

Session 22-05, a Regular Meeting of the Library Advisory Board was called to order by Chair Kate Finn at 5:30 p.m. on May 17, 2022 at the Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar. Boardmember Douglas Baily was appointed May 9, 2022 to fill the seat vacated by Boardmember Gordy Vernon.

PRESENT: BOARDMEMBERS KUSZMAUL, BAILY, SPRINGER, MCKINNEY, FINN, AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSON

ABSENT: BOARDMEMBERS FAIR AND DOLMA (both excused)

STAFF: LIBRARY DIRECTOR BERRY
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

Chair Finn welcomed new boardmember Douglas Baily.

AGENDA APPROVAL

SPRINGER/KUSZMAUL MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Ann Dixon, city resident, shared her reasons for opposing the proposed reorganization of the library and IT divisions into one department.

Lyn Maslow, city resident, voiced her reservations for the Admin Dept. Reorganization of Library and IT Services.

RECONSIDERATION

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. April 19, 2022 Regular Meeting Minutes

KUSZMAUL/MCKINNEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON-OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Library Director Report dated April 30, 2022

- i. Supplement Report: May 1-15, 2022
- ii. 2021 & 2022 Statistical Reports

Library Director Berry spoke to his written staff and supplement report, the list of upcoming activities and special events, and responded to questions from the board.

- B. Legislative Update
- C. Fundraising Update

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

- A. Admin Dept. Reorganization: Library & IT Services (LIT) – Responses from LAB Members
 - i. Homer Public Library Strategic Plan 2020-2025
 - ii. Boardmember Kuszmaul Response Submittal Supplemental Packet
 - iii. “Don’t Give Up Our Seat at the Table” Public Library Article Supplemental Packet

Chair Finn introduced the agenda item by reading the title. She noted the responses provided by boardmembers that were compiled by Library Director Berry, and the other materials provided by staff. She opened the floor for discussion.

Boardmember Kuszmaul apologized for her technical difficulties that caused her delayed response, which was provided in the supplemental packet.

Boardmember McKinney posed the question: is the LAB going to support the City Manager’s proposal or are they going to make a recommendation in opposition? Chair Finn suggested the board’s goal for tonight is to come up with a statement of how they feel about the reorganization to be shared with the City Manager and City Council.

At Boardmember Kuszmaul’s request for input, Boardmember Baily shared how he does not have a full opinion on the matter given how new he is and his inexperience with the City’s operations and budget.

Mr. Berry gave a summary of all the feedback he has received from concerned boardmembers and members of the public and an update on IT improvements. What he has heard from a lot of people over the past month is there’s a general recognition that the City’s IT department is in crisis, badly in need of help, but that it should be a stand-alone department with more staff of its own and separate from the library. He provided an update on his efforts to improve IT, the hiring of a new full-time Chief Information Officer, and his stance on how the library is there to help. If the LAB wishes to recommend that his leadership assistance to IT is made on a temporary basis, he thinks that is a reasonable compromise and would support it.

Boardmember McKinney commented in support of a limited timeframe. He shared his concerns for the change being made permanently and Mr. Berry experiencing burn-out, which would negatively impact the library.

Boardmember Springer inquired why the City has gone 14 years without getting another IT position hired. Mr. Berry explained how IT has great engineers but does not have the effective administrative

leadership needed to stand up in front of Council and make the case that more IT staff/budget is necessary.

Chair Finn shared her concerns that IT is always in crisis, will always be in demand of better leadership, and that it will take Mr. Berry's time away from the library due to the split position.

Boardmember McKinney clarified with Mr. Berry how much time he dedicates to providing administrative needs to IT. Mr. Berry explained how his involvement has been about 25% of his work week but is decreasing since they have solved much of the task organization issues over the past year. He noted that it does take away from some of the library's time. He shared a personal experience that spoke to how libraries are here to serve the public and solve crises, and by helping IT even in a temporary arrangement it benefits not just the library and City but also the public good.

Boardmember Kuszmaul commented on how it's the City's responsibility to fix this, not the libraries, and if the City can find funds for other things and acknowledge that IT is critical, then why can't they find the funding to address IT needs. Mr. Berry noted that they are getting there and spoke of his presentation to Council at their retreat in March. Boardmember Kuszmaul suggested that they not support the reorganization and embed it in the structure of the City. But if the City has no other options, to at least agree to not formalize the division reorganization and put a limit on the library director's involvement in the improvement of the IT department.

Chair Finn explained her vision for what a library director does, and how a library is not "task oriented" like the IT department is. She expressed her wish that this change does not extend into the future, and if it does happen that it at least be limited to a short timeframe.

Boardmember McKinney opined that we need to take Mr. Berry's input into consideration, recognize his abilities that can help the City, and trust him to let Council know when he's reaching his limits/abilities. He feels turning the proposal down completely is disrespectful to Mr. Berry.

Boardmember Kuszmaul replied that they should turn down the creation of a new department, but could support the continuation of the Library Director being temporarily deployed to IT to assist, with the intention of hiring a new IT director. Boardmembers McKinney and Springer voiced their agreement with that statement.

Discussion ensued on whether something should be drafted or a motion be made, concerns that not all the boardmembers are present but their comments are reflected in the meeting minutes and their written statements, what brought the City Manager to make this decision to reorganize it this way, and whether or not the LAB wants to put a specific time limit on it but perhaps do a re-evaluation that comes back through the LAB in a year.

Mr. Berry summarized that the LAB opposes the creation of a new department, and supports the continuation of the librarian being temporarily deployed to assist IT for a year, with the intention of hiring a new IT director. Boardmember McKinney added that Council should be made aware of the level of opposition there is to this reorganization from the LAB and those involved with the library, and that this recommendation is a compromise.

Boardmember Baily opined that a new department would create its own constituency that may be hard to overcome, and that establishing a new department is not in the better interest of the library.

Chair Finn commented that the library is part of the City, and the LAB is an advisory body of the City organization, so they want the City to be happy/healthy and succeed as much as they want the library to succeed. Yet the same idea remains: the library will lose in this arrangement and she is not happy with that.

Student Representative Johnson commented on everything that has been said, the points made, and the public members that have come to present their concerns. It seems like the LAB is doing a good job of reflecting the greater community's concerns, and thinks that people would be happy with how they're approaching the issue.

Chair Finn clarified with Deputy City Clerk Tussey on how their feedback on this matter will be submitted to the City Manager and City Council, and what could be provided to Council when she gives the LAB report at their next meeting.

KUSZMAUL/MCKINNEY MOVED THAT THE LAB EXPRESSES ITS NON-SUPPORT FOR THE CREATION OF A NEW DEPARTMENT CALLED LIBRARY AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES, AND ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE PROPOSAL HAS AWAKENED PASSION IN THE COMMUNITY AND CONCERN FOR ITS IMPACT ON LIBRARY SERVICES. THE LAB RECOMMENDS THAT THE CITY PRIORITIZE THE CREATION OF AN IT DEPARTMENT TO ADDRESS ALL THE IT NEEDS, AND IF THE CITY CANNOT DO THAT IN AN EXPEDITIOUS MANNER THAT AN ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISE WOULD BE TO FORMALIZE THE LOAN OF THE LIBRARY DIRECTOR TO CONTINUE HELPING WITH A TIME LIMIT OF A YEAR.

Chair Finn confirmed that the motion covers all the concerns and the process for getting their responses/feedback to City Council. There was discussion on making sure the motion included the fact that this is a compromise and how the LAB would like to see the prioritization of hiring a new IT director to address the City's IT problems.

VOTE: YES: SPRINGER, KUSZMAUL, MCKINNEY, FINN, BAILY

Motion carried.

Chair Finn thanked the board for all their thoughtful input over the past couple of months and for coming up with a quality statement rather than just stomping their feet. At the suggestion of Boardmember Kuszmaul, Boardmember Baily agreed to submit his comments in writing to Mr. Berry so they could also be included with the other written responses.

NEW BUSINESS

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. Memo 22-066 LAB Appointment of Douglas Baily
- B. NPR Article Re: Ukraine's Libraries dated March 9, 2022
- C. American Library Association (ALA) Press Release Re: Ukraine Library Relief Fund
- D. LAB 2022 Calendar

Chair Finn noted and facilitated discussion on the informational materials and supplemental items provided. In response to a volunteer request, Chair Finn agreed to give the LAB report at the May 23rd City Council meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

Ann Dixon, city resident, thanked the board for working through the reorganization issue so carefully. She inquired how the topic will be handled if it comes up at Council during the summer months when LAB does not meet.

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Deputy City Clerk Tussey answered Ms. Dixon's question regarding how the board can address any library/IT department reorganization concerns that arise during the summer.

Library Director Berry had no comments.

COMMENTS OF THE BOARD

Boardmember McKinney commented that this meeting marks the end of his first year on the board. He wasn't sure what it was going to be like serving on the board but has really enjoyed it, wanted to thank everyone, and is blown away by all the time and effort everyone puts into these meetings. It has been a good experience. He thanked the board and staff again and wished everyone a good summer.

Boardmember Kuszmaul shared her hopes that City Manager Dumouchel takes the board's feedback and input seriously, and does not treat it like a checkbox but integrates it into his proposal.

Chair Finn wished everyone a happy summer and commented on all the ways to volunteer at the library. She suggested boardmembers look over the list of events provided by Mr. Berry and see how they can give their time to the library since the board will not be meeting over the summer.

Boardmembers Springer, Baily, and Student Rep Johnson had no comments.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Finn adjourned the meeting at 6:48 p.m. The next regular meeting is Tuesday, August 16, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. All meetings are scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar.



RACHEL TUSSEY, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

Approved: August 16, 2022

