

THE FERGUSON LIBRARY  
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
April 16, 2024

**Present:**

**Board Members:** E. Bromley (Chair); M. Hyman (Vice Chair); S. Vidan (Treasurer); R. Mercede (Secretary); S. Frederick; A. Livingston; T. Lucero; L. Meyer;

**Citizen Advisors:** T. Bartley; A. Better-Wirz; T. Cassone; S. Conley; S. Duarte; J. Freeman; A. LiVolsi; M. Metwally; M. Millan; S. O'Shea; B. Spaulding

**Staff:** A. Knapp; L. Avellar; C. Harper; C. Hubbard; S. LaPerla; D. Lyles

**Guest:** Ellen Paul; Executive Director of Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC)

Board Chair Ellen Bromley called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

**Minutes**

The minutes of the February 26, 2024 board meeting were presented and all voted in favor to approve.

**Treasurer's Report**

Since Susana Vidan joined through remote access, Cheryl Harper presented the Treasurer's Report and the Income Statement as of March 31, 2024. The Foundation is still in a transition period, but the library was able to draw from the Foundation budgeted contribution. We have submitted to the city the first quarter report for the state grant, and will submit the final one after June 30. Passport services are still doing well. The Friends of Ferguson have increased their donations to the library in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters. There are still five open positions to be filled and we are under budget. Additionally, maintenance staff is performing several in-house maintenance projects, which has kept our costs lower. However, we anticipate costs for a few major repairs with a broken fire panel at the Weed Branch and air circulating issues at the Main Library. We are running over in our consulting line which includes HMA2, Legacy Engineers, and Harmony Business.

Alice discussed Silktown Roofing and efforts to receive non-bonded money from the city's operating reserve account to pay for the work they performed last fall.

**CEO's Report**

Alice introduced guest Ellen Paul, Executive Director of the Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC), who spoke about CLC's services to more than 1,000 libraries across

Connecticut. Even though CLC is allocated a small amount of state funding they can provide contract discounts on book supplies, technology equipment, and publicity for library offerings. The Ferguson Library saved more than \$200,000 from the use of CLC services during 2023. CLC's largest scope of work is geared towards professional development training, which Ferguson has also taken advantage of. Alice added that CLC has deep connections with library vendors.

Alice spoke about tracking statistics which show a slight increase in circulating materials due to downloading e-books and e-audiobooks. Children's circulation and the number of reference questions increased. We may be underreporting the reference questions as we didn't include Book-a-Librarian in our numbers or the public's use of Digital Navigators; we will make this adjustment moving forward. The public is starting to use more computers on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor; we are beginning to return to pre-COVID computer usage.

Connecticut Bill HB06800, an Act Concerning Electronic Book and Digital Audiobook Licensing did not pass through legislation. Ms. Knapp thanked Representative Matt Blumenthal for his efforts to move this act forward. A second bill will be coming up for vote this week, and the Attorney General said he will defend this bill if passed.

### **Executive Committee**

Chair Ellen Bromley reported that the Executive Committee met a day earlier on April 15 and reviewed the material presented at today's meeting.

### **Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee met and is approaching people for the Board. Both Michael Hyman and Steve Frederick's board terms will be expiring. New officers and names of new board members will be presented at the Annual Meeting in June.

### **Ferguson Library Foundation**

The Foundation Board met with accountant Chris Eck at their March 12, 2024 meeting and went through the 2023 compilation report. The Foundation's income is below the threshold for a full audit. In the future, the Foundation will have a yearly audit performed. The Foundation's Certificate of Incorporation's new structure will now be a Type 1 Supporting Organization.

### **Friends of Ferguson**

President Margaret Metwally summarized the Friends' history and shared how their fundraising used to be only the annual Book & Author Luncheon. Once the city cut library funding, the Friends' funding objectives changed. The Friends Book Store emerged as their biggest money maker. Susie Draper, the new Book Store manager, is coming up with ideas for Bedford Street sales, collectable sales, and special bag sales. With Ann Sexton's help, the Books for Babies delivery to Stamford Hospital has exploded, and Eileen Rosner has put so much of herself into the annual Literary Competition. Friends' membership has increased as well as donations to the Friends.

Margaret mentioned the upcoming Jazz and Poetry event at the South End Branch on April 26.

## **Old Business**

### **2024-2025 Operating Budget Update**

Alice reported that the Board of Finance is set to meet on April 18 to vote on the 2024-25 Operating Budget.

## **New Business**

Two new policies were presented to the Board: Employee Reimbursement Policy; and Travel Expense Policy. These policies do not change how we conduct business but rather put in writing what our procedures are. Both of these policies were motioned and approved to accept.

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### **Employee Reimbursement Policy**

#### ***Policy Statement:***

*All supplies for the Ferguson Library (library) and or program materials should go through the Purchasing Department. The library recognizes that employees may **occasionally** need to make purchases for library materials or program materials using their own funds. This policy outlines the guidelines and procedures for such personal purchases and the reimbursement process.*

#### ***Guidelines for Personal Purchases:***

##### ***1. Authorization:***

- Employees must obtain prior authorization from their supervisor or before making any purchases on behalf of the library.*
- Authorization should be obtained in writing and include details such as the nature of the purchase, the approved budget, and any specific requirements.*
- A company credit card should be used.*

##### ***2. Appropriate Purchases:***

- Purchases made with employee's own funds, i.e. credit card or cash, should be limited to essential library materials or program materials that are directly related to the employee's job responsibilities and a company credit card is not available.*
- The library's tax-exempt number must be used for all purchases.*

##### ***3. Receipts and Documentation:***

- Employees must retain detailed receipts for all purchases.*
- Receipts should clearly indicate the items purchased, the date of purchase, and the total cost.*

##### ***4. Budget Compliance:***

- Purchases must adhere to the budgetary constraints set by the library.*
- Employees should be mindful of allocated budgets and seek approval for any purchases that may exceed the approved limits.*

**Reimbursement Procedures:****1. Expense Report Submission:**

- *Employees must submit a completed expense report, including all required receipts and documentation, to the Business Office for reimbursement.*

*2. The expense report should be submitted within five (5) days of the purchase.*

**3. Approval Process:**

- *The submitted expense report will undergo review and approval by the designated authority, ensuring compliance with the library's policies and budgetary constraints.*

**4. Timely Reimbursement:**

- *The library is committed to reimbursing employees for authorized personal purchases in a timely manner. Reimbursements will be processed within five (5) days of receiving the completed expense report.*

**Policy Violations:****1. Consequences:**

- *Violations of this policy may be subject to disciplinary actions, including but not limited to verbal or written warnings, reimbursement refusal, or more severe consequences as deemed appropriate by Human Resources.*

**Review and Updates:****1. Regular Review:**

- *This policy will be subject to periodic review to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.*
  - *Updates may be made as necessary, and employees will be informed of any changes.*
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## **Travel Expense Policy**

**Overview**

*It is the policy of the Ferguson Library (Library) to reimburse staff for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred during approved work-related travel.*

*Employees seeking reimbursement should incur the lowest reasonable travel expenses and exercise care to avoid impropriety or the appearance of impropriety.*

*Reimbursement is allowed only when reimbursement has not been, and will not be, received from other sources. If a circumstance arises that is not specifically covered in this travel policy, then the most conservative course of action should be taken.*

**Authorization and responsibility**

*Staff travel must be authorized. Staff should verify that planned travel is eligible for reimbursement before making travel arrangements. Within 30 days of completion of a trip, staff must submit a travel reimbursement form and supporting documentation to obtain reimbursement of expenses.*

*An individual may not approve his or her own travel or reimbursement. The travel reimbursement form must be signed by an Administrator.*

*Travel and reimbursement for members of the leadership team must be approved by the CEO or the Director of Administrative Services.*

*Designated approval authorities are required to review expenditures and withhold reimbursement if there is reason to believe that the expenditures are inappropriate or extravagant.*

### **Personal funds**

*Staff should review reimbursement guidelines before spending personal funds for business travel to determine if such expenses are reimbursable. See Section II: Travel Expenses/Procedures for details. The library reserves the right to deny reimbursement of travel-related expenses for failure to comply with policies and procedures.*

*Staff who use personal funds to facilitate travel arrangements will not be reimbursed until after the trip occurs and proper documentation is submitted.*

### **Vacation in conjunction with business travel**

*In cases in which vacation time is added to a business trip, any cost variance in airfare, car rental or lodging must be clearly identified on the travel request form. The library will not prepay any personal expenses with the intention of being “repaid” at a later time, nor will any personal expenses be reimbursed.*

### **Exceptions**

*Occasionally it may be necessary for staff to request exceptions to this travel policy. Requests for exceptions to the policy must be made in writing and approved by the CEO or by the Director of Administrative Services.*

### **Travel Expenses/Procedures**

#### **General information**

*Authorized business travel for staff that includes prepayments must be pre-approved.*

**Airfare.** *Staff are expected to obtain the lowest available airfare that reasonably meets business travel needs.*

*Staff are encouraged to book flights at least 60 days in advance to avoid premium airfare pricing.*

*Coach class or economy tickets must be purchased for domestic flights time totaling less than five consecutive hours excluding layovers.*

*A less-than-first-class ticket (i.e., business class) may be purchased for domestic flights with flight time exceeding five consecutive hours excluding layovers.*

*Airfare may be purchased with a Library’s credit card through the department head or the business office with a request for payment form.*

**Rail transportation.** *The library will prepay rail transportation provided that the cost does not exceed the cost of the least expensive airfare.*

**Rental vehicles.** *The library will pay for approved use of a rental vehicle. See the section on reimbursements below in this section.*

**Conference registration fees.** *Conference registration fees can be prepaid with a Library credit card or check through the business office with a request for payment form. Business-related banquets or meals that are considered part of the conference can be paid for with the registration fees.*

### **Reimbursements**

*Requests for reimbursements of travel-related expenses are submitted on a travel reimbursement form. This form must be accompanied by supporting documentation.*

*These forms must be submitted to the business office **within two weeks** after the trip is completed.*

*Reimbursement of travel expenses is based on documentation of reasonable and actual expenses supported by the original, itemized receipts where required.*

**Automobile (personally owned—domestic travel).** *A valid driver's license issued within the United States and personal automobile insurance are required for expenses to be reimbursed. Drivers should be aware of the extent of coverage (if any) provided by his or her automobile insurance company for travel that is business or not personal in nature.*

*Reimbursement for use of a personal automobile is based on the federal mileage rate.*

*A staff travel reimbursement form is required for reimbursement of all vehicle-related expenses, including gasoline, wear and tear, and personal auto insurance. As of 1/1/2024 the rate is \$.67 cents per mile.*

**Automobile (rental—domestic travel).** *Reimbursement for a commercial rental vehicle as a primary mode of transportation is authorized only if the rental vehicle is more economical than any other type of public transportation, or if the destination is not otherwise accessible. Vehicle rental at a destination city is reimbursable. Original receipts are required.*

*The library authorizes reimbursement for the most economic vehicle available. In certain circumstances larger vehicles may be rented, with supervisory approval. The rental agreement must clearly show the date and the points of departure/arrival, as well as the total cost. Drivers must adhere to the rental requirements, and restrictions must be followed. Original receipts are required.*

*When vehicle rentals are necessary, the library encourages travelers to purchase collision damage waiver (CDW) and loss damage waiver (LDW) coverage. [Company Name] will reimburse the cost of CDW and LDW coverage; all other insurance reimbursements will be denied.*

*Drivers should be aware of the extent of coverage (if any) provided by his or her automobile insurance company for travel that is business or not personal in nature.*

*Parking fees, tolls and other incidental costs associated with the vehicle use are not covered by the rental agreement.*

*Staff are strongly encouraged to fill the gas tank before returning the vehicle to the rental agency to avoid service fees and more expensive fuel rates.*

**Conference registration fees.**

*Registration fees paid directly by an individual will not be reimbursed until the conference is completed.*

**Lodging (commercial).** *The cost of overnight lodging (room rate and tax only) will be reimbursed to staff if the authorized travel is 45 miles or more from the staff's home or primary worksite.*

*Exceptions to this restriction may be approved in writing by the CEO or by the Director of Administrative Services.*

*The library will reimburse lodging expenses at reasonable, single occupancy or standard business room rates. When the hotel or motel is the conference or convention site, reimbursement will be limited to the conference rate.*

**Meals (per diem).**

*If a meal is in a conference registration fee, built in to the standard, single hotel room rate or replaced by a legitimate business meal, the per diem allowance for that meal may not be claimed.*

*Receipts are not required for per diem allowances. Per diem allowances are reimbursed after the trip is completed.*

**Parking.** *Original receipts are required for parking fees (including airport parking).*

**Tolls.** *Original receipts are required for tolls.*

**Miscellaneous transportation.** *Original receipts are required for taxis, bus, subway, metro, ferry and other modes of transportation.*

**Non-reimbursable Travel Expenses**

*The following items that may be associated with business travel will not be reimbursed by the library:*

- *Airline club memberships.*
- *Airline upgrades.*
- *Business class for domestic flights or first class for all flights.*
- *Child care, babysitting, house-sitting, or pet-sitting/kennel charges.*
- *Commuting between home and the primary work location.*
- *Costs incurred by traveler's failure to cancel travel or hotel reservations in a timely fashion.*
- *Personal entertainment expenses, including in-flight movies, headsets, health club facilities, hotel pay-per-view movies, in-theater movies, social activities and related incidental costs.*
- *Travel accident insurance premiums or purchase of additional travel insurance.*
- *Other expenses not directly related to the business travel.*

**Travel for Non-Employees**

*Additional costs for travel, lodging, meal or other travel expenses for spouses or other family members will not be reimbursed unless the individual has a bona fide company purpose for engaging in the travel or attending the event. Such travel is generally limited to senior management and should occur infrequently.*

**Novel Affair Results**

Linda Avellar spoke about Novel Affair, noting that this year's event broke funding records by raising \$263,000. We didn't have a live auction this year, but the paddle raise brought in more than expected and a high of 300 in attendance for honoree Steven Frederick. Remarks were made that 'this is the best event in town'.

**Board Retreat – May 4, 2024**

Alice mentioned the May 4 Board Retreat. Margaret Sullivan, of Margaret Sullivan Studio, will be conducting workshops on the Future of Libraries

**Alex Lee Resolution**

Long-time employee, Alex Lee, Materials Management Manager, will retire on April 26, after 36 years of employment. Mr. Lee is being honored with the following resolution:

**WHEREAS** Alex Lee started his career with the Ferguson Library on September 9, 1988 as a Library Clerk; and promoted to Supervisor of Circulation on July 24, 2000; and promoted again to Supervisor of Materials Management on July 3, 2017.

**WHEREAS** Alex Lee has ably and diligently performed his duties with integrity and dedication; and has successfully integrated two different departments into one, and has always offered wise observations during his time with the Ferguson Library;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Trustees of the Ferguson Library hereby extends its sincere appreciation to Alex Lee for his distinguished and dedicated service.

There being no further business, Ms. Bromley motioned to end the meeting. All approved, the meeting was adjourned at 5:18 pm.

RJ Mercede  
Secretary