

Minutes

of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the
Bridgeport Public Library held on Wednesday May18, 2016
at 7 p.m.in the boardroom of the Burroughs-Saden Library

Present: All Directors and City Librarian

Absent: None

Call to Order and the Adoption of the Agenda:

President O'Donnell called the meeting to order at 7:09 PM. Director Baraka questioned whether the Board of Directors intended to accept public comment since it was not on the agenda. Director Osborne-Gant made a **MOTION** to accept public comment. The Motion was unanimously approved.

Public Comment:

George Mintz, President of the Bridgeport NAACP, told the Board of Directors that he was here to testify "on behalf of Scott's character". He said that the library was friendlier over the last five years. He expressed concern about a pattern of fighting and racial division happening in Bridgeport in the police, fire and school department. "It looks like we are going backward." "As employers you have a decision to make, whatever your decision it should be the result of a thorough investigation and achieved fairly and equitably".

Approval of the Minutes

Director Errichetti made a Motion to approve the minutes of the April Meeting pending typographical corrections. His motion was seconded by Director Baraka and unanimously approved.

Approval of Financial Reports/ Payment of Invoices

City Librarian Hughes presented monthly vouchers in the amount of \$35,103.05 for approval. \$7,699.89 of that amount was for program presenters for May and June and had not been entered yet into MUNIS. Director Baraka made a **MOTION** to approve payment of the vouchers. It was seconded by Director Errichetti and unanimously approved.

Director Errichetti expressed serious concern over the alarming increase in labor costs presented in the monthly financial report. He asked City Librarian Hughes "how we can go from a projected surplus for the year in the Payroll Account to a -\$147,644.91 deficit in one month when there have been no personnel changes? City Librarian Hughes explained that a spike in vacation pay produced the shortfall. He explained that there was a sharp increase in payouts due to retirements. There were four, possibly eight, retirements totally \$340,000. Director Errichetti reminded the City Librarian that the Board of Directors did not authorize payment of the \$15,000 per employee retirement incentive offered by the City. Director O'Donnell stated that it was "our obligation to challenge it". Director Errichetti questioned: "Who is spending our money without any authority? Some things

need to be fought for?" He asked City Librarian Hughes " have you told them it was O.K.?" City Librarian Hughes said that he would be happy to arrange a meeting with OPM and invite you to attend." Director Baraka expressed concern about the deficit in the salary line and inquired. "Do we need to move money?" Treasurer Errichetti said not until next year. He stated that his primary concern was how the deficit occurred and that the swing in the salary account was shocking with only \$20,000 in vacation payout accounted for."

Because of the importance of this issue, Director Errichetti made a **MOTION** Mr. Flatto and Mr. Nkwo be informed by the City Librarian of Library Board's position and the fact that it did not authorize the payment of retirement incentive funds. . The motion was seconded by Director Holden and passed by confirmed and approved Board Members.

Director O'Donnell requested that the record show that neither Director Greenberg nor Director Christy had cast any votes nor participated in the any official board action since their positions had been called into question.

Unfinished Business:

City Librarian Hughes informed the Board of Directors that there still were no hard numbers regarding the 2016-17 Library budget. "Presently, we don't know the impact of any state funding. The Board's counter request of 6.6 million dollars was not approved. " City Librarian Hughes again offered to set up a meeting with OPM. Director Errichetti inquired why the surplus could not be spent and if the new administration had been given the factual information of the referendum.

City Librarian Hughes informed the Board of Directors that a Community meeting had been held at Burroughs-Saden to gain input for the new Strategic Plan and that another would be held at the CT innovation Center on Connecticut Ave. at 6:30 pm. He reported that the East Side NRZ did not have a roster and that he was still pulling together a meeting to inform the community about the plans and timeline for the library renovations.

He distributed a handout regarding the proposed Innovation Lab. He said he had a walk through of the Burrough-Saden community room with the Fairfield County Foundation representative. He informed the Board of Directors that he had applied for a grant. Directors expressed concern regarding the loss of community space. City Librarian Hughes stated that he did not need Board approval to apply for a grant and that the facility would not be losing community space. Director Errichetti emphasized the fact that the "Friends" group had not even been informed of a grant application that was made on their behalf and that they were a separate legal entity. City Librarian Hughes reiterated that everything was preliminary and that the Building Committee would have to approve of any plans.

City Librarian Hughes had no update on the appointments of the new directors. He had not spoken to Mr. DePara.

Correspondence and Communications

President O'Donnell informed the board of several letters written in support of BPL yoga and cooking classes, correspondence from Attorney Thomas Ganim regarding the bequest of materials and an opportunity to host the American Museum of Tort Law at the Library.

City Librarian Report

City Librarian Hughes distributed his monthly report, which gave a monthly update of the activities and facilities conditions of the Main and Branch Library. It summarized his monthly schedule, which noted attendance at library events, the mayor's cabinet meeting and financial meetings with OPM. He stated that he had submitted a letter of intent for the state library construction grants and had applied for an FCC grant for the innovation center. He advised the Board of Directors of the early retirement incentive offered by the City of Bridgeport and its projected impact of the Library

Report of Facilities/Building Committee

Director Holden summarized status of major building concerns. He indicated that no one could be found to remove the "Blue Glue" on the first floor hallway and that the maintenance supervisor had been unable to contact the vendor who was to provide a quote. He informed the Board of Directors that the first-floor restroom renovation was due to be completed in two weeks. He summarized details of committee discussion on two the three new library facilities. He indicated that discussions included the locations of the children's/teen sections, parent/family bathrooms and the feasibility of constructing rather than renovating facilities. Director Osborne-Gant suggested that we consider how unisex bathrooms (recently mandated by executive order) will be addressed by both existing and new facilities. Director Holden emphasized the need for input from branch managers in planning building modifications. Director O'Donnell also stressed the need to keep the community informed of progress.

Director Errichetti informed the Board of Directors of the need for more parking spaces at the North End Branch during the spring and summer sports season. He said that during games and all day Saturday that there is no place for patrons and staff to park. Director Errichetti volunteered to email Mr. Ricci or Mr. Carroll to set up a meeting to discuss the matter.

Report of Finance Committee

Director Errichetti had no new information on the assessment of current insurance coverage.

Report of Governance (Nominations)

City Librarian Hughes had no update on the status of the four appointments of current directors. He stated that he had not been in contact with Mr. DePara. At Director Greenberg's request, Director Errichetti offered a **MOTION** directing City Librarian Hughes to specifically contact Mr. De Para regarding the paperwork and status of Director Greenberg who has received no information regarding his appointment.

Report of Personnel Committee

Director Greenberg reported that there was no quorum; hence, no action to report

Report of the Friends of the Library no report

New Business

President O'Donnell requested a motion to go into Executive Session (CGS S1-200 (6)(a) to discuss the performance, evaluation or dismissal of the City Librarian. At that moment, City Librarian Hughes told President O'Donnell and the Library Board of Directors that he wanted to have the discussion of his performance held in open public session. Director Errichetti so moved and Director Holden seconded the **MOTION**. Discussion was limited to the five fully qualified members of the Board of Directors.

President O'Donnell offered a brief review of the discussion of the May 4th Special Meeting reminding that a motion to maintain Mr. Hughes as Library Director received no second as did a motion for his dismissal. The period of his initial 60-day probation having lapsed, President O'Donnell asked the Board of Directors how they wished to proceed.

Director Holden expressed a desire to resolve this issue. He described the situation as detrimental to the well being of the library, the staff and the City Librarian himself. "It does no good for everyone to be walking on eggshells." He said, "I want to make it perfectly clear. This is not about color; it is solely about competence. It is about lack of trust. The information you have brought to the table has not been reliable. The Board needs to be able to trust the information you give them. We don't dismiss the outreach to the community that you have done, but we have a fiduciary responsibility to insure that taxpayer funds are used efficiently, effectively and wisely.

Director Holden then suggested that the City Librarian's probation be continued with specific measurable goals. He commented, "We will be better to him than he has been to us." He enumerated the goals as follows: 1) attend all subcommittee meetings and be prepared with accurate facts and information. The discussion focused on the current budget crisis and the variance in the numbers presented by the City Librarian. Several directors questioned whether the City Librarian "could be trusted to do our bidding with the city."

The second goal was "that we need to know where he was at all times." Director Baraka commented that this was nit-picking and that previous directors had not been required to

do that. Director Holden responded, "We were not here to make comparisons. It is not micro-management. It is management. The day-to-day management of the library is not being done. All we want him to do is to do his job. Specifically, present a budget based on \$6 million that takes into account retirements and accounts for the reallocation and/or replacement of personnel.

Director Holden emphasized that staff morale is at an all time low. While he acknowledged that City Librarian Hughes had employed "an open-door policy" during his tenure as City Librarian "clearly it was not working" and suggested that he institute a policy of regularly scheduled meetings with department heads.

Director Errichetti suggested that City Librarian Hughes document meetings: who he spoke to, what was discussed, what was resolved and what remains an issue.

Director Holden offered a **MOTION** to extend City Librarian Hughes probation for another sixty days. Director Errichetti seconded the motion that was passed by a vote of the authorized directors.

The Board of Directors voted to go into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation at 9:05 p.m. The five authorized directors left the Board Room for 20 minutes and returned with no action being taken

Adjournment

Director Errichetti suggested that the last item on the agenda (proposal for staff deployment and operations be referred to the finance and personnel committee meetings at 5:30pm Tuesday June 4th and that an additional committee meeting be held on Tuesday June 14th at 5:30 pm so that the Board of Directors will be fully informed to adopt a budget for the 2016-17 fiscal year at the regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday June 15, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. Director Errichetti made a **MOTION** for adjournment at 9:25 pm the motion was seconded and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by

Anne Cunningham