

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Video Conference Call via GoToMeeting

PRESENT: Michele Bria, Ald. Milele Coggs, Ald. Nik Kovac, Matt Kowalski, Teresa Mercado, Sup. Marcelia Nicholson, Ald. JoCasta Zamarripa, Joan Johnson

EXCUSED: Chris Layden, Dir. Larry Miller, Mark Sain, Jennifer Smith

STAFF: Eileen Force Cahill, Kristina Gomez, Sam McGovern-Rowen, Jennifer Meyer-Stearns, Amelia Osterud, Judy Pinger, Anne Rasmussen, Rebecca Schweisberger

OTHERS

PRESENT: MPL Foundation: Pat Swanson
Budget and Policy Division: Dennis Yaccarino, Mason Lavey
Dr. Joyce Latham

President Michele Bria called the meeting of the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees to order at 4:01 p.m. on March 23, 2021 with a quorum present. All Trustees participated by video conference.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. **Regular Board Meeting Minutes January 26, 2021.**
2. **Committee Reports**
 - a. Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes – January 26, 2021
 - b. Innovation & Strategy Committee Meeting Minutes – February 10, 2021
3. **Administrative Reports**
 - a. Financial Report
 - b. Library Director’s Reports
 - c. Statistics

President Bria asked the Board if any items should be removed from the Consent Agenda presented as Attachment A, pages 4-20 of the agenda. Hearing no objection, the Consent Agenda was approved.

SPECIAL COMMUNICATION

4. **Budget Outlook.** President Bria introduced Budget and Policy Manager Dennis Yaccarino to present the outlook for the 2022 budget. The City is preparing for a substantial budget crisis in 2023 due to increased pension payments. In 2021 the City will receive additional federal funds as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic which may help offset the deficit. MPL will be asked to submit a cost to continue budget for 2022 and no changes to hours or services are expected. Library Director Joan Johnson noted MPL priorities are maintaining hours and locations, continuing

infrastructure and capital projects, offering programming focused on literacy and youth-serving programs, digital inclusion, and the action plan for racial equity and inclusion. MPL is also researching options for expanded broadband access through the American Rescue Plan Act. Additional information about this initiative will be presented at the April 14, 2021 MPL Board Innovation and Strategy meeting; all Trustees are welcome to attend. Informational item.

BOARD EDUCATION

5. **UWM-MPL Fines Research Presentation.** Director Johnson introduced Dr. Joyce Latham, former professor in the UW-Milwaukee School of Information Science. In 2018, MPL began considering ways to address potential barriers to patron use of library resources, including blocked cards due to overdue fines and fees. In 2019, Dr. Latham partnered with MPL to hold focus groups with library patrons with blocked cards to gain a better understanding of the reasons materials are not returned. Dr. Latham presented an overview of the premise, data collection methods, analysis, and final report of her fines study research project. The study has been shared with colleagues at several library conferences and will soon be published in the journal *Library Trends*. Dr. Latham also shared patron feedback collected at the focus groups and commended MPL for working directly with patrons to examine this issue. Director Johnson noted part of MPL's response to the findings was to reduce the overdue fine on DVDs from \$1.00 per day to \$0.15 per day. President Bria thanked Dr. Latham for sharing this research with the Board. Informational item.

NEW BUSINESS

6. **Proposal for Adjustments to Unique Management Service Collection Policy.** Director Johnson presented a proposal to change the parameters for referring patron accounts to the Unique Management Services (UMS) collection process; the proposal is outlined in a memo to the Board listed as Attachment C of the agenda. Trustee Kovac moved to raise the fines threshold from \$25.00 to \$99.99, lowering the referral fee from \$15.00 to \$10.00, and extending the length of time before referral from 60 days to 90 days. Trustee Mercado seconded. Motion passed.

REPORTS

7. **Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) Board Meeting.** New Trustee Corey Clark was introduced. Director Johnson reviewed the 2020 Resource Library Report which is attached at the end of these minutes. The marketing plan was reviewed and will focus on the priority audiences of job seekers, students and parents, and lifelong learners. The Board reviewed and discussed the Wisconsin Policy Forum report *Balancing the Books*. MCFLS is in the process of hiring a new Network Administrator. Informational item.
8. **Building & Development Committee Meeting.** Committee Vice-Chair Nik Kovac reported on the March 4, 2021 meeting. The Committee heard proposals from the architectural firms of HGA, Moody Nolan, and TKWA. The Mitchell Street Library co-developer, Gorman & Company, placed a request with the City Assessor's office to make the library space tax-exempt. Due to the historic nature of the property, to qualify for a tax exemption the lease must be with a charitable organization that is tax-exempt under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) code. MPL does not qualify for the Section 501 exemption but the Milwaukee Public Library Foundation (MPLF) does. The developer has proposed transferring the lease to MPLF with a sub-lease to MPL. If approved, this new lease agreement would be in effect for approximately 3 years, and no material changes to the terms of the original lease. Director Johnson has discussed the request with MPLF Executive Director Ryan Daniels and the request will be presented to the MPLF Board for consideration. The Committee moves to approve the lease transfer. Trustee Kowalski seconded. Motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

9. **COVID-19 Response and Recovery.** Director Johnson provided an update on the library's ongoing response to the pandemic and shared she has received the first of two vaccination shots. Library Administration has worked hard to get Library staff vaccinated as soon as possible and many staff have already received both shots. In the first week of March, Villard Square and Mitchell Street Library served as vaccination sites for educators. The second 'pop-up' clinic will be held in early April. MPL remains committed to assisting Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) as needed. MPL is working with Department of Employee Relations (DER) to fill vacancies and move toward reinstating more hours and services via a phased approach. Director Johnson requested approval to change the materials quarantine from 72 hours to 24 hours and to eliminate the quarantine when appropriate. Trustee Zamarripa moved to approve; Trustee Kowalski seconded. Motion passed.
10. **State Annual Report – Review Data and Ratify President's Approval.** MPL prepared and submitted the annual report to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), listed as Attachment G of the agenda. President Bria reviewed and approved the report and entertained a motion for the Board to ratify her approval. Trustee Coggs moved to ratify; Trustee Kowalski seconded. Motion passed.
11. **2020 Census Follow-up.** Director Johnson noted MPL supported the U.S. Census Department by providing training space for census takers and applied for mini-grants to help promote taking the census. MPL hired four local mural artists to design and paint murals promoting the opportunity to be counted in the census. A series of videos were also created and distributed to various community organizations and featured local community leaders encouraging census participation. MPL had a short window to implement these programs and Director Johnson offered special thanks to Adult Programming Librarian Kristina Gomez, who became the project leader on this initiative. A letter of thanks from the Census Bureau was listed as Attachment H of the agenda. Informational item.

With no further business, the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees meeting of March 23, 2021 was adjourned at 5:21 p.m.
