



CITY OF OREGON CITY LIBRARY BOARD MINUTES

Virtual Meeting
Wednesday, February 9, 2022 at 5:30 PM

This meeting will be held online via Zoom; please contact dbutcher@orccity.org for the meeting link.

CALL TO ORDER

David Goldberg called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: David Goldberg, Cynthia Andrews, Heidi Blackwell, Nick Dierckman, Kari Linder, Elizabeth Zinter

It was noted that Larry Osborne had an excused absence.

Staff Present: Greg Williams, Library Director, Denise Butcher, Library Operations Manager

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

1. Cynthia Andrews made a motion to accept the November 10 and January 12 Library Board Meeting minutes and the January 12 Library Board Work Session minutes without changes. Nick Dierckman seconded the motion. David Goldberg, Cynthia Andrews, Heidi Blackwell, Nick Dierckman, Kari Linder, and Elizabeth Zinter voted aye. The motion carried.

AGENDA DISCUSSION

2. David Goldberg noted that there was a request for public comment and offered to rearrange the agenda to allow for public comment early out of consideration for the member of the public's time and the typical length of the Library Director's Report. Community Member Penny Simpson was admitted to the meeting. Denise Butcher asked Penny to state her name, city of residency, and told her that she would have three minutes to speak.

Penny Simpson stated her name as Penny Simpson, city of residence as Oregon City, and stated that she did not want to speak, but wanted to watch the meeting. Penny asked if she could present later. David asked for clarification on presentation subject matter and timing. Penny stated that she meant later in the meeting after others had spoken. David said that the Library Director's Report could proceed and that Penny could speak afterwards.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

3. Greg Williams highlighted the addition of the reference question statistic, explained that this statistic provided information about the types of inquiries staff receive, and shared the expectation that this data would be included in the monthly report going forward. Greg noted that January's circulation and foot traffic numbers were the highest since the library reopened in July 2021 and was accompanied by higher internet and Wi-Fi usage. Greg mentioned that in January, several staff members had tested positive for COVID; the staff members have since recovered, but the library continues to experience staffing challenges brought on by illness and exposure-related absences.

Nick Dierckman stated that the statistics defaulted to a one year comparison, acknowledged that 2020's data was not typical, and wondered if it would be possible to compare this year's statistics to 2019's statistics to better gauge the library's numbers. Greg said that he would prepare those numbers for the next meeting and offered a reminder that the foot traffic counts may not be directly comparable due to the difficulty with the people counters that was ongoing in 2019.

Greg shared that the library had been awarded \$4,800 workforce development grant from the State Library of Oregon and recognized Larry Osborne for his work on the grant application. Greg anticipated the money would fund teleconferencing equipment for the meeting rooms to provide patrons a more connected experience.

Greg introduced Barratt Miller, Youth Services Librarian, and stated that she had enrolled in a course called Touchpoints in Libraries, thanked Elizabeth Zinter for the information that led to Barratt's enrollment, and invited Barratt to speak about the program.

Barratt said the program was designed to promote strong relationships between professionals and parents of children birth to age 5 with a focus on library, educational, and health care settings. Cynthia Andrews pointed out that this program seemed to pair nicely with the Thousand Books Before Kindergarten program. Barratt agreed.

David Goldberg asked if this was the program run by Dr. Brazleton. Barratt and Elizabeth said yes. David asked if there might be a future library program directed at parents that might come out of the training. Barratt thought the most immediate application of the tools and strategies would be the way it informed staff training. Barratt recommended the book Dr. Brazleton wrote on Touchpoints for anyone seeking more information.

Greg shared that the McLoughlin Memorial Association had loaned a scale model of the McLoughlin House for display in the Carnegie section of the library. Greg said there would be interpretive materials forthcoming and patron feedback was positive.

Greg noted that the Thousand Books Before Kindergarten program launched in January.

Greg said Denise Butcher and Sabrina Tusing participated in Tumwata Middle School's Vacant Lot Event, wherein a class of eighth graders developed and pitched ideas for the use of the city owned vacant lot located near the Kentucky Fried Chicken and bus depot. Denise shared that one of the ideas was to turn it into a golf course with holes based on local historical sites while other proposals included outdoor performance spaces and food cart clusters.

Greg shared that Barratt had been invited to participate in the Oregon City Public School curriculum review for language arts. Greg spoke to the close relationship between Oregon City Public Schools and the library and the desire to be in concert and support their curriculum with programming and resources. David spoke to the importance of early literacy and the results of early extra assistance.

Greg discussed the outreach program to River Terrace Memory Care. The program started in January. Jen Giovanetti had provided materials that could be accessed by people with memory issues, experiencing cognitive decline, and/or barriers to accessing the materials at the library.

Greg reported that Libraries in Clackamas County (LINCC) received the first library district distribution, which usually arrived in late January and on average represented around 93% of the total annual distribution. Greg felt that the amount of the distribution was very close to what had been budgeted. The second distribution was expected in June. Greg shared that the next year's projections from the County had been released and were also very close to what the City had budgeted.

Greg shared online comments speaking positively of the staff. Cynthia agreed and stated that the staff's acknowledgement of patrons was a welcome recognition of common humanity and personhood. David seconded this assessment and shared his own positive interactions. Elizabeth thirded this assessment and lauded the children's librarians. Heidi Blackwell spoke positively about the Black Pioneers program, as did Cynthia.

David Goldberg asked if there were any questions about the Director's Report. Heidi observed the young adult numbers were far lower than the numbers for children and adults and wondered if soliciting input from teens might help bolster the numbers.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Penny Simpson stated that she had been a resident of Oregon City for much of her life and was considering leaving part of her estate to the Library Foundation. Penny stated that she was seeking to understand how responsive the library was to community values, expressed concern with materials she had found in the children's section, and asked what the process was for a patron to challenge a library book, and what was the criteria for consideration.

David Goldberg thanked Penny, noted that there was a lot brought up that would be a big discussion, which was not the purpose of Public Comment, and acknowledged that there was a specific question that might be helpful and concisely addressed and asked Greg Williams if he would talk about it.

Greg acknowledged that the question related to the first discussion item, Collection Development Policy, and an overview of the challenge process.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Review of Collection Development Policy

Greg said specific authors, groups, and library systems had been challenged at higher than usual rates in the past few months; he referenced articles from general and professional publications on the matter. Greg stated that the last version of the collection development policy was in 2019 and it is reviewed every three years. Greg anticipated a more formal review of it during 2022 but wanted to familiarize the Board with the current policy. Greg stated that the American Library Association's (ALA) documents Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read, Freedom to View, and statement on Minor Access to Library Materials were included in the current policy and encapsulated the professional ethics and practices of libraries. Greg stated that Oregon Library Association's professional standard for public libraries was that the ALA's standards be adopted by the Library Board. Greg said that these had been adopted unanimously by the board outside of the Collection Development Policy.

Greg asked for questions. Community Member Penny stated that she did not see the article about minors. Greg offered to forward it to her and confirmed with Denise that they had Penny's email address.

Greg acknowledged that the Collection Development Policy was long, explained his wish to highlight a few things, invited questions if others had them, and introduced Barratt Miller, Youth Services Librarian, as the collection development policy implementation expert, particularly with children's materials.

Greg's stated that items were considered on the whole of their merit, not individual passages, that works were not excluded due to the political, social, or religious beliefs of the author or creator, works by people in protected classes by Oregon law were included, professional reviews were used in consideration of selecting materials, and the collection was intended to reflect the local diversity of the service area. Greg recognized that the decisions concerning the location of materials within the library collection were a bit imperfect because readers' readiness for materials was individual, but materials geared towards the needs of readers from birth through 12 years of age would be placed in the children's section and materials geared towards readers ages 13-18 years of age would be placed in the teen section. Greg stated that professional reviews were used in the consideration of placement based on target age.

Greg stated that it was the role of parents to determine what was appropriate for their child/ren and that the library and library staff were there to support parents in accessing those materials. Greg asked if there were any questions.

David Goldberg asked what the process was if a patron had issues with materials in the collection.

Greg explained that the challenge process was Appendix D of the Collection Development Policy and the process could be initiated by any member of the service area. The patron would ask for the form, fill in the information asked for by the form, including contact information and why they felt the material should be reconsidered, return the form to the library where it would be routed to the Library Director who would then consult with staff, evaluate the material on the basis of collection development policy. The Library Director would then reach out to the submitter of the reconsideration form. Greg noted that any decision the Library Director makes on the reconsideration could be appealed to the Library Board and the board would have access to the request and the material in question.

Nick Dierckman asked how many requests for reconsideration there had been in the last year or month. Greg stated that since he started two years ago, there had not been any and asked Denise Butcher and Barratt how many there had been prior to his arrival. Nick stated he'd been on the board for four years and did not recall any escalating to the board during that time.

Barratt stated that it was far more common that staff had informal conversations with parents or patrons who either encountered unexpected content in a material that they were unprepared to discuss with their child or came across a material that upset them. In these instances, staff were able to provide support for using the library to best meet their needs, resolving these situations without elevating them to a formal request to reconsider. Barratt recognized that with diversity of belief systems and individual children and the collection that reflected that, there were many opportunities for people to encounter upsetting content for a wide variety of reasons. Barratt noted that usually people primarily wanted to be heard, provided with resources so they could either avoid or handle future encounters differently, and that occasionally looking into complaints uncovered items that were mislabeled and belonged in other areas of the library.

Barratt recommended Common Sense Media as a helpful tool for parents and patrons to prescreen their items as it provided metrics on many potential things different people might find objectionable. Barratt noted that Common Sense Media had begun charging for access, but stated concerned patrons could talk to staff and staff could use the staff account to access it on the patron's behalf.

Barratt reflected that in her six years at OCPL, the concerns brought by parents were wide and varied, although they had become more politically charged. Barratt said that all requests were heard and addressed with the same level of concern.

Barratt also stated that if patrons felt there was a lack of materials on a certain topic or perspective, she referred them to the suggestion forms to suggest materials for the collection. Barratt explained that the Teen Classics and Picture Book Classics collections had been started out of conversations with parents who felt that those materials were not accessible enough to their children.

David reaffirmed that the library's role was not to function as the parent of patrons and it was left to parents of patrons to determine what is appropriate for their kids. David noted that public places were a place where multiple perspectives were held and communicated and voiced appreciation for library staff's respectful engagement with patron concerns.

Barratt reiterated that ultimately it was the right and responsibility of parents to decide what was appropriate for their child, not the library's, and that that right extended to their children and not other people's children. Barratt also noted that children matured at different rates, held different interests, and different families prioritized different matters, which meant that what was appropriate for one child might not be appropriate for a different child the exact same age.

Nick thanked Barratt for the work she was doing and expressed concern that some parents might not be comfortable approaching staff with their concerns. Nick wondered if there might be a way to communicate with the members of the service area.

Community member Penny stated that she found that when she had a concern there were millions like her with the same concern, and voiced she thought that there should be a form that everyone who had a concern should be given with steps they could take. Penny stated that she often visits the library when it is closed or times Barratt was not there and thought that many concerns might not be heard, recorded, or reach the Board. Penny suggested that all library staff approached by someone with a concern about materials give them a sheet of paper instructing who to talk to because she thought many concerns were not being heard and related an example where she did not feel her concern was heard.

David noted that the policies and form were in place, had not been made widely understood, and thought that communicating them better would be something to work towards.

Cynthia supported Community Member Penny's comments about making the reconsideration forms more accessible, suggesting that they be available at the staff desks. Cynthia acknowledged that with the pandemic measures and long closure, it was probably difficult to conduct staff training and development and suggested that it might be helpful to do one now, as things became more normal and foot traffic increased.

Greg shared that there were multiple avenues that patrons could provide feedback, and that patron feedback was listened to and considered.

Community Member Penny voiced support for using Trail News as a communication tool.

David asked for clarification that there were no actionable steps to be taken on this policy at this time. Greg confirmed this.

David thanked Community Member Penny for her comments and recommended direct follow up with staff for her specific concerns.

5. Strategic Plan Committee Updates

David Goldberg noted the meeting was at time and the discussion around revisions to the strategic plan would require some time to go through, he would prefer to not rush that process, and voting on the revisions to the bylaws still remained. David proposed postponing the discussion of the strategic plan to the next meeting and focusing on the bylaws.

6. Revisions to the Library Board Bylaws Updates

Greg Williams summarized that the bylaw updates were last discussed in August 2021 and would make the Because Accessibility Matters Council and the Teen Advisory Group subcommittees of the Library Board to streamline communication and the organizational structure. These revisions created liaison positions for board members, tasked the subcommittee liaisons with sharing with the larger board at least on an annual basis, and would task library staff with the recruitment of the subcommittee members.

David asked if this had been run by the city attorney; Greg confirmed he had and there had been no negative feedback or request for revisions.

Nick asked if the establishment of the subcommittees would have to go through the Library Board. Greg said yes and that the current bylaws give the power to establish a committee to the chair, so the establishment of the subcommittees would be an extension of that. Greg stated that if this revision passed, at a future date, he would come before the board to request the creation of committees.

Nick Dierckman expressed discomfort with the wording using "charge." Cynthia proposed the wording "propose objectives" as a revision. Cynthia made a motion to adopt the bylaws as amended. Nick Dierckman seconded the motion. David Goldberg, Cynthia Andrews, Heidi Blackwell, Nick Dierckman, Kari Linder, Elizabeth Zinter voted aye. The motion carried.

COMMUNICATIONS

Nick Dierckman reported that Library District Advisory Committee had a meeting scheduled for February 28, 2022 regarding defining the issues to work on and that the District Task Force had been on hiatus.

Greg Williams reported on behalf of Larry Osborne that the Friends of the Oregon City Library met several times since the last report and had approved financial contributions to the Everbright Board. Greg reported that although there had been COVID-related challenges in January resulting in the store closing for a week, the store was doing well. The Friends intended to apply for a mural permit for an external wall of the bookstore.

Cynthia Andrews reported that the Library Foundation had approved a \$3,500 contribution towards the Everbright Board. Cynthia shared that the Foundation had a new Treasurer, Dave Wimmer, and spoke positively of his efforts to improve the clarity of the financial reports.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

7. Discussion on Strategic Plan Revisions
8. Discussion of Expectations for Staff Created Tactical Plan

ADJOURNMENT

David Goldberg adjourned the meeting at 6:38 pm.