

**THE FERGUSON LIBRARY**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**October 24, 2023**

**Present:**

**Board Members:** E. Bromley (Chair); M. Hyman (Vice Chair); RJ Mercede (Secretary); S. Frederick; A. Livingston; T. Lucero; C. Paris

**Citizen Advisors:** T. Bartley; A. Better-Wirz; S. Duarte; S. Fitzgerald; J. Freeman; R. Granata; A. LiVolsi; R. McManus; M. Metwally; M. Millan; J. Orlikoff; S. O'Shea; S. Perry; M. Sommer; B. Spaulding; D. Stein

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

**Guest:** Henry Myerberg of HMA2

Ms. Bromley called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

**Minutes**

Ms. Bromley asked if there were any changes to the September 19, 2023 Board of Trustees minutes. With no comments, a motion was made and seconded to accept them. The motion passed.

**Treasurer's Report**

In Ms. Vidan's absence, Ms. Harper reported that the income statement has a surplus bottom line. The Kumon math and reading program has been renting space at the Main Library since mid-July and this is reported in our rental income. The wages and benefits category is down due to open positions. An IT consultant has been hired to assist with a much-needed upgrade to the library's IT infrastructure, the staff's migration to Office 365 and for additional projects. Maintenance costs have been reduced since the custodial staff is handling a number of in-house repairs. Insurance costs are up due to premium increases and there are additional increases in utilities costs. Our cash and cash equivalents are strong, and we are in good financial standing.

**CEO's Report**

Ms. Knapp shared highlights from her September CEO report and talked about the library's summer reading programs. The library received a grant for the West Side Branch through the state tax on cannabis sales (distributed through United Way). We are planning enrichment programs with these funds. Our numbers overall show circulation of books and digital materials up compared to 2019. Our reference numbers are strong across all branches. Youth circulation of physical items is still strong but adult

DVD and audio circulation is declining with the rise of streaming and downloading. Youth Services Supervisor Elizabeth McKay, who also serves as Co-Chair of United Way's C2C (Cradle-to-Career) Early Grade Reading Community Action Network, spoke in greater detail about our summer reading programs. We sent library coaches to the Boys & Girls Club and ROSCO enrichment camps, serving about 400 kids in total. We also distributed library cards and free books and met with parents at the end of the day to encourage reading. Over the past three years, local school libraries have closed but Ferguson has supplied more than 1,000 books to four elementary schools in conjunction with Board of Education summer reading suggestions. At a book giveaway in September, the library gave out 2,000 books to kids and teens. We have been buying more books in other languages, particularly Spanish.

Ms. Knapp praised the library's maintenance department and their efforts to take on more projects normally conducted by outside businesses.

### **Executive Committee**

Ms. Bromley said the Executive Committee met earlier in the day and discussed the board agenda and material that will be reviewed at today's meeting.

### **Building Committee**

The Building Committee met on October 5, 2023, to review the library's capital budget submission to the City's Planning Board. The budget includes \$ 3 million for phase one of the Bennett Branch modernization; \$775,000 for Main Library boilers to complete the HVAC project; \$300,000 to complete the Main Library's elevator project and to finish digitization of the Stamford Advocate for \$135,000. Also, small meeting room pods and furniture have been purchased for the Harry Bennett Branch and new carpeting is planned for the Main Library.

### **Marketing & Advocacy Committee**

The newly formed Marketing & Advocacy Committee met on October 11 to brainstorm efforts to push out library messages on a possible quarterly basis. They also discussed ways to raise awareness of library services.

### **Friends of Ferguson**

Ms. Metwally reported on the Friends of Ferguson's fundraising ideas and recent Friends Author Series events, including Jacques Pepin on October 5 and the upcoming Pub Crawl on November 15. She spoke about efforts to attract new and renewed Friends membership and the Books for Babies Program, where the Friends have distributed over 100,000 books over the years. A Friends board member is translating their materials into Spanish to attract a more diverse membership for Friends.

### **Ferguson Library Foundation**

Mr. Frederick spoke about the recent Foundation board meeting (October 19). He reported on the library's investment portfolio, which dropped due to weakness in the stock market. With the Foundation now becoming the fundraising arm of the library, a

joint meeting with the Foundation and the board's Development Committee is being planned to discuss future joint efforts.

### **Old Business**

Mr. Myerberg previewed the master plan and strategic framework for the next 10 years. A resolution will be brought at the December board meeting with a possible new title from master plan to comprehensive plan or action plan.

The Main Library roof replacement was nearly completed in seven days and finishing touches are still going on. This project was a long time coming, with five years of planning (and budgeting) and completed in a very short time.

### **New Business**

#### **2023-2024 Capital Projects**

City of Stamford funding will not be bonded until Spring 2024, but there will be funds for the Harry Bennett Branch and Main Library elevators.

#### **2025-2031 Capital Projects Requests**

The 2025-2032 capital project request was presented for board approval. Project requests are \$775,000 to replace the Main Library's boilers, while upgrading the HVAC system. A request of \$3 million will match the \$2 million state construction grant for Harry Bennett Branch upgrades, an additional \$300,000 for the Main Library elevator upgrades, and a \$135,000 request to finish the digitization of the Stamford Advocate. For short-term financing, a request will be made for \$70,000 for PC replacement and technology infrastructure upgrades. A motion passed to approve the library's capital project request.

#### **December Board Meeting**

To showcase new improvements at the Harry Bennett Branch, Ms. Knapp said the December 5 board meeting will be held at the Bennett Branch, followed by a reception. This will be in place of the usual holiday dinner.

Ms. Bromley motioned to dismiss today's meeting. Mr. Mercede approved and Ms. Frederick seconded. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 5:54 pm.

RJ Mercede  
Secretary