

**THE FERGUSON LIBRARY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
September 17, 2024**

Present:

Board Members: E. Bromley (Chair); M. Mays (Vice Chair); S. Vidan (Treasurer);
R. Mercede (Secretary); A. George; T. Lucero; L. Meyer; S. O’Shea

Citizen Advisors: S. Conley; S. Frederick; J. Freeman; R. Granata; S. Kim; M. Moore;
J. Orlikoff; M. Metwally; R. McManus, Maria Millan

Staff: A. Knapp; L. Avellar; C. Harper; S. LaPerla; D. Lyles; E. McKay; A. Marrocolla

Board Chair Ellen Bromley called the meeting to order at 4:31 pm. Those present in-person and virtually introduced themselves.

Minutes

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2024, meeting.

Treasurer’s Report

Susana Vidan, Treasurer, reported that the past year has been an excellent one for the library, with the budget staying in line and demonstrating positive trends in revenue. Key highlights include the annual contribution from the Friends of Ferguson totaled \$139,000 and the passport department exceeded its budgeted revenue by \$56,000. An anticipated annual corporate grant of \$35,000 was unexpectedly reduced to just \$2,000. Despite this, the organization was able to secure several unbudgeted grants including \$125,000 from the State of Connecticut for a fiber upgrade, IMLS Grant of \$52,000, United Way grant at \$15,000, and restricted grants of \$60,000 from various individuals. A Board Member inquired about salary wages and benefits. In response, Cheryl Harper addressed the staffing challenges faced by the Youth Services Department since the onset of COVID-19. She noted a decline in librarians within the department and emphasized the library’s efforts to hire bilingual staff to better serve the diverse Stamford community.

The balance sheets for FY ending June 30, 2024, and for August 2024 were reviewed. Some account receivables show the library is still owed reimbursement from the City for roof repair and a state ARPA grant monies of \$250,000. Even so, we have just under \$1million cash on hand. Budget amounts for income for the new year show a 2.4 increase over last year.

CEO's Report

Alice Knapp asked the Board to review her June CEO report which highlighted a number of impressive programs this past year that brought in increased attendance at the library. It also mentioned improvements in the Building Services and IT Department. She then introduced Susan LaPerla who spoke on the Dashboard for the Strategic Framework. We are working with staff on expanding outreach into the community, partnering with local organizations to offer their service to the public, and increasing our services to English language learners. Digital Navigator use is up, and Entrepreneur in Residence (EIR) program is expanding its services.

Elizabeth McKay, Youth Services Manager, reported on the annual Summer Reading Club. This year, staff were able to get into each of the local schools to promote summer reading. We stocked four summer school locations with over 1,500 books. We helped as a community partner with the Stamford Schools with registration for kindergarten offered at the library branches. Stamford Schools and United Way's C2C hired a summer literacy coach to conduct activities at camps. Also, Youth Services had two successful parent engagement days at Boys & Girls Club. We are working with the Rosenshein Foundation on a book giveaway this fall. In addition, the West Side Branch hosted a Toastmasters program and plans to introduce a podcast training session soon. The Summer Reading Club finale was held at the Boys & Girls Club, and the library looks forward to continuing this partnership.

Ms. Knapp introduced Anthony Marrocolla, Manager of the Adult and Information Services Department. Mr. Marrocolla announced several of the upcoming programs for Hispanic Heritage Month and Italian Heritage Month. Luis Miranda, father of Lin-Manuel Miranda, will be here to discuss his book *Relentless*. On October 7, we will host a virtual program on researching Italian American ancestry, and on October 17, celebrity chef Lidia Bastianich has a "sold out" program. The Minturnese Dancers will be here on October 20. On September 24, we will host Kevin Baker with his talk on *The New York Game: Baseball*. On October 8, Stephen Solomon is here to talk on the creation of the right to Freedom of Speech. [This program has since been rescheduled for December 4.] And on October 19 we will launch our new CreateLab with a variety of sessions, including a demo of our new mobile kitchen. The mobile kitchen was purchased with funds from an anonymous donor. October 28 will feature Jonathan Lethem author of *Brooklyn Crime Novel*. The Howard Kaplan Lecture is set for November 14 with Dr. James Forman, and *The Castle*, a play about imprisonment and hope, will be presented on November 24. Mr. Marrocolla said the library is trying to offer a variety of diverse programming.

Ms. Knapp shared that she is in discussions with Mayor Simmons regarding funding for a new East Side Branch, noting that \$5 million remains from the ARPA grant, along with \$3 million allocated by Congressman Jim Himes. In addition, the library is collaborating with the City's Planning Department to modify and enhance services at the South End Branch.

Executive Committee

Ms. Bromley said the Executive Committee met on September 16th and reviewed the agenda for today's Board meeting.

Pension Committee

The Pension Committee met on July 16th but failed to have a quorum. The new pension advisors will offer pension allocations taking some of the liability and decision-making off the Pension Committee. The next Pension Committee meeting is scheduled for October 17th.

Ferguson Library Foundation

With the recent change to the Foundation Bylaws, the Board of Trustees will need to approve the election of Trustees to the Foundation Library Board.

Election of Trustees 2024 – 2027

George Boyce	2024 – 2027
Scott Conley	2024 – 2027
Michael Hyman	2024 – 2027
Sopong Kim	2024 – 2027
Anderson Livingston	2024 – 2027 (2 nd Term)

Board of Trustees 2024 – 2025

Tom Cassone	2022 – 2025
Robert J. Granata	2023 – 2026
Polly O'Brien Morrow	2023 – 2026
Stephanie O'Shea	2023 – 2026
Mary Sommer	2023 – 2026
Ann Zucker	2023 – 2026
George Boyce	2024 – 2027
Scott Conley	2024 – 2027
Michael Hyman	2024 – 2027
Sopong Kim	2024 – 2027
Anderson Livingston	2024 – 2027

A motion was made and approved to accept the slate of Foundation Trustees.

Friends of Ferguson

Friends President Margaret Metwally said the Friends Board is at capacity with 24 members and six Citizen Advisers, and the board is showing more diversity in its members. The Books for Babies program is expanding with C2C's (Cradle-to-Career) partnership with Read to Grow and distributed over 2,400 books this year at Stamford Hospital. She spoke on plans for Friends's 45th anniversary program and thanked Friends Book Store Manager Susie Draper and Nancy Lewittes for bringing in over \$6,500 in sales at the Arts & Crafts on Bedford Street event.

Old Business

Compliance & Reporting Policy and Conflict of Interest & Confidential Policy: the Board of Trustees were reminded to sign these two policies which can be found on the BoardEffect library connection.

A review of the library's pension plan showed that it is still in good standing.

The Main Library's HVAC system is at the end of its life and is a very expensive project with over \$2.3 million to replace.

New Business

2023-2024 Annual Report

Linda Avellar asked the Board Members to review the 2023-2024 Annual Report and to let her know of any changes.

Ms. Avellar also mentioned the Ferguson Library received an Honorable Mention from the Connecticut Press Club.

M&T Bank Resolution

This resolution for a transfer of \$500,000 from First County Bank to M&T Bank was not voted on. An Initial discussion was started on the use of an additional bank, M&T Bank. Robert Granata, from First County Bank, suggested that savings could be had with a different account and First County will be in contact with Cheryl Harper to discuss this further. Ms. Vidan suggested that the resolution be held until further review of what First County Bank has to offer for additional benefit to the library.

Review of Library Policies

Alice Knapp discussed the CT State Library's new Best Practices that recommends a review of library policies every 2 years. With that, Denise Lyles, Manager of the Harry Bennett Branch and Weed Memorial & Hollander Branch, presented the 4 most used policies that need to be reviewed and voted on:

Behavior and Supervision of Children

<https://www.fergusonlibrary.org/policies/behavior-and-supervision-children-policy>

Public Comment Policy

<https://www.fergusonlibrary.org/policies/public-comment-policy>

Study Room Policy

<https://www.fergusonlibrary.org/policies/study-room-policy>

Web Presence & Social Media Policy

<https://www.fergusonlibrary.org/policies/web-presence-and-social-media-policy>

Some discussion was brought forth with clarification on the Public Comment Policy use at Library Board Meetings and limiting public comment to a certain time frame, so that a participant will not be able to hijack the meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Behavior and Supervision of Children, Study Room, Web Presence & Social Media policies as presented, all voted in favor, the motion passed. The Public Comment at Library Board Meetings policy was sent back to committee for clarification.

Citizen Advisers and Committee Assignments

A list of Citizen Advisers and Committee Assignments were distributed at today's meeting.

FOIA / New Member Orientation / Intellectual Freedom

Alice Knapp spoke on upcoming events that the Board and Citizen Advisors are invited to: FOIA Session with Amy LiVolsi on September 24 at 9:00 am; New Board/Citizen Adviser Orientation on October 14 at 9:00 am; Intellectual Freedom Session on October 17 at 9:00 am. A Zoom connection will be available for all events to accommodate those who want to join remotely.

Book Challenge

The Ferguson Library received a complaint about the Children's Collection and certain items that were asked to be removed from the shelf. Ms. Knapp provided a copy of her response to this complaint and shared this with the Board.

All Day Staff Retreat

An All Day Staff Retreat will be held on November 1, 2024, and the Ferguson Library will be closed to the public in order for all staff to attend.

The next Board Meeting is set for Tuesday, October 22, 2024, at 4:30 pm.

Ellen Bromley motioned to adjourn the meeting, all approved, the meeting was adjourned at 5:38 pm.

RJ Mercede
Secretary