

## Minutes

of Special Meeting of the Board as a Committee of the Whole  
held Wednesday, July 27, 2016 at 5:30 p.m.  
at the Burroughs-Saden Library  
925 Broad Street, Bridgeport, CT

President O'Donnell called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m. All directors were present as was City Librarian Hughes.

There was a dual purpose to the meeting 1) to listen to a presentation by Library Development Solutions on the preliminary data and development of an updated Strategic Plan and 2) a Combined Special Personnel Committee Meeting to address staff concerns vis a vis the assumption and execution of duties previously performed by recently retired staff.

1. President O'Donnell introduced Alan and Leslie Berger of Library Development Solutions and asked them to reconstruct a timeline for their involvement in the development of an updated strategic plan. Mr. Berger explained that they signed a contract almost a year ago. In order to gather input from the community, a survey was posted around the first of the year and a Spanish version was posted several months later. In May they held a forum with 26 Bpt. Residents/staff and in early June they conducted a forum for 12 BPT residents at the Bridgeport Innovation Center. In June and July they met with 5 staff members (JR Librarians) and had 19 staff responses to a written survey. Now meeting with Board of Directors. Director Holden expressed concern, " that the Board was only now being brought into the process." via phone call last Friday.

Mr. Berger explained that they were going to "tune up" or start a revision of the existing plan.

He summarized the three major priorities of Library Board Directors in response to the question "What three goals do you have for the library by 2020?"

- Have the three new branches open and operating- as well as whatever improvements need to happen downtown.
- Resolution to organizational issues of staffing, leadership and governance- realignment and stabilizing of current resources to benefit residents who are using the library.
- Marketing and outreach- up date resources and friends- refresh email and advocacy pieces and continue engagement

Mr. Berger said that feed back from public was "not deep but wide" There were 1400 responses to the online questionnaire it was better than last time, but there may be a need to refresh databases. The survey was posted on the Library Facebook

site. There were few responses to the Spanish version, but that was posted later. 50 hard copies of the survey were just turned in from North End Branch.

Mr. and Mrs. Berger reviewed a summary of the data obtained from the online survey. They highlighted the fact that 97% of the responses indicated a belief that the Library was an important part of Bridgeport's future and 89% said it was an important part of their families/ neighborhoods future.

President O'Donnell questioned whether 1400 responses from a population of approximately 144,000 (1% response )was sufficient data to draw valid conclusions. Mr. Berger explained that this was a self-selected not a random sample and that "people who are closest to us tell us what we are doing good". He and his wife felt confident that the sample was large enough to filter out trends. Asked if there was something we could have done differently to get more responses, the group suggested, "We could have gone to community groups, but probably would not have learned anything different." "We could have got the staff excited" "engaged people in the library. We did not do enough hard copies."

Director Baraka said that she thought that the 1400 responses were better than last time and the result of the referendum. She said there were more people in the library and was impressed that the largest number of responses came from the 30 to 54 age group. They (this group) would talk to others.

Director O'Donnell inquired why the staff focus groups were only comprised of five staff members and "what was the selection process through which they were chosen?" A staff member in attendance said, "Many of us didn't even know that there was a meeting." Mr. Berger indicated that they talked to staff that "showed up", but that they can still get staff input.

Directors Holden and O'Donnell asked City Librarian Hughes if a completed strategic plan was needed for the submission of the CT Library Construction Grant. City Librarian Hughes responded it (the application) "asks if you have a plan, but you don't have to send it." Mr. Berger said, "You tell us what you need and we will make sure that you have it." Director Baraka confirmed Mr. Hughes position by accessing and reading from the State Library Construction Grant site.

Ms. Berger indicated that the library faces more basic challenges and needs that place us at risk (i.e. infrastructure, collection)

Director Errichetti said," Scott, has laid out a plan to get us funding. Can you outline for us three to five core deliverables that we should focus on in our efforts to modernize the library? We have an open floor plan in the designs for the new branches, but what collaborations should we seek out?

Ms. Berger briefly outlined some key considerations for future library growth.

- Safe facilities
- Centers of technology-no drop zones- great technology
- Quiet spaces for business- scanners-copiers.
- Places of opportunity- meeting rooms-community

The consultants “collections are smaller. Non-fiction collections are out of date the minute they are printed. The city investing in the library is investing in the future. They are places for people where knowledge and community converge. Knowledge is shared with less need for individual books.

Regarding the filling of staff positions, she stated that staffing duties in libraries must change. Customer interactions are no longer transactional, but collaborative. Librarians have changed from experts into facilitators and problem-solvers. Staffing and services are open. Everything is on wheels. Technological literacy and financial literacy are paramount. She described the Topeka Library where every staff member has community as part of their title.

She mentioned that, although the recent vacancies are seen as a shortage “absences can be used as opportunities to learn and improve staff capabilities. Such change can be accomplished through a partnership between the board, staff and city librarian. Every employee of the Library must be able to demonstrate at least minimal competency in technology. One of the needs of the library is an IT genius—a person who can not only supervise the day-to- day technology, but also project and evaluate future technology needs. WIFI is central. It was mentioned that Burroughs-Saden WIFI is turned off at night and there was a brief discussion of whether that policy is needed and should be continued.

She spoke of the need for “Branding” and “getting the word out about how indispensable the library is in people’s lives. People must have access to popular materials in their spoken language. The Hartford Library has cultivated young people to hire in different groups She suggested that the library hire an HR professional to manage staffing and benefits. CEO/CFO (?)

President O’Donnell summarized the questions that still needed to be answered: “What is the purpose of the branches? What are the skills needed to deliver those services? (work from clean sheet) What does the system need? How do we deliver library services from the mother ship for the next three to the years? He suggested literacy and early learning advocacy be major goals for the library with ancillary services for adults.

Director Holden inquired how the consultants became aware of the recent retirements and library grievances. Mr. Berger explained that they receive Google alerts every time their clients appear in the press so they can keep abreast of current developments in the library.

He again expressed concern that the Board of Directors was being contacted so late in the process. He asked if the surveys were still active and was told they had been taken down. He urged another push on the staff survey by scheduling another meeting with the staff and, perhaps, including staff inclusion during the meeting to discuss the final document.

Mr. Berger agreed to provide an updated/refreshed copy of the Strategic Plan for reference in the State of Connecticut Library Construction Grant at the August 17 meeting during which the completed grant will be reviewed.

The Board scheduled a Strategic Planning retreat with the consultants and staff for Wednesday, September 21<sup>st</sup> at 5 p.m. in lieu of the regularly scheduled monthly meeting.

Director Baraka offered a **MOTION** for adjournment of the first portion of the meeting, which was seconded by Director Errichetti and the Meeting for the purpose of reporting on the Strategic Plan was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

**2) President O'Donnell convened the meeting of the Personnel Committee Acting as a Committee of the Whole at 7:10 p.m. All directors were present, as was the City Librarian and several staff members.**

All Directors were present when the meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm. Director O'Donnell explained that this meeting was called as a result of staff emails that expressed confusion regarding the reassignment of library functions and the supervisory chain of reporting for duties previously performed by recently retired staff.

President O'Donnell asked City Librarian Hughes if he had completed the written plan for the assumption of duties as requested by the Board of Directors **on June 28<sup>th</sup>** and what has transpired to address it.

City Librarian Hughes responded that he had submitted the plan in a flow chart given to the Board of Directors on **July 6<sup>th</sup>**. He stated that "the issues were being addressed; that requests for staffing had been given to labor relations and that the concerns are that of one person and that he should have spoken to me in person."

President O'Donnell stated that the procedure for the resolution staff concerns was one that was put in place in 2007. Rather than approaching individual board members, it was determined that staff should inform the City Librarian first and in the event their concerns were not resolved, only then should they inform the Personnel Committee of the Library Board. City Librarian Hughes said, "It is your (the Library Board) duty to listen and be informed. President O'Donnell indicated that there was staff concerns expressed in emails sent to you and copied to the Board of Directors dating back to June 16. The plan you presented did not address the concerns of classification and nobody seems to understand

who is in charge of specific items like renewal of online subscriptions and responsibility for Bibliomation etc.

City Librarian Hughes said, "We have been working through these issues. Our priority has been sustaining 6 hours of service. We just found out in June who will retire. The plan was presented to the Supervisors in June. My priority has been keeping the doors open."

Director Errichetti said that he felt it was unrealistic to believe that all details would be resolved in one plan when so many people were lost."

City Librarian Hughes informed the Board that renewals of "Boopsie and Collection HP were being addressed out of my office. We are doing the scheduling out of my office." Director Holden responded, "Who is doing the staffing? Is "We" you or your staff. He doesn't know who is in charge. On staffing, on scheduling, on prioritizing, on programming, you are. You avoid issues by saying "we""

City Librarian Hughes said that Director Holden "was being disrespectful" in the way he was being spoken to. Director Holden said "Insubordinate" was the word that came to mind regarding Mr. Hughes demeanor.

Director O'Donnell said, "The staff needs to know what and who was assigned?"

Mr. Hughes responded, "City issues, subscriptions, grants, licenses and budget are coming out of my office. For example, we renewed the museum passes. I am done talking. We are addressing issues and will continue to work it through. I have no more comment.

Director Baraka commented the City Librarian and senior staff are working on all issues. It is an arduous task. We should not address this in public we are addressing personnel issues.

Director O'Donnell commented, "We were not discussing his (the sender of the email) personnel issues. We are carrying out the process that was put in place in 2007 to resolve an issue raised about things not being done."

Director Errichetti expressed the belief that the email was "out of line"

Director Cunningham asked City Librarian Hughes if he "specifically responded to the staff member who had sent the emails." He said. "No, at the meeting. I explained the policy to the whole staff. He had at least two meetings face to face where he could have asked me."

He continued, "Jim, you do not operate library staff. They are City employees."

Director O'Donnell responded, "Does the Board of Directors have authority over the City Librarian? We are observing the process set up when you arrived. I object to the City Librarian's demeanor toward this board. It is insubordinate. You are in our employment. We are exercising our fiduciary duty to safeguard the well being of the Library to make sure that things are being done to keep things going. We are in a situation to work collaboratively to keep the Library open and services deliverable.

Director Baraka said, "This discussion is out of order. It deals with personnel issues."

Director Errichetti said "We have a special personnel meeting in two weeks where we can discuss the response to this staff members concerns."

Director Holden remarked, "We do not have a current, functioning table of organization.

City Librarian Hughes said he had submitted one and distributed it to the Board. Director Cunningham said it was the flow chart.

Director O'Donnell commented, "Perhaps this was not communicated to the individual. Maybe he was not present. Maybe he didn't understand.

City Librarian Hughes responded, "I don't report to him. I provided support"

Director Baraka again expressed concern that this was not an appropriate forum. It should be executive session.

City Librarian Hughes was directed to provide answers to the issues raised in the emails and a table of organization for the regularly scheduled Personnel meeting in August.

Director Baraka made a **MOTION** to adjourn that was seconded by Director Errichetti and unanimously passed.

Respectfully submitted by,

Anne Cunningham, Ass't Secretary

