City of Muscatine

LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

The Library Board of Trustees meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 4:30 p.m. in the Library Conference Room

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER
   Tony Loconsole called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. In addition to Loconsole, Board members present were Nora Dwyer, Diana Boeding, Scott Comstock, and Mary Odell. Those with excused absences were Kevin Knox, Diana Gradert, and Steve Truitt. Also present were Bobby Fiedler, Molly Garrett, and Greg Benefiel.

   Kraig Reed joined the meeting at 4:45 p.m.
2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
   Odell moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Comstock. All ayes; motion carried.
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
   Dwyer moved to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2025 meeting. Seconded by Odell. All ayes; motion carried.
4. RATIFY BILLS FOR PAYMENT
   Fiedler, referencing the fund statements, stated the General Fund shows about 43% remaining in the budget; however, he stated that by the end of February, that amount should be about 33%.

   Fiedler stated there were no surprises in the Trust Fund.

Fiedler stated the Computer Revolving Fund is at approximately $37,000, but the amount will drop closer to $33,000 once the bill from EnvisionWare for the coin and bill receptacles for the kiosks is received. He stated that two kiosks are still needed, and the library will probably purchase them next fiscal year.

Discussion followed.

Comstock moved to ratify the bills for January 17, 2025 and February 7, 2025. Seconded by Odell. All ayes; motion carried.

5. RECEIVE COMMUNICATION

6. COMMUNICATIONS - CITIZENS

7. STAFF LIAISON

   Benefiel reminded everyone that the Friends' group's miniature golf tournament is this Saturday at the library. He recognized Kathy Kuhl for the work she put into the tournament.

8. FRIENDS' REPORT

   Fiedler, speaking in reference to the miniature golf tournament being held by the Friends' group this weekend, recognized Kathy Kuhl and the members for their work in advance of the tournament.

   Fiedler stated the annual meeting of the Friends' group will be held on March 5, 2025 in Room 301 of the library. He stated the meeting would begin with normal business, and it would be an opportunity to share information about the group with the public. He stated the annual meeting is a non-profit requirement.

   Dwyer stated she is not getting emails from the Friends' group. She stated she would check into it.

   Fiedler stated she could contact either him or Kathy Kuhl if the issue is not corrected.

9. DIRECTORS' REPORT

   Channel 5-Cost Benefit Analysis:

   Fiedler stated that Chad Yocom left the library in October 2024. He stated staff has been trying to figure out what to do with Channel 5. He stated that after a lot of staff time spent on learning how Channel 5 was set up, it is his opinion that it would not be worthwhile to keep it as it is. He pointed out that the video activities would still be taking place.

   Fiedler stated the library had been paying approximately $15,000 for Channel 5. He stated the cost of the position itself was approximately $100,000 annually, which was a combination of wages and benefits. He stated there had been discussions about hiring someone in a 28-hour position to operate Channel 5 but stated it did not make sense to him to do so. He stated that based on Chad's notes and other issues, it would probably take 1 1/2 to 2 full-time positions to operate Channel 5. He also stated that Chad had been using a lot of his own equipment after being requested not to.

Fiedler stated that Channel 5 had its benefits and initially was good for the library during COVID. He stated he feels it has become more than the library is equipped to handle, and he feels discontinuing Channel 5 is the right thing to do for the library. He stated the 28 hours would be better suited for hiring an Outreach Coordinator. He stated the Children's Department and the new Outreach position would be responsible for producing and broadcasting videos without the need for Channel 5.

There was discussion about how Media Tree would be handled.

Dwyer asked how the public would be notified that the library would no longer be offering Channel 5.

Loconsole stated the library could do a continuous loop for the announcement and further stated that perhaps MP&W could help with the messaging. He stated he liked the idea of hiring an Outreach Coordinator, and he was glad to hear that the Children's Department would be handling the videos.

This was followed by discussion concerning the library's video library.

Odell asked if there could be any legal liability when separating Channel 5 and Media Tree, and Fiedler stated his argument would be that the library does not own Media Tree and does not want to be liable. He stated Chad had leased Channel 5 as a commercial business and when the library purchased it, it became the library's lease. He stated the library purchased the Channel 5 lease with the understanding that Chad's business would not be part of it.

Outreach Coordinator Position:

Fiedler stated the information for this position was included in the Board packet. He stated this information would be shared with Stephanie Romagnoli for posting. He stated he would let staff know about the position at the All Staff meeting on Thursday morning.

Fiedler stated the person hired for this position would be attending events both inside and outside the library to promote the library. He stated they would be attending any big events within the community to make the library's presence known. He stated this person would also spend time at the desk in the Children's Department. He stated this position's essential responsibilities would include outreach planning and events, desk time, home delivery services, volunteer planning and coordination, and video/YouTube production. He stated the library would be looking for a positive person to share all the amazing things the library has to offer. He stated that if the library ever gets a bookmobile, this person would be involved with that activity as well.

Dwyer asked if anyone on staff was interested, and Fiedler stated he did not know.

Reed asked what type of benefits this position would have, and Fiedler stated they would get the same benefits as the other part-time employees.

Budget Update:

Fiedler stated that as part of the budget process, he had requested a 4.1% increase; however, the City Administrator would be recommending a 2% overall increase to City Council. He stated the library does not have a lot of control over personnel costs, which is the bulk of the increase.

Fiedler stated the library would be seeing a reduction in its capital outlay. He stated that in Fiscal Year 2024/2025, the amount for capital outlay was $150,200. He stated the amount being recommended by the City Administrator for Fiscal Year 2025/2026 will be $130,000. He asked the Board to keep in mind the $10,000 the library had received for furniture replacement in Fiscal Year 2024/2025. He stated that HNI had donated furniture to the library, so not having the $10,000 in the budget this fiscal year would not be a sizable loss. Fiedler stated he did request handicap door access for the restrooms on the main floor. He stated he hoped the request would be approved by City Council and noted it would be a part of the Building & Ground's budget.

Fiedler stated that he did share with City Council that the library is a team player and wants to help the city in any way it can; however, reductions to the library's budget could have an impact on the services we provide our patrons. He stated he does not feel this is an issue for the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 budget, but upcoming budgets could see more cuts. He noted that all city departments were affected by the reductions in the budget. Fiedler stated he wants to keep staff and balance things the best way we can.

Fiedler stated the Outreach position is only going to benefit the library.

Dwyer asked if this was a good time to be adding library staff, and Fiedler stated this position was already in the budget because of the issue with Channel 5.

Boeding stated it was her understanding this position was already budgeted, and Fiedler stated she was correct.

Fiedler stated the city is not looking at eliminating positions.

Fiedler stated that showcasing the library is always going to be a long-term benefit.

Dwyer asked if there was anything the Board could do to be advocates for the library.

Fiedler stated that Board members could call their legislators as citizens. He stated that in more informal settings, share what the library does as a way to promote it. He stated he could put together something that shows the library's services.

Loconsole stated he agreed with everything Fiedler had said. He stated everyone at the meeting was on the Board because they were proud of the library. He stated the library is an easy place to brag about. He stated he liked the idea of having a list of bulleted items that could be used by the Board. He stated that whatever the Board can do will only help the library. He stated Board members should get to know their council members and should show up at community events. He ended by saying he was excited about the hiring of an Outreach Coordinator.

Fiedler stated he feels really positive about staff interaction with the public. He stated that any opportunity the Board has to talk about the library will go a long way.

IA 2025 Legislative Update:

Fiedler provided a legislative update. He stated there are currently four bills moving quite quickly through the House and the Senate. He stated one bill repeals the exemption public libraries have had pertaining to obscenity, which he feels will likely pass. He stated repealing the exemption would make it very easy for anyone who feels materials are obscene to file a suit against the library. If a suit is filed and the ruling is not in favor of the library, staff could be held liable, and there would be a chance they could face criminal charges. He explained which employees could be affected by this ruling.

Odell stated this issue was on the front page of the Register this morning, but it did not give a lot of detail.

Fiedler stated these are extreme situations, but the ruling would open the door to the possibility. He stated that even if there is a 1% chance, the library needs to take action to prevent it from happening. He stated that some libraries have barred access to minors. He stated if the bill is approved, he will work with the city attorney to explore the library's options.

Dwyer asked if parents would have to be with minors, and he answered yes, further stating a waiver could be signed.

Fiedler stated that at this point, there is a good chance the bill will pass. He stated that this situation is so challenging because everyone has a different opinion of what is considered obscenity. He stated it will be dealt with if it becomes necessary.

Boeding asked for the bill number, and Fiedler stated it was HF274 and its companion bill was SF235.

Fiedler stated that the bill HF51 would ban what would be considered obscene performances at the library.

Garrett stated its passing could impact performances at the library, and Fiedler stated she was correct.

Fiedler stated that bill SF181 would impact the library's ability to provide e-materials to patrons. He stated this bill could have an impact on Libby/Overdrive.

Garrett stated it was sad because there are so many enriching opportunities.

Fiedler stated that approval of companion bills HF284 and SF238 could take away Enrich funding for libraries that pay dues to organizations that engage in advocacy work, such as the Iowa Library Association.

There was discussion concerning other libraries that are having the same issues.

Fiedler stated that we are trying to be as creative as we can and that all we can do is to make our opinions known.

Fiedler stated the bills move quickly through the legislative system.

Odell asked where the next Legislative Forum would be held, and Fiedler stated it would be in Burlington.

10. BOARD TRAINING

A. Presentation of Comics+Resource by Assistant Director Molly Garrett

Garrett directed everyone's attention to the new television and stated she was going to go over the new Comics+ database. She stated that Comics+ offers many graphic novels and comic books. She stated there is limited space in the library, but Comics+ gives patrons instant access to these things.

Garrett stated the Comics+ database team is the best. She stated it is a small group that evaluates each item that comes into the collection, and they keep everything up to date. She stated they have a good response time.

Garrett stated the only thing patrons need to use the database is a library card. She then explained the process of accessing items on the database and went through the instructions on how the system works. She stated there are no holds and no wait times.

Garrett stated that at this time, Comics+ is the library's highest-used database.

Odell asked if the database was active now, and Garrett answered yes.

Garrett stated Comics+ does have an ap. She stated patrons access the database with the ap, which lives within the website just like Libby.

Loconsole stated Comics+ is another great thing to promote for the library.

Comstock asked about the size of the catalog, and Garrett stated there are 20,000+ items available.

Garrett stated it is a new system and a new database.

Odell asked where the information would be shown in the monthly statistical report, and Garrett stated it would be found under databases.

11. OLD BUSINESS

12. NEW BUSINESS

A. Request to Approve Formation of Steering Committee Consisting of Two to Three Library Board Members and Library Director for the Patio Project

Loconsole read the request as submitted.

Fiedler stated he is looking for two to three volunteers to serve on the Steering Committee for the proposed Patio Project.

Those volunteering to serve were Loconsole, Reed, and Dwyer. Fiedler would also be serving on the committee.

Odell moved to approve the volunteers for the Steering Committee for the proposed Patio Project. Seconded by Comstock. All ayes; motion carried.

B. Request to Approve Initial Draft of the Patio Project RFP for Posting on ION Wave

Loconsole read the request as submitted.

Fiedler stated this action is essentially approving the proposed Request for Proposal (RFP) for the proposed Patio Project. He stated that now that the Steering Committee had been formed, he wanted to run the proposed RFP by them. He stated it might go out by mid-March. He stated he was asking the Board to discuss the initial draft with the Steering Committee approving the finalized RFP.

Reed moved to approve the initial draft of the RFP for the proposed Patio Project. Seconded by Dwyer. All ayes; motion carried.

Fiedler stated he would be reaching out to everyone on the Steering Committee.

13. ADJOURNMENT
Odell moved the meeting be adjourned at 5:56 p.m. Seconded by Dwyer. All ayes; motion carried.

14. NEXT MEETING

A. March 19, 2025