Board of Trustees Meeting  
Russell Library – Hubbard Room  
Tuesday, October 15, 2019

Present: Trustees Atherton, Fulton, Hadley, Murdock, Nelson, Russell, Wisneski; Library Director Burkey, C. Ahern (Director of Information Services and Adult Learning).

Absent: Trustees Becker, Berlind, Duggan, Ford, Norwood

1. Call to Order: President Wisneski called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.
   Mission Moment: President Wisneski recounted a story about his son’s participation in the “500 Books Before Third Grade” initiative, and how much he has enjoyed it.

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

3. Approval of Minutes: It was moved (Trustee Hadley) and seconded (Trustee Fulton) to approve the minutes of the September 17, 2019 Board meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Administration Report

   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.”
   - The Finance and Government Operations Committee of the Common Council unanimously approved my request to reclassify/upgrade three Bargaining Unit positions at their 10/2 meeting. It will go to the full Council for a vote at the November 4 Council meeting.
   - We are working with a candidate for the Youth/Teen Librarian position.
   - We will hold preliminary interviews for the Youth/Children's Librarian position in the next couple of weeks.
   - We had a successful and informative Staff Professional Development Day (morning) on September 27, with 50 staff in attendance. Our next sessions are scheduled for January 10 and May 15, 2020.

   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.”
   - Our upcoming events and classes include "Jazz Up Close," the Middletown International Film Festival (through November 5), "Current Drug Trends," Passport Day (always a huge event), Pianist Mark Valenti in concert, many early childhood literacy sessions
(Wonderful Ones, Twos are Terrific, Baby Rhyme Time), and so much more -- please visit our Events calendar at [http://www.russelllibrary.org/](http://www.russelllibrary.org/) for a full listing.

- We will be participating in the Middletown Community Thanksgiving Project again this year -- Board members are welcome and encouraged to join in. A $20 contribution provides a nice Thanksgiving meal for our neighbors, plus the group is always looking for volunteers to pack baskets the week of Thanksgiving; this year the basket packing will take place on Monday, November 25 at Fellowship Church on Saybrook Road. See Ramona for more information/donations.

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

- Please walk through the Children's Room and take a look at the transformation that is happening there: fresh, bright, and colorful paint, furniture rearrangement, and a beautiful alphabet carpet. There is much more to come!

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

- Mary Dattilo and I met with representatives from Bywater Solutions, a company that installs and develops the open-source "Koha" library software system, which is used by several libraries in Connecticut. As you know, Russell is currently a member of the Libraries Online, Inc. (LION) consortium, which runs the "Sierra" software system from Innovative Interfaces, Inc. We currently pay the LION consortium approximately $110,000 per year for various services, including the Sierra software program. An open-source solution like Koha would represent a savings of many tens of thousands of dollars per year, but it would also mean that we would exit the LION consortium and have a "standalone" system. This is just food for thought as we continue to examine long-term sustainability.

- The Friends are looking into a large, combined book sale with the former Friends of the Wesleyan Library, likely next spring. I will pass along information as it becomes available.

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

6. **New Business:**

   a. Trustee Hadley forwarded the recommendation of Bryan Skowera as Trustee (Company), to fill a partial-term vacancy through June 2020. It was moved (Trustee Hadley) and seconded (Trustee Murdock). The motion passed unanimously.

   b. Director Burkey reported that the fiscal year holiday calendar was already approved by the Board in April 2019; therefore, no additional Board decisions are required regarding the 2019 holiday schedule of hours.

   c. Catherine Ahern, Director of Information Services and Adult Learning, gave a presentation on the current operations and projects in her department, which include but are certainly not limited to the following: Middletown history/genealogy, building strong relationships with patrons, computer/technology assistance and instruction, selection of fiction and
nonfiction books, Amazon book sales, services to older adults, job and career services (resume assistance, LinkedIn photo shoots, job group and workshops), events and programs, reference/research services, collection development and maintenance.

d. It was moved (Trustee Atherton) and seconded (Trustee Nelson) to add a vote on the proposed by-laws amendments to the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

e. It was moved (Trustee Nelson) and seconded (Trustee Murdock) to approve the proposed by-laws amendments and recommend them to the Russell Library Company for adoption. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Committee Reports and Recommendations:

a. Finance & Audit Committee Report: Trustee Berling (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 Blew 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 Hadley) and seconded (Trustee Murdock) to adjourn at 7:50 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.
Next regular board meeting: Tuesday, November 19, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Ramona Burkey, Library Director