



Library Board Meeting Minutes
January 14, 2021

Chairperson: Cassandra Barney; Presiding

Board Members Present: Jayne Detering, Violet Stone, and Desri Hansen (6:03pm)

Absent Board Members: Anita McClure

Staff Present: Assistant City Administrator/City Recorder Michele Eldridge, Library Supervisor (Court Clerk/UB Supervisor) Lori Ross, and Librarians Cheryl Spangler and Mandy Pelkey.

Meeting Location: Harrisburg Municipal Center @ 354 Smith St.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL at 6:02pm

CONCERNED CITIZEN(S) IN THE AUDIENCE. None were present

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- Barney motioned to approve the minutes and was seconded by Stone. The Library Board then voted unanimously to approve the Minutes for November 12, 2020.

OLD BUSINESS

THE MATTER OF... FINALIZING A PROPOSAL REQUESTING THE LIBRARY INSTITUTE A SIX MONTH "FINE FREE" PILOT PROGRAM.

The Board discussed first what the replacement cost should be. Spangler noted that most people will hand you a book to replace the lost book, rather than pay a fee. Ross added also that there is a 25% administrative fee that we are supposed to be charging. Spangler said that it depends upon the circumstances. Hansen asked if someone who has a fine should carry a balance for a year. Pelkey told her yes, and if they can pay a few dollars and reduce their amount, and still be allowed to check out books, then they will keep coming to the Library. Ross said that we need to come up with a fee for the books. Albany charges \$15,00, and Lebanon charges \$10.00.

The Librarians handed out a letter that had been received by them from Russell Talmadge. **(Both letters are shown in Addendum No. 1)** Pelkey said that he had witnessed a child who wasn't allowed to check out books, who was extremely upset and in tears. He paid for the fines so that they could check out a book. Another letter had also been written by a Kleresha Harderson, one of the children who use Library services. Stone added that her grandson was almost hysterical because he had a fine; and in fact, he was stressed out about it for a couple of days. Barney said that some libraries had a donation box for people to put money in for this kind of thing. Pelkey said that she would rather that there was a fund set up for kids who can't pay, rather than asking for Library donations. Ross reminded them that if they decided to change these, that the policy would need to be updated. Barnes said that they wouldn't be completely going fine free. There are still charges for damaged or lost books.

Pelkey said what would we do instead of going fine free? Barney referred to page no. 6, which had an action plan for this. It basically sets up a period of about 30 days, which includes the first 2 auto renewals. The Board briefly discussed the administrative fee and decided that they would rather remove it. Ross reminded them that this would only apply to Harrisburg's materials, not the other Libraries. Pelkey read several quotes from the ALA (American Library Association) (Please see Addendum No. 2 for the handouts provided by Librarian Pelkey, from the ALA, the Oregon Public Library District, and from the Colorado Library systems). Barney realized that she had made a mistake on page 3 of her report and asked for it to say 'not at the expense of the City' under Goals and Objectives. Pelkey pointed out all the statements and information that shows how important early literacy was. Eldridge remembered that at one of her speeches for the Library Guild, that Spangler had provided her with statistics in relation to early literacy being an important factor that lowers the chance of a child turning to a life of crime. Spangler agreed, and that this is about equity. If we are making Libraries accessible, then it should treat everyone the same, including those that are low income. Barney added that economic disparities are emphasized when there are fines. Detering said that it used to be that parents emphasized that having fines showed kids that they needed to be responsible. However, Pelkey said that parents aren't doing that anymore. But it should be the parent's responsibility, not the Libraries responsibility to do that.

Barney said that without a fine free atmosphere, people worry too much about accountability. But the stress of returning books can come off of kids when there are no fines that their family might struggle to pay. Money (lack of) causes stress and targets people who are already low income. Hansen added that she is very responsible, but she's forgotten too, and that's just regular life. She wants her children to love libraries, not be worried about them. Barney added that she knew one mom, who checked out books, and got a late fee. After that, it was around 3 years before she went back. She didn't want to let her kids check out books because she was afraid that she would lose them, or be late, and she couldn't afford the fines.

Discussion in relation to fines forgiven: Spangler said that last year, they had a lot that was forgiven in the amnesty program. Barney said that they should use the years before we were closed, because we were closed for the remodel, before the Library closed because of the pandemic. Ross said that she had asked Jeremy for the records on how many books had been lost, and how many fines had been forgiven. Looking at the figures provided, there were forgiven payments at between \$1,000 and \$2,500 per year. Eldridge noted that this is the first time we've ever had these figures, and they were fairly substantial. She added that the Board needed to be prepared. This is missing revenue, and the City Council will note that. But you also have your pros and cons, and your reasons for why you believe that this proposal works better for our community. Ross recommended that they use the actual budget figures in the report, from the budget worksheets that she provided.

January 14, 2021

After some discussion, the Board decided that they had enough edits to the report, that they would like to take this to Council in March, to the work session, rather than earlier. That will give them another chance to go over the report and make some final changes at the meeting in early March. Barney asked for the group to send questions to her, that would be examples for why people might be against the program, so that they can address those. Barney reminded everyone that we are still accountable for lost books, and damaged books; this would be a trial program. They would work on marketing the fine free program, and she asked everyone to be prepared to prove how this would work better for our Library. She truly believes that this will increase the patron numbers we currently have.

ADJOURN: The Library Board adjourned the meeting at 7:10pm.

Chairperson

City Recorder