating the appreciation she had received from the community was ample reward.

4. Committee Reports

Personnel

Large followed up on a task assigned at the board retreat to explore the possibility of hiring a temporary CEO for the interim period. He recommended that the interim be staffed with existing personnel due to the availability of qualified individuals who have the library knowledge-base as opposed to someone experienced only in non-profit administration.

Strategic Planning

Jackie Lilly brought forward a suggestion from the Board retreat to increase the number of board meetings from 4 per year to 6 per year in order to reduce the number of special meetings, and to meet more frequently during periods where more decision-making is necessary, such as with the budget.

Board Action: Motion to hold board meetings on the 1st Thursday of the month at noon in the months of February, March, June, September, October, and December was made, seconded and approved.

Romulo Samaniego suggested having a teleconference option for those unable to travel, which was supported by other board members. Anne Melissa Dowling suggested having themed board meetings which would identify certain topics for more intensive discussion.

Development

Greg Davis mentioned that the next meeting of the Development Committee is December 9. The committee will be discussing a plan for the first six months of the year.

Finance

Paul Shipman reported that the Finance Committee meeting had focused on the library's endowment funds; capital projects; and 1st Q budget results. An annual review of allocations in the endowment funds will be undertaken in the fall to rebalance the portfolio and prepare for the annual distribution. The committee had received the commitments to funders, budget, and status of bids for the completion of the capital project. The 1st Q budget shows expenditures on target. The process for the 09-10 budget has not formally started, but will be set in motion shortly.

Sullivan, Shipman, and Greg Davis will ask for a meeting with the mayor, Pedro Sagarra, and Calixto Torres to discuss expectations and clarify communications.

Shipman requested a copy of the City Matrix be sent to him. Enid Rey reported that recent conversations on the duplication of services have focused on the quality and access to services, rather than simply the number of locations offering services.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 17.

Safety and Security

Cynthia Reik presented the recommendations from the Safety and Security Task Force. She acknowledged work completed or underway within the Downtown Library, and requested that the following resolutions be approved by the board:

RESOLVED, that the Library develop a plan to eliminate the use of the Arch Street lobby by the end of January 2009 (providing that alternate handicap access is available on the Main Street entrance) as a point of ingress and egress for customers and visitors.

RESOLVED, that the Library contract with a vendor by the end of January 2009 to install video surveillance devices within the Downtown Library.

RESOLVED that the Library create a plan for additional anti-theft devices in the Downtown Library.

RESOLVED, that the Library revise the current Internet Use Policy to reflect changes in regulations and/or statutes, such as the Child Internet Protection Act, and in public access. Further it is resolved that the Library develop an operational plan to organize the computer network and stations to provide tiered access to the Internet.

RESOLVED, that the Library create a plan for a separate and dedicated teen area within the Downtown Library by reallocating space and other resources.

Board Action: The resolutions were moved, seconded and approved.

Sullivan requested that a report on the operational plan for the Internet Policy, inclusive of staff input, be brought to the board by February 15th. She also requested the plan for the teen area by June 1st.

5. Chief Librarian's Report

The chief librarian told the board that the library's 1st Q budget is balanced, but that it is provisional due to difficulties the city is having with the finance system, Munis. Payroll figures, however, are accurate.

Blalock encouraged board members to review the Strategic Performance Report in their packet, which has important information about the effect of reduction of services due to the branch closings.

6. Old Business

No old business was brought to the table.

7. New Business

Blalock requested a motion to authorize the interim director to sign and submit two grant applications, each in the amount of \$100,000, to the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. These are the funds given for the purpose of reopening the Mark Twain and the Blue Hills Branches.

Board Action: A motion to authorize the interim director to sign and submit the two grant applications was made, seconded and approved.

8. Executive Session

President Sullivan moved the meeting to Executive Session for discussion of personnel matters related to the chief librarian and executive staff.

President Sullivan reconvened the regular meeting at 2:45 p.m.

Personnel Committee

Large brought forward three recommendations for board action. He proposed hiring an executive search firm for the purposes of conducting the search for the new chief Librarian; setting the salary for the new chief librarian not to be in excess of \$150,000; and authorizing the appointment of Jenny Benedict and Matt Poland as interim directors, sharing responsibilities for the Office of the Chief Librarian until the new chief librarian is hired.

Board Action: A motion to hire an executive search firm for the purposes of conducting the search for the new chief librarian was moved, seconded and approved.

Board Action: A motion to set the salary for the new chief librarian not to be in excess of \$150,000 was moved, seconded and approved.

Board Action: A motion to appoint Jenny Benedict and Matt Poland as interim directors, sharing the responsibilities for the Office of the Chief Librarian until the new chief librarian is hired, was moved, seconded and approved.

Large advised that the interim period would last no longer than 18 months, and the interim arrangement would be reconsidered if needed.

President Sullivan adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Blalock, Acting Secretary