Board Meeting
Russell Library Board Room
Tuesday, June 18, 2019

Present: Trustees Atherton, Becker, Berlind, Duggan, Ford, Fulton, Hadley, Nelson, Norwood, Wisneski, and Zawisky; Library Director Burkey; Director of Youth & Family Learning Jennifer Billingsley

Excused: Trustees, Murdock, Russell

1. **Call to Order:** President Wisneski called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.
   **Mission Moment:** President Wisneski remarked on the positive conversations and interactions that occurred at the Annual Meeting that preceded the Board meeting.

2. **Public Session/Comment:** There were no comments from member of the public.

3. **Approval of Minutes:** It was moved (Trustee Ford) and seconded (Trustee Norwood) to approve the minutes of the May 21 Board meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Administration Report** – Ramona Burkey, Library Director: Director Burkey prefaced her report by telling the board that the chiller, part of the HVAC system, needs $16,000 worth of repair (involving parts made to order) and that Assistant Director for Administrative Services Doyle is preparing a resolution to present to the City Finance & Government Committee at its June 26 meeting. Because the Library is a cooling center during the summer, this is an emergency need. There was an extensive discussion of whether or not to ask the City for $200,000 for a whole new unit, and how that “ask” would fit into the major renovation (and possible expansion) that is long overdue for the aging building, last extensively renovated in 1983.

**Programs and Services**
- Like all public libraries, we are ready to begin our Summer Reading Program. Keep an eye on our e-newsletter and our website for details on special events for children, teens and adults.

**Personnel**
- As part of a City-wide initiative, all staff have completed intensive online Cybersecurity training.
- As part of another City-wide initiative, this one spearheaded by the Human Relations Commission, several Russell staff members recently completed a two-day Anti-Racism workshop at City Hall. The sessions were run by the NCCJ (National Conference for Community and Justice). We’re going to contact the facilitators
about the feasibility of running sessions for all Russell staff.

- I will be attending the annual conference of the American Library Association from June 19-25 in Washington, D.C. Staff members Brandie Doyle and Cathy Ahern will also be attending; we look forward to bringing back many good ideas.

Facilities and Technology

- We are having some issues with our (26-year-old) chiller, which we hope to have resolved before the weather gets too warm and humid. (See above!)
- Repairs on the flat roof of the children’s room (formerly the bank building) will happen soon.
- Deb Barberi and her Digital and Emerging Technologies team are in the process of upgrading all library computers to Windows 10. Many of our machines are simply too old to accept the upgrade and will have to be replaced.

Financial

- We were recently awarded a total of $25,015 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for the coming year: $8,000 for our Career Program, and $17,015 to replace the 36-year-old carpeting in the upstairs Info area. Congratulations to Christy Billings, Bob Carlson, and Brandie Doyle for these successful grant applications.
- I’m pleased to announce that the Russell Library is the recipient of a $7,500 LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) Literacy grant, towards the purchase of a “Charlie Cart.” The Charlie Cart is a mobile kitchen that we will be able to use on- and off-site to provide educational food programs for children, teens, and adults. We look forward to outreach at the Farmer’s Market and other Middletown venues. Congratulations to the Programming and Community Engagement department, headed by Gail Thompson-Allen, for writing and implementing this successful grant.

Community Engagements/Meetings

- Attended the first annual “State of Education in Middletown” event
- Attended the Chamber of Commerce breakfast with Congressman John Larson
- Attended Chamber event, “COLLISION: Art vs. Tech”
- Met with new Chamber Small Business Coordinator and gave him a tour of Russell
- Hosted Central Business Bureau monthly meeting at Chamber of Commerce
- Attended 2-day Anti-Racism training, along with other Russell staff and key City staff, at City Hall
- Attended Friends of CT Libraries annual meeting at MxCC
- Met new Director of the Godfrey Library
- Met with Middletown Public Schools I.T. Director Michael Skott to discuss technology initiatives
- Attended Susan Allison poetry reading
- Attended Story Bridge session (Community Foundation of Middlesex County initiative)
• Attended United Way “Conversations with Champions” session
• Represented Russell Library at the first annual Middletown Pride event
• Met with Clifton Watson, Director of Wesleyan’s Jewett Center for Community Partnerships

**Friends of the Library**

• The Friends’ June book sale netted $1,087.50, which is 44% more than their June 2018 book sale total. Many thanks to the Friends for their hard work and support of the Russell Library.
• The Friends’ Annual Meeting will be held on the evening of Thursday, June 27 in the Hubbard Room. Mary Dattilo, Chief Public Services Officer, will be the keynote speaker.

5. **Old Business:** There was no old business.

6. **New Business:**
   a. **New Board Member:** Kellin Atherton, our newest Board member, was introduced and gave a brief summary of his interests. A father of three, he is a reader, writer, and advocate, works for Quest Global and consults for Pratt & Whitney, and wants to foster diversity in the Middletown Community. He spoke of the recent Pride parade and activities in Middletown.
   b. **Staff Presentation:** Jennifer Billingsley, Director of Youth & Family Learning, gave a rapid update of recent and future activities in the department to carry out the themes of “creating joy” and “deepening partnerships.” Examples cited are: the WOYC art show after-hours reception with Peppa Pig; a visit by Middletown-raised author Minh Lê; storytelling by Len Cabral during screen-free week; reading buddies at MacDonough School; MacDonough’s 5th grade visit to the library where each student received a copy of “El Deafo” courtesy of CT Humanities; new carpets and light table; a drum circle for Make Music Day; summer reading collaboration with city schools’ reading logs; Kindergarten Kickstart will be held at the library; partnerships with FoodCorps, the Science Museum, the Children’s Museum. Future plans include a visit from the weather van, an update of the teen volunteer program, collaboration with Middletown Racial Justice Coalition to host “We the People”; the Pride Parade with Ella the “kid governor;” preschool info fairs in the fall and in the spring; and use of the Charley Cart to encourage healthy eating.
   c. **Nominations and elections:** Taneisha Duggan of the Nominating Committee proposed the following slate of officers: President, Eamonn Wisneski; Vice President, Kellin Atherton; Treasurer, Andrew Becker; Secretary, Wendy Berlind. It was moved (Trustee Norwood) and seconded (Trustee Nelson) that the slate of officers be elected, with the friendly amendment that Steve Nelson be added as the fifth member of the Executive Committee. The motion passed unanimously.

7. **Committee Reports and Recommendations:**
   a. **Finance & Audit Committee Report:** Trustee Becker reported that the Company budget, at 92% of the fiscal year, has received 92% of income. The city budget is
right on track for 92% of the year. The endowment stands at $1,185,000, down from last month’s $1,253,000 due to the interfund transfer being complete, and to market factors.

b. **Policy Committee Report:** The committee will try to meet over the summer to work on by-laws revision.

c. **Facility Committee Report:** Trustee Nelson, Chair, noted that the condition of the building had been referenced extensively during the discussion about the malfunctioning chiller.

d. **Human Resources Committee Report:** Trustee Zawisky, Chair, reported that she would go over the results of the survey evaluating Director Burkey during Executive Session.

  

e. **Nominating Committee Report:** The committee’s work was done for this year; it was mentioned that committees need to be consolidated, and the work will be undertaken by the policy committee.

f. **Strategic Plan:** Trustee Wisneski reported that the committee met on June 14 and plans to work with Maxine Bleiweis as a consultant. A grant is being written for money to help pay for her services.

8. **Executive Session:** It was moved (Trustee Norwood) and seconded (Trustee Hadley) to enter Executive Session at 9:30 p.m. The motion passed unanimously. It was moved (Trustee Ford) and seconded (Trustee Norwood) to exit Executive Session at 9:48 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

9. **Adjournment:** It was moved (Trustee Ford) and seconded (Trustee Atherton) to adjourn at 9:49 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

**Next regular board meeting:** Tuesday, September 17, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Berlind

Wendy Berlind, Secretary