

## Minutes of Special Meeting July 6, 2016

Attendees: President O'Donnell, Vice-President Baraka, Secretary/Treasurer Errichetti, **Assistant Secretary Cunningham** and Director Holden ~~Cunningham~~  
Directors (Pending Common Council Confirmation) Brown, Christy, Greenberg, Osborne-Gant (participated in discussion but did not offer motions or vote)  
City Librarian: Hughes

Call to Order: 5:40 P.M. Adjourned at 7:05 P.M.

### Investigation and Review of proposed Layoffs of library staff

President O'Donnell asked City Librarian Hughes to relate the sequence of events that led to the creation and delivery of layoff notices to the ~~79% of the professional staff of the Bridgeport Public Library,~~ **that with recent retirements results in a 79% reduction in professional staff.**

City Librarian Hughes informed the Board of Directors on Friday at 1:30 via email that he had been called to a meeting on Thursday afternoon at **City Hall** with Mr. Nkwo, Mr. Gomes and Ms. Hawkins informing him that layoffs were a possibility **and "would continue to keep the board abreast of any news" he received.** President O'Donnell responded to Mr. Hughes via email and asked him to **"please keep the Board informed immediately as events occur."** **Although no further email or other communication was received from the City Librarian,** Mr. Hughes **now** explained that he was called to Labor Relations at 3:45 pm. the following day and given nine envelopes containing layoff notices. (7 professional librarians, the BPL maintenance supervisor and a custodian 4) He delivered five and returned to Labor Relations.

Since all of the layoffs involved ~~BCAS~~ **BCSA** supervisors, President O'Donnell asked if any NAGE members at the Library had been given layoff notices. City Librarian Hughes said that he was not sure, but that he spoke to **NAGE President** Dwayne Harrison and that they planned to meet on Thursday. He also indicated that he spoke to the ~~BCAS~~ **BCSA** President on Friday. **When asked what he had done to plan for continued operation of the libraries, Mr. Hughes** ~~He~~ said he "had not taken any steps. The main thing is in the hands of the Unions. I am hopeful that the layoffs will be called off."

President O'Donnell asked City Librarian Hughes if he had given Labor Relations a copy of **Connecticut General** Statute 11-33 as had been ~~requested~~ **directed** by the Library Board several months ago. Mr. Hughes replied that he "gave them a copy yesterday"

President O'Donnell asked how the positions for layoffs had been selected.

City Librarian Hughes responded, "The mayor had a list" He said he didn't have a chance to see the list on Friday. (Didn't know percentage of library employees out of total layoffs)

President O'Donnell asked City Librarian Hughes, "Despite the ~~request~~ specific direction of the Library Board of Directors that you "educate" the new administration on the provisions of CT ~~statutes~~ ~~statute~~ regarding libraries particularly Section 11-33, that you only gave them a copy yesterday?" City Librarian Hughes responded, "Yes". President O'Donnell continued, "Do you know how the Mayor made his selection?" "No", City Librarian Hughes responded, "He is coming up with his own list." President O'Donnell inquired, "Did you indicate to the Mayor that it was not his prerogative to determine library staffing? It was an intrusion into the powers of the library guaranteed by State statute to hire and allocate library staff as long as there are available funds, **as previously directed by the Board**" Mr. Hughes said, "No".

Director Baraka asked, "Wasn't there contract language for seniority?" Mr. Hughes said he didn't think layoffs "were based on seniority. It was the **Mayor's** ~~his~~ list. I don't have the answers. I don't know **if** it was a breakdown in union negotiating,"

There was some confusion on when or whether the unions involved were going to meet to discuss layoffs or re-vote on concessions

President O'Donnell indicated that he had been in contact with the City Attorney to advise him of the legal authority over the library staff **and the lack of financial benefit to the City general fund because any unspent salary remains in the restricted library fund.**

Director Errichetti offered a **MOTION** ~~authorizing~~ **directing** Library Board President O'Donnell to write a letter to Mayor Ganim informing him of the CT statutes that empower the administration and governance of the library (CT-11-33) and to advise him that the Library Board will not honor the layoffs proposed for Library staff. The letter should ~~be~~ request a written response to all Library Board members and the City Librarian. The Motion was seconded by Director Baraka and unanimously passed by Directors Errichetti, Baraka, Holden, Cunningham and O'Donnell.

### **Impact on service from recent retirements and proposed layoff.**

- Director Holden wondered "How are we expected to run five libraries with four remaining professional librarians?" The Board was never notified of the intent to layoff librarians. He was reminded that the first budget submission submitted by City Librarian Hughes to OPM zeroed out all librarian salaries. President O'Donnell

stated that this was the reason that the final budget explicitly dedicated \$3.1 million for a full salary budget line **to ensure funds to restore the retired professional staff and retain** all current employees. "We have the money" there is no reason to lay them off".

An inquiry ~~is~~ **was** made about whether the American Library Association had a recommendation for minimum professional staffing

- Much of the discussion was devoted to **how the Library could continue** ~~continuing~~ ~~library~~ operations despite reduced staffing. **When asked about what steps he had taken upon learning of the proposed layoffs**, City Librarian Hughes indicated that he did not have a staffing or operational plan which accounts for staff shortage

### • **Consideration of necessary actions to be taken due to lack of adequate library staff.**

- Director Errichetti indicated that he did not feel comfortable opening buildings that were not adequately staff. Presents safety concerns especially without a facilities supervisor.
- There was also concern that union/layoff issues may not be resolved in enough time to notify staff of duties etc. –if issues resolved (layoffs revoked) **to** open Monday.
- Director Errichetti made a **MOTION** that **ALL** Bridgeport Public Library facilities will be closed on Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup>. The motion was seconded by Director Holden and ~~affirmed~~ **unanimously adopted** by all approved Directors. Director Errichetti suggested signs **and other public notification** indicating closure due to layoffs by Mayor.
- Contingency plans were discussed if labor issues were not resolved in time to open facilities on Monday. There was initial support to open Burroughs to public and have all staff report and/or to have staff work in buildings closed to public. In the absence of a staffing plan there was a great deal of discussion of how best to maximize public access with 79% reduction in professional staff. **Director Baraka expressed concern about staff being in buildings that were closed.**
- **A MOTION** was made by Director Errichetti, seconded by Director Baraka to **re-open Burroughs Saden on Monday July 11<sup>th</sup> and close all other library facilities. A discussion ensued regarding the lack of planning by the City Librarian to permit efficient or adequate operation. In a roll call vote requested by Director Baraka the Directors cast the Following votes: Director Baraka Yes; Director Holden: No; Director Errichetti, Yes Director Cunningham, No Director O'Donnell No (the motion failed 3 to 2).**
- **A MOTION** was made by Director Holden and seconded by Director Cunningham to close all library facilities and to open them only after action by the Board of Directors at a **SPECIAL BOARD MEETING OF THE WHOLE** to be held Tuesday July 12<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm. at a place to be determined. In a roll call vote requested by Director Baraka the Directors cast the Following votes: Director Baraka No; Director Holden:

Yes; Director Errichetti, No Director Cunningham, Yes Director O'Donnell Yes (3 to 2 motion passed.)

- City Librarian Hughes was directed to prepare and present at that meeting a plan for staffing, hours and locations to maximize public access to libraries as a result of retirements and layoffs.
- City Librarian Hughes said he had not yet confirmed the meeting with the East End NRZ for the 12<sup>th</sup>. Director Holden said that he would to contact the chairman and inform the board of the location.

### **Consideration of alternative actions to ensure continued operations of Bridgeport libraries**

- A **MOTION** was made by Director Holden to retain the services of the firm of Berdon, Young and Margolis to provide counsel to the Library Board to ensure continued operation of Bridgeport Libraries under the powers conferred by Connecticut General Statutes **and to be prepared to file an injunction to prevent implementation of the proposed layoffs on Friday July 8<sup>th</sup>**. The Motion was seconded by Director Errichetti and approved **unanimously** by all approved directors.
- Directors discussed how to best inform the Citizens of Bridgeport of the closings in the most timely and effective manner. Director Osborne-Gant offered to help prepare a press release. Director Baraka objected due to Director Osborne-Gant's **questioned** status. A **MOTION** was made to direct Librarian Soltis using ~~whatever~~ sources available to prepare a notice to be posted on the Library website **and to disseminate the notice** informing the public of the closings. Directors Cunningham, Holden, Errichetti and O'Donnell **voted to approve** Director Baraka **voted** against ~~approved~~ the Motion was adopted 4-1.