Board Meeting  
Russell Library Board Room  
Tuesday, September 17, 2019

Present: Trustees Atherton, Berlind, Ford, Fulton, Hadley, Murdock, Nelson, Russell, and Wisneski; Library Director Burkey

Excused: Trustees Becker, Duggan, Norwood

1. **Call to Order:** President Wisneski called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.  
   **Mission Moment:** President Wisneski recently ran into someone who was surprised that he was a library trustee, saying that libraries are not relevant anymore; this inspired a “rant” about library services, and perhaps a theme for this year, showing all the ways in which libraries are relevant.

2. **Public Session/Comment:** There were no members of the public present.

3. **Approval of Minutes:** It was moved (Trustee Atherton) and seconded (Trustee Hadley) to approve the minutes of the June 18 Board meeting. The motion passed with the abstention of Trustee Murdock.

4. **Administration Report** – Ramona Burkey, Library Director, noted that her report is in a new format, organized by the organizational goals approved by the Board this summer. She reported that the programming librarian position will be replaced with an additional Youth and Family Learning librarian, to strengthen focus on preschool offerings. Programming tasks are being shared by several current librarians.

   **GOAL 1:** “A cohesive team of coworkers who buy into a shared vision of the future of the Russell Library, understand their roles in that future, and feel that their skills and abilities are fully utilized within the context of their daily work.”

   - At the next Finance and Government Operations Committee meeting, I will be requesting reclassifications (all upgrades) of the following Union positions:
     - Library Clerk to Library Computer Technician
     - Library Assistant to Library Associate
     - Custodian to Custodian/Maintainer
   
   These upgrades are necessary due to the evolving needs of the library; the anticipated increases in salaries will be balanced out by two current full-time vacancies and the savings that will be realized by hiring new staff at Step 1 of the associated salary scale.

   - This summer, we renovated the Digital and Emerging Technologies office to allow for two new team members to be added. The DET team now consists of Deborah Barberi (manager of DET), Walter Rode, Gary Brown and Kim Spachman, and they are already accomplishing great things, including upgrading all library computers to Windows X and rolling out our Wi-Fi Hotspot program.

   - We have begun the interview process for our vacant Youth/Teen Librarian position.

   - We have advertised for the position of Children’s Librarian. As I reported a few weeks ago over email, Rolande Duprey has resigned her position; we will be shifting that full-time position to the Youth department in keeping with Middletown’s strong emphasis on early childhood education and enrichment.
• We have begun implementing a Performance Management evaluation system for staff. Currently, library department heads and administrators are testing out the new system and working on setting objectives/activities/timelines related to our organizational Goals for the upcoming year. Performance Management is a collaborative process that emphasizes regular employee contact with their team leader(s), clear expectation-setting, and an ongoing focus on how employees’ activities directly contribute to achieving organizational goals. The Performance Management system will ultimately be rolled out to all Russell staff.

• Upcoming staff professional development:
  o TANGO (The Alliance for Nonprofit Growth and Opportunity) Conference, September 18: “Building Bridges Between Non-Profit and For-Profit Businesses”
  o Connecticut Digital Government Summit, September 23
  o Staff Professional Development Day, September 27, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Topics will include Active Shooter training, “Getting to Know Your Health Benefits” (our City health carrier just changed as of July 1), “Workplace Anti-Racism/Implicit Bias Training” (NCCJ), and “Technology Q and A.”
  o New England Library Association conference, October 20-22
  o Library Journal Directors’ Summit, November 7-8
  o Don’t forget to let me know ASAP if you would like to register for the Association of CT Library Boards conference at the University of Hartford on Friday, November 8.

GOAL 2: “Groups and individuals think of the Russell Library as a driver of community connection, problem-solving and innovation, a transformer of lives, and a source for reliable, quality information.”

• We have just started loaning Wi-Fi Hotspots to patrons, allowing free internet access anywhere there is cell service (Sprint). The hotspots will also allow us to do outreach/library card signup drives, etc. in places where there is not wireless internet access.

• We received our Charlie Cart this summer. The Charlie Cart is a (semi-) mobile kitchen that we will use for food literacy and educational events for kids, teens, and adults. We purchased the Charlie Cart using primarily Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant funds.

Library staff “check out” our new Charlie Cart
• Community engagements and meetings (not including internal meetings):
  o United Way Women’s Initiative
  o Allbritton Community Advisory Board (Wesleyan)
  o ArtsNet90 regional meeting
  o Urban Libraries Task Force (through State Library)
  o Advisory Council for Library Planning and Development (through State Library)
  o Connecticut Library Association Board
  o Dr. Conner, Superintendent of Schools
  o Wesleyan Library Director Andrew White
  o Chamber of Commerce Central Business Bureau
  o NEAT Annual Garden Party
  o POCD Steering Committee (meetings, community listening sessions)
  o Middlesex County Story Bridge Project
  o Holiday on Main Planning Committee
  o LION consortium Board meeting, Governance Task Force

**GOAL 3: The Russell Library is a “destination”: A place of wonder and discovery that is welcoming and comfortable for all.**

• This summer, we implemented Automatic Courtesy Renewals for all renewable library materials. If an item’s due date is near and no one else has it reserved, it will automatically renew for another loan period. Patrons are extremely happy about this new service!
• We were able to complete an emergency repair to our chiller this summer, thanks to the City of Middletown and the support of the Board.
• We are researching new, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone systems, for future installation. Our current telephone system dates back to the Reagan administration, and we will have to make major wiring improvements before installing a VOIP system.

**GOAL 4: The Russell Library is a strong and sustainable organization.**

• We are close to implementing credit card payment capability for fines/fees, printing, donations, etc.
• I submitted the application materials for a $5,000 capacity-building grant from the Community Foundation of Middlesex County, to fund some of our Strategic Planning consultant costs. The maximum grant from CFMC is $5,000. Grant awards will be announced at the end of December.
• I will be applying for a similar capacity-building grant from CT Humanities this fall; the deadline is in November.
• Our grant revenue is up substantially this year compared to last year.
• Our Supporter Appreciation Reception/Company Meeting will take place sometime in early to mid-December. The time of year has been changed because we would like to invite the new Mayor and Common Council members, and because it gives more time for the Policy Committee and Board to review governance changes for presentation to the Company in December. The reception will have a festive holiday feel!
• We are working on cleaning out the basement “Hitchcock Room” in order to make it cleaner and healthier and to facilitate more income generation, both from the Friends of the Library and from our Amazon store. Staff are doing a great job with this hands-on, grimy project!
• Upcoming Friends book sales are October 11-13, November 8-10, and December 13-15. The Friends are always looking for book sale volunteers. Don’t forget to join or renew your Friends membership.

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

6. **New Business:** There was no new business.
7. **Committee Reports and Recommendations:**
   a. **Finance & Audit Committee Report:** Trustee Berlind (in the absence of Chair Becker) summarized the recent meeting with Essex Financial Services, noting that though the stock market fluctuates, its fundamentals are strong. ESF investment managers plan to replace two funds to increase diversity and minimize risk. The committee discussed the proposal for eliminating overdue fines, focusing on donations and income from the library's selling donated books through Amazon instead. Lost items would still be subject to a replacement charge and a blocked library card. There was a brief discussion of responsible investing. The committee will meet on October 24 for further discussion.
   b. **Policy Committee Report:** Trustee Ford, Chair of the committee, reported that the revised by-laws had been approved and will be circulated to Board members for their consideration. A volunteer recognition and meeting of the Russell Company is being planned for December and the revised by-laws will be voted on then. The elimination of overdue fines was discussed and received favorably by committee members. The possibility of making the library a gun-free campus was discussed; Trustee Wisneski will look into the legal requirements of such a policy. The committee will also look into aligning the policy document with other library documents such as the POP and the Employee Handbook.
   c. **Facility Committee Report:** Trustee Nelson, Chair, noted earlier that the needs of the facility must be a part of the Strategic Plan and that regular communication about the facility and the plan with the new mayor and Common Council is a must.
   d. **Human Resources Committee Report:** With the resignation of Trustee Zawisky, this committee needs a new chair.
   e. **Nominating Committee Report:** Trustee Hadley noted that there is a vacancy on the board and that anyone with suggestions for a replacement should let her know.
   f. **Strategic Plan:** Trustee Wisneski reported that the committee met with Maxine Bleiweis and Erica Byrne this summer; they will act as consultants to the Strategic Planning Committee and begin focus groups and interviews this fall. Two grants are being applied for, from the Community Foundation of Middlesex County and from the CT Humanities Council to fund their work.

8. **Adjournment:** It was moved (Trustee Russell) and seconded (Trustee Nelson) to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

**Next regular board meeting:** Tuesday, October 15, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Berlind

Wendy Berlind, Secretary