

Fort Madison Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of the regular meeting held October 21, 2021, 5:30 p.m. in person and electronically via Zoom.

Board members present in person: Sharon Groene, Candice Smrt, Ron Welder, Anne Heitz, Tom Pollpeter, Kathy Burkhardt and Mary Whitcomb.

Others present: Sarah Clendineng, library staff, in person.

Meeting called to order with a quorum present at 5:30 pm.

Excused Absences: Motion to excuse the absence of Phil Hecht, Jane Bartlett, Candice Smrt and Kathy Burkhardt– Welder; 2nd – Heitz. The motion was carried unanimously.

Approval of Agenda: A motion to approve the agenda was made by Welder; 2nd – Whitcomb. The motion was carried unanimously.

Public Comments: There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes:

[Kathy Burkhardt joined the meeting]

Motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting September 16 –Welder; 2nd –Heitz. The motion was carried unanimously.

Approval of October 2021 Bills: Trustee Groene asked if the electricity was about the same as last year and the director replied that it was. Trustee Whitcomb commented that the room looked really nice with a fresh coat of paint.

Motion to approve the October 2021 bills – Heitz; 2nd –Burkhardt. The motion was carried unanimously.

Correspondence: The director received a donation for four specific books from a woman who lives in Connecticut. Her husband had recently passed away and was from Fort Madison. We don't usually mail notification of donations but, since she lives so far away, the director sent her pictures of the books and the gift plates.

Director's Report: In addition to the attached report, Trustee Groene commented that the library's financial standing sounds good. Trustee Burkhardt asked about the Houdini program and if it was an adult or a children's program. The director replied that it is an adult program and he has been here in different characters over the year. Trustee Burkhardt also asked about progress on the Little Free Library. The director replied that she hasn't heard back, yet, about the estimate.

New Business

Set date for December/January Strategic Planning Meeting

The library board needs to hold a special meeting to review the feedback from the community strategic planning session and set goals and objectives. The director presented several possible dates and the board decided to meet on December 2 and 5:30 pm.

Operations Policy including discussion of removing library fines

There is one sentence that is almost an exact duplicate of a sentence near it and the director recommends removing this.

The larger change that the director is recommending is no longer charging fines for overdue materials. Trustee Groene stated that she agrees with this after reading the directors reasons in the board packet. The director stated that she does see it as a barrier to access that impacts lower income persons more than others. While computer use has decreased, it is still something that people are increasingly relying on and having an excessive fine could keep you from checking out a hotspot that you might need. Additionally, there is staff time that goes into manual blocking patrons that might be better used in other areas. Finally, there are other ways to encourage patrons to return materials. Trustee Burkhardt asked about the difference between the amount of fines collected and the amount of items lost and wondered about what would be done about the money spent replacing lost items. The director clarified that items that were lost or damaged would still have to be paid for. This would only remove the fines on items that are brought back to the library late. The library still has the item it was just returned after the due date. Trustee Whitcomb wondered about patrons keeping new books and delaying when the next patron could get it. The director replied that there are other ways to encourage patrons to return books, for example blocking patrons with any book a month overdue or more 3 or more overdue items. Trustee Burkhardt also asked about how computer use is connected to fines. The director clarified that patrons can be blocked from using the computers by their fines. Trustee Burkhardt asked if there was a reason patrons couldn't use computers if they have items out. The director replied that the board could change this, as well. Trustee Burkhardt was worried about the incentive for people to bring back books and was wondering if the library would still be reminding people and sending out e-mails. The director replied that they would still do the reminder letters and e-mails. However, there are people even now who do the math and decide they would rather wait a week and pay the fine for returning the book late rather than bring the book back on time.

Trustee Welder inquired about doing a 90 day moratorium on fines. The board wouldn't change the policy, yet, but would test this for 90 days and then review it to see if we are having issues with unreturned items. Trustee Burkhardt inquired about what the librarians would need to do to track this. The director replied that there are ways that the system can adjust to this and provide statistics. The director stated that she can keep an eye on what's going on and if it is being heavily abused, it can be reviewed at any time. The director requested that, if the board is in favor of a trial period, that it be 6 months, rather than 90 days to get a better idea of how it is working.

Motion to have a 6 month moratorium on fines beginning on November 1 – Welder; 2nd – Whitcomb. Motion carried unanimously.

Trustee Heitz inquired about the definition of non-resident. The director will add “Residents of Lee County or communities in Iowa participating in the Open Access program, or who own property in Lee County are eligible for a library card” to the beginning of “I. Circulation., A. Registration”

Additionally. Under “C. Loan Periods, Procedures”, the director will add that “Items with reserves on them cannot be renewed”

Trustee Burkhardt inquired about students getting library cards and if the parent has to sign for that. The director replied that they do not if the student is 14 or older. Trustee Burkhardt was concerned that parents would be responsible for children's cards they were not aware of. The director replied that that children would be responsible for lost items checked out on those cards and they are not connected to the parent's card.

Trustee Burkhardt asked that we add language that patrons who are blocked from checking out library materials are still able to access the computers. A lot of people who use the computer don't have access at home. The director replied that one reason that policy was implemented was as an incentive for patrons to pay their fines,

with use trending down, it's not as much of an incentive as it was.

Under library charges it was pointed out that Microfilm prints is still listed and needs to be removed since all printing now goes through a computer, also, the Putnam pass needs to be removed from Fees.

There was also discussion of the projector. The library does currently have an overhead projector that can be borrowed. There was a video projector donated to the library that is not currently available to loan. Part of the reason is logistics, figuring it how to make it available for use in the meeting room, especially if it is a meeting held after hours and then making sure it gets put away before the next meeting. Most of the time the director could do this because she comes in and checks between meetings but, if the director is on vacation, there isn't anybody to check.

Trustee Heitz inquired about the disaster policy and what people in the meeting room outside of library hours should do during a tornado. The director said that the women's restroom is probably the safest place. Trustee Heitz indicated that this information is not included in the operations policy and asked if a sign could be added to the meeting room. The director said that she will do this.

Trustee Heitz also inquired about sex offenders and asked if they could use curbside pick-up. The director replied that she had thought about that but that the law actually says that they cannot be within 300 feet of library property.

Motion to approve changes to the operation policy including:

1. Defining residents and non-residents
2. Clarifying that items with reserves on them cannot be renewed
3. Removing the second sentence under "C. Loan Periods, Policy", "Patrons with a probationary status will be limited to one DVD at a time and will not be eligible to check out Hot Spots" as it is duplicated lower down.
4. Add "The charging of library fees will be suspended from November 1 through May 1, to be reviewed at the April board meeting" to the beginning of item "F. Fees, policy".
5. Add "with the exception of computer use" to item "F. Fees, policy" where suspending library privileges is listed.
6. Removing the Putnam Pass and Microfilm printing from the Fees section

Made by Burkhardt; 2nd – Heitz. Motion carried unanimously.

Review Meeting Room Policy – no use on Sundays December 1-March 31

The director started off by asking if the board would like to make the video projector available for public use. Trustee Welder asked if there had been any requests for it. The director replied that the only ones she recalled were from the genealogical society. Trustee Burkhardt asked if people knew it was available. The director replied that she didn't think so, unless they read the policy on the wall.

The director would like the board to consider not renting the room on Sundays from December 1 through March 31 due to the possibility of the need for snow removal. The director looked into typical Iowa snowfall and the season is from about mid-November to mid-March. Trustee Burkhardt asked how many reservations we have during that time on Sundays. The director replied that we have a lot. If there isn't an event in the meeting room, the city does not shovel the library sidewalks on Sundays. Mark Bousset had talked to the director about this, with concerns about overtime if we have a really snowy year because they aren't shoveling at other city properties on Sundays. Trustee Burkhardt expressed concern that there aren't any other places in town to hold events on a Sunday. Also, the policy already includes language that the library isn't liable for injury, etc. The director replied that the room would still be available on Friday evening and Saturdays, it would just be about

16 Sundays out of the year that it would not be available. Trustee Welder asked if the director could talk to Mark about the library covering the overtime costs. Trustee Burkhardt also suggested looking into contracting for snow removal on Sundays. Trustee Pollpeter clarified that if there is a substantial snowfall on Saturday night, the city hall sidewalks aren't shoveled. That is the director's understanding.

Motion to table this discussion until the November meeting while the director pursues additional information – Heitz; 2nd – Welder. Carried unanimously.

Trustee Heitz inquired about the use of the Sheaffer room for library programs rather than holding them in the program room in the children's area. The director replied that it has become an issue of storage space and the size of the programs. We don't have a lot of space to store projects in progress for the children's programs and a lot of those are stored in the room in the children's area. Additionally, sometimes, even if things weren't stored in there, it would be an issue of not having enough space for all the people attending. Trustee Burkhardt asked if the movable wall panels could be used to split the room for multiple programs. Several board members expressed concern that there would be a sound problem with that option. Trustee Burkhardt asked for clarification on the space used by the Friends of the Library and asked why craft stuff that isn't being used isn't stored somewhere else and suggested that only the craft supplies for the current weeks projects need to be out. That way all the craft stuff wouldn't be stored in one area. The director explained that there is at least one craft every week, sometimes two. Also, Thursday crafternoon is an ongoing craft, it's a longer term craft that needs things left out over several weeks. Trustee Burkhardt commented that the room was painted to be used as an activity room. The director replied that then Covid happened and we've been trying to keep people separated farther apart and there hasn't been room to separate people in that area. Trustee Welder expressed the opinion that library programs should take priority in use of the meeting room. Trustee Burkhardt stated that she thinks there needs to be a balance between adult programming and children's programs because Wednesdays and Thursdays are two kids programs back to back. The director replied that this is not the case. Thursday is a teen and adult program. Wednesday is kids, story hour in the morning and Wacky Wednesday in the afternoon. Then Tuesday afternoon is a teen program. Monday afternoon is middle school and teen. There was a question about attendance at the Monday and Tuesday programs. The director replied that they haven't been well attended but she hadn't wanted to look at any changes to them until after the strategic plan is developed to provide a direction for those resources.

Freegal Renewal

The director has been purchasing new CDs to build that collection and her recommendation, based on poor usage, is to let this subscription lapse and go back to developing the physical CD collection.

Motion to go into closed Session pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 21.5(i) "To evaluate the professional competency of an individual whose appointment, hiring, performance, or discharge is being considered when necessary to prevent needless and irreparable injury to that individual's reputation and that individual requests a closed session." – Welder; 2nd – Burkhardt. Carried unanimously.

Motion to come out of closed session – Welder; 2nd – Burkhardt. Carried unanimously.

Trustee Burkhardt inquired about the grass along the sidewalk that has been killed because of salt. The director thought that this was one of the items that had been put on hold based on tackling the other items that were budgeted for. Trustee Burkhardt also asked that we hire an electrician to replace the lights in the display cases.

Trustee Education

Trustee Handbook Chapter 8 "Evaluating Service and Advocating for Advancement"

There were no questions. The director will explore board evaluation tools and see if she can find a good one.

Board members were asked to think about anything they would like to see included in next years budget proposal.

The director asked what the board thought about a volunteer reception in December. The consensus was to not hold an official reception but find another way to recognize the library volunteers.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm until Thursday, November 18, 2021