

Minutes
of the April 27, 2016 Meeting
of the Board of Directors of the Bridgeport Public Library
held at 7 p.m. in the boardroom of the Burroughs-Saden Library

Present: Directors O'Donnell, Baraka, Errichetti, Holden, Osborne-Gant, Christy, Brown, Cunningham, City Librarian Hughes

Absent: Director Greenberg.

Call to Order/ Adoption of Agenda:

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm. A **Motion** was made by Director Errichetti and seconded by Director Osborne-Gant to adopt agenda. Director Baraka questioned the three-minute limit on public speaking. President O'Donnell explained it was adopted by resolution and is in previous minutes. The agenda was unanimously adopted.

Public Comment:

Director Baraka offered a **MOTION** to extend the public comment beyond the 30-minute limit in order to hear from all speakers. Director Cunningham seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.

- Several BPL Librarians expressed shock and concern about the elimination of librarian positions in the budget documents released by the City of Bridgeport. They expressed grievous concern about library operations. One called for the removal of the City Librarian,
- Several members of the public addressed the positive impact of library programs, especially the yoga classes, youth poetry programs, and children's programs in general. The instructor for the yoga program expressed her dismay regarding the termination of the classes effective the following day. She told the Board of Directors that she felt it was disrespectful. City Librarian Hughes told her they would meet the following day to see what could be worked out.
- Several community members lauded the City Librarian's work and cautioned the Board of Directors about community and political repercussions in the event of his dismissal.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the March meeting were unanimously approved pending corrections of names of Directors in attendance. The **MOTION** was made by Director Baraka and seconded by Director Cunningham

Approval of the Treasurer's Report / Payment of Invoices.

City Librarian Hughes presented the financial report in a new format. President O'Donnell reiterated his request to have monthly accounting of salary accounts in order to monitor and reduce expenses. City Librarian Hughes presented vouchers for payment in the amount of \$57,625.06. Director Baraka made a **MOTION** for their approval, which was seconded by Director Errichetti and unanimously approved. City Librarian Hughes also requested line item transfers of \$1,000 from Bookbinding to Uniform and \$10,000 from gas to electricity accounts. He also requested approval for transfer of \$14,850 from Publications to Subscriptions. The transfers were unanimously approved.

President O'Donnell reiterated his request to provide an excel file of all salary accounts to show monthly and year-to-date expenditures.

Unfinished Business

City Librarian Hughes requested Director Errichetti to explain the budget figures. He explained to the Board and the audience that the City's Grand list for 2016-17 suffered a billion dollar loss due to the revaluation. This resulted in a million dollar decrease in the 1 mill appropriation set aside for the library reducing the budget for the next fiscal year to \$6.045 million dollars. Furthermore, the tentative budget appropriation reduced library funds by another \$238,000 for revenue lost due to the State ceiling of 32 mills on automobile taxes. President O'Donnell again emphasized that the Library Board was not consulted and did not put together or approve the budget figures presented in the Mayor's proposal, which OPM Director Nestor Nkwo indicated had been submitted to the Administration by City Librarian Hughes. President O'Donnell stated that when it was apparent that there would be a decrease in the City Grand List, the Library Board had directed City Librarian Hughes to provide a financial projection to address the anticipated decrease.

Director Errichetti made a **MOTION** to go back to OPM with a recommendation of a \$6.6 million dollar budget request for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The Motion was seconded by Director Baraka and unanimously passed. Director O'Donnell requested City Librarian Hughes to have the budget request posted on the BPL website along with a narrative of his construction explaining the need for BPL requests. He also asked the City Librarian Hughes to explain "Where did the idea of cutting the professional staff come from? How was it allocated? What was the process? There seems to be a disconnect. If the City is seeking early retirements then those positions will need to be replaced. Did you educate the

personnel at OPM about the control of library funds? Do they understand the process?" City Librarian Hughes responded that he "thought so" and that the cuts were the result of back and forth conversations.

Director Holden asked where "the programming cuts came from without any discussion with or approval or notification of the Board of Directors?" City Librarian Hughes said: "I will take the blame for that."

Director Holden recommended that the programming calendar be maintained through the end of the fiscal year, as long as current funding is available. Director Errichetti suggested the programs be reviewed by City Librarian Hughes. Director Baraka expressed concerns about this approach. Director Osborne-Gant suggested that City Librarian Hughes assess the efficacy of Library programs using a metric that he develops. Librarian Bina Williams volunteered to share materials she already possessed. Director Errichetti offered a **MOTION** to maintain current programming pending the development of an evaluative metric by City Librarian Hughes. The Motion was seconded by Director Baraka and passed unanimously.

City Librarian Hughes informed the Board of Directors that they had received an electronic invitation for the Intranet website that would serve as a portal for better communication between the library administration and the Board of Directors. He requested that the Executive committee of the Board of Directors meet with him to write the agenda. President O'Donnell stated that the Board never had an Executive Committee and indicated that the formation of such a board would have to go through the policy committee and a resolution approved. He found such a committee unnecessary on such a small board which meets regularly as a Board through its Committees. Director Errichetti indicated that he would need more than one-day notice to make such a meeting and asked how long he should expect to wait for a response to an email. City Librarian Hughes responded that twenty-four hours was reasonable time.

City Librarian Hughes informed the Board of Directors that a meeting had been scheduled for Thursday May 12 at Burroughs-Saden at 6:30 p.m. to gather community feedback for the BPL long-range strategic plan. He encouraged members of the audience to attend.

City Librarian Hughes reported that Mr. de Para said that the appointments of the two new Directors were still in Internal Affairs.

Correspondence:

Director Baraka made a **MOTION refer** an email correspondence from Mr. Flatto regarding financial matters to the Building and Finance Committee. The motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

President O'Donnell inquired about an email he received from a member of the administration of the University of Bridgeport regarding a last minute invitation to address the current meeting and the lack of clear communication between the parties involved in the Innovation Lab project.

Report of the Facilities Committee

Chairman Holden reported on the results of the Committee meeting held the previous Tuesday. Committee members were surprised by the absence of City Librarian Hughes, later reported to be due to illness, and by the presence of Professor Seung Park who was asked by City Librarian Hughes without informing the Committee Chair or other members to present a model of the proposed innovation center. Facilities Supervisor Baldwin updated the Board of Directors on the progress of bathroom renovations and other maintenance issues in the branches. He informed the Board of Directors of the roof leak at Burroughs-Saden is still unresolved and that they are investigating another possible leak on the East Main Street property acquired from the Salvation Army

Mark Halstead reported that work had been completed on the new men's restroom at Burroughs-Saden and the work on the Ladies room was suspended pending the issuance of a waiver from the Building inspector. However, he assured the committee that the work would resume as soon as possible. He invited the committee members to view the newly painted Burroughs-Saden lobby.

Despite City Librarian Hughes absence and the lack of committee information on the Innovation Lab Project. Professor Park presented his design and gave an interesting explanation of his understanding of the proposed collaboration between the University of Bridgeport and the Bridgeport Public Library. Director O'Donnell noted that the Board of Directors never sanctioned the giving up of space in the Burroughs -Saden Community room and had no specific discussion or communication to warrant a design renovation. He suggested that the matter be referred back to the Facilities Committee and that the communications issue be referred to Personnel.

Director Errichetti reported that discussions were being held with the architects regarding designs for the East Main Street Technology Center and Newfield Branch. Both he and Director O'Donnell indicated that current budget reductions might impact the timeline for completion of the projects. President O'Donnell was adamant in assuring the community that, although financial considerations may extend the timeline for the completion of the new facilities, they would not deter or lessen the commitment of the Board of Directors to improve Library facilities for the citizens of Bridgeport.

Report of the Finance Committee

Chairman Errichetti commented that every effort would be made to retain library services despite impending budget cuts. He maintained it would be ludicrous to cut professional staff and still be able to provide needed service to the public. He also noted that, ironically, the failure to bond for new library facilities alleviates the need to increase monies dedicated to debt service for the time being. Final budget numbers will not be available until the Common Council passes a budget, the mayor approves it and the mill rate is set.

Report of the Personnel Committee- None

Report of the Friends of the Bridgeport Library

Director Errichetti reported that the proceeds of the April book sales were given to the Literacy Volunteers. The Friends granted \$2000 to Central High School for books and were establishing clear guidelines for grant proposals. The also made a donation to Hallen School for a parent/ child literacy program. He reported the proposed Scrabble Tournament with the Milford Friends group was "in limbo".

New Business

Several Board members indicated that they saw no improvement in the communication between the City Librarian and the Board of Directors. They mentioned the "Intranet website that just appeared today", the lack of notification for the City Librarian's absence from scheduled meeting priors to the commencement of the meeting, and a last minute request to meet regarding creation of an agenda for today's meeting were offered as evidence of poor and inconsistent communication.

Director Errichetti offered a **MOTION** calling for a SPECIAL BOARD MEETING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE to be schedule one week from today on May 4th at 5:30 p.m. to review the City Librarian's performance. The Motion was seconded by Director Holden and unanimously passed.

Director Errichetti made a **MOTION** to go into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation. The motion was seconded by Director Osborne-Gant and approved. The Board of Directors entered into Executive Session at 9:47 p.m. The directors emerged from Executive session at 10: 05 p.m. Director Cunningham made a **MOTION** for adjournment at 10:07. The Motion was seconded by Director Holden and unanimously passed. The Meeting was adjourned at 10:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Anne Cunningham, Secretary Pro Tem

