

Fort Madison Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of the regular meeting held August 18, 2022, 5:30 p.m. in person and electronically via Zoom.

Board members present in person: Sharon Groene, Jane Bartlett, Candice Smrt, Anne Heitz, Lon Spurgin, and Mary Whitcomb.

Others present: Sarah Clendineng, library staff. Jack Gray, city council liaison.

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

Excused Absences: Motion to excuse the absences of Ron Welder, Tom Pollpeter and Kathy Burkhardt – Heitz; 2nd – Smrt. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Agenda: Motion to approve the agenda – Heitz; 2nd – Bartlett. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comments: No public comments.

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve the minutes of the July 21 meeting– Spurgin; 2nd – Whitcomb. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of the Bills: Trustee Groene inquired if the electric usage was in line with last year. The director replied that it was. There was also a question about savings with the solar panels. The director replied that, based on the estimated savings, there might be about a 25% drop. Trustee Groene also inquired about the spending on miscellaneous commodities from the July financial report where the percentage of spending seemed high for the year. The director replied that there were some things for the fall that didn't get ordered in time for the June bills but we should still be well within budget on that line item and that is a line item that it makes sense to spend completely and then use the gift fund or county fund to purchase additional needed items. The board was pleased with the price of the tree removal and the job that was done. Trustee Bartlett inquired about the postage meter rental that wasn't under postage and shipping. It was clarified that the rental is covered under the rents and leases line item while postage is used to purchase postage to attach to items that we are mailing. The postage meter is the only item that we pay out of the rents and leases line item.

Motion to approve the August bills – Bartlett; 2nd – Heitz. Carried unanimously.

Correspondence: No correspondence.

Director's Report: See the attached report.

New Business

Pre-approve computer purchase from the Special Projects Endowment Fund:

The library needs to upgrade some of the computers and the director would like to move to the Windows 11 operating system. She hadn't really seen any refurbished Windows 11 computers and then, about a month ago, came across an ad for some at a good price. The director realized that if this becomes available again, it might be time sensitive without time for two presentations to the board if we want to purchase them out of the Special Projects Endowment Fund. Therefore the director is requesting pre-approval for this amount so that if a good deal does come up again, she can go ahead and purchase them.

Trustee Bartlett inquired if the computers would be actually new or refurbished. The director replied that they would be new to us. If she can find new computers for these prices, she will get them, but these prices would

more likely be refurbished and the majority of the computers we have right now are refurbished and we haven't had any problems with them. Trustee Bartlett asked when we last replaced computers. The director replied that we bought two last December and we do have two new computers in the regular budget, as well. The director has been trying to replace two computers a year but that doesn't allow for laptop replacement and it's not going quite fast enough, on its own, to replace all Windows 10 computers by 2025, when support expires. So, in addition to using the Special Projects Endowment Fund we'll be purchasing two from the general fund.

There was a question about how many laptops we have and how they are used. The director replied that they are primarily used for the Minecraft program, though patrons can check them out for use inside the library building. They could be used for other STEM programming in the future, as well. Currently only nine of the laptops are working consistently.

Trustee Heitz asked the director if she thought twelve would be used based on the use of the nine we have. The director replied that based on the interest in Minecraft this summer that she thought that twelve would be used.

This is just the first presentation, no action is needed at this time.

Discussion of Community Resource Guide:

The director has done some looking around and has seen some interesting programs that other communities have done that we could contact for ideas and resources if we decide to pursue this. The director does feel that developing a community resource guide falls solidly within the library's strategic plan. The big unknown at this time is whether there will be a cost for software or a website to maintain it or if it is something that could be hosted in-house. Additionally, this could go beyond what is typically found in directories such as children's or elder resources or financial assistance but things like small contractors or lawn mowing services. Essentially, recreating the yellow pages for Fort Madison.

Motion to approve the director exploring a community resource guide, what it would include and what format would be most useful to the residents of Fort Madison – Heitz; 2nd – Smrt. Motion carried unanimously.

Report on fiscal impact of increasing library hours

At the July meeting, the board asked the director to look into what additional personnel would be required to meet the state standard for the number of hours the library is open to the public. After exploring the costs as well as library usage the director doesn't think that now is the right time. The hours that might be the most useful would be evening and, with the staff we have, adding hours later into the evening would be a significant burden on them. Being open until 6 is already very late in Fort Madison and if you were wanting to be open that late in the evening you would probably need at least three part-time people to rotate through that so that you don't have all of the full-time people working in the library until 6:30 or 7:00 every night. While you do what your job requires of you, that is not what current employees were hired for and evening hours do put a significant limit on other things you can do. This is why the director looked at morning hours for this recommendation. However, just looking at usage right now, even 6 to 7 on Thursdays usage really drops so the director doesn't even know if adding additional evening hours would be the right thing to do at this time. If the mayor is successful in this 1000 new people moving to Fort Madison over the next four years, these patterns might change and we might want to reevaluate it at a later time. Trustee Groene commented that for the cost of additional employees, we're not bringing in that much more money. At this point, if there is any interest in increasing staff, the director would suggest putting that toward services, rather than additional hours.

Trustee Heitz inquired about the early traffic on Saturday, though that is a little different. The director replied that there is about the same traffic between 9 and 10 on Saturday as there is between 9:30 and 10 on weekdays.

While none of this is in our budget for the current year and probably wouldn't be in next year's budget, it is good information to have if the board were to pursue additional funding such as the \$.27 tax levy. The director understands wanting to increase hours but based on current usage either having someone with more hours, or another person in the afternoon where we could maybe do more programming when people are using the library might be a better option.

Landscaping discussion

The director will be getting in touch with the landscaper about addressing some of the things that were discussed last year. One of those was adding a river rock border along the decorative sidewalk due to the salt killing the grass. The director is concerned that we already have people tripping on that sidewalk and adding river rocks could make that worse and looked for other options that might be better. Trustee Heitz mentioned that the grass came back pretty good this year and wondered if we had a problem with anything other than aesthetics, has anyone tripped off the edge of the sidewalk? The director said that she wasn't aware of any but could ask them to look at it and fill in where there might be an edge or dip to bring it up level.

The director has also been thinking about the loss of the two trees by the west parking lot and the front of the library looking kind of bare and it would be nice to have a couple of trees in front of the library, especially on the west side and was wondering what the board's thoughts were on that. The board was in favor of the idea. Trustee Heitz asked about where the director was thinking. The director was thinking maybe one on each side of the front entrance, not large trees, just something to provide a little shade. Trustee Heitz commented that we need to be sure not to block the line of sight in the book drop lane. Trustee Spurgin mentioned that we would also need to think about watering and the director mentioned that there are water spigots on the front of the building that would be easy to access.

Discussion of Purchasing Plates from Ted Sloat Book

G Bradley Publishing is going out of business and selling off their remaining assets and contacted the director about purchasing the printing plates for the Ted Sloat book, "Fort Madison: A Pictorial History". We could purchase the plates for \$250 plus shipping or we could purchase the copyright for \$2,500 which would include the cost of shipping. If we had the copyright, we could use them however we wanted, the director's inclination would be to find a way to get them scanned and put them online for wider access. However, there is nothing in our strategic plan that this would fit within. The director is bringing it up as a one-time opportunity, as a way to preserve some of Fort Madison's history. Trustee Bartlett inquired if they might sell them for less than \$2,500, also if we could get in touch with any of Ted Sloat's family to help with this project. There was a question of how we would pay for this, the director would recommend the gift fund, we do currently have the funds to cover this. Trustee Bartlett would like us to try and get a better price and wouldn't mind making inquiries to see if any of the family might be interested in helping.

Motion to approve purchasing the plates and the copyright, attempting to negotiate for a better price – Smrt; 2nd – Heitz. Motion carried unanimously.

2022 Lee County Libraries Annual Meeting

The Lee County Libraries annual meeting will be September 20 at the Fort Madison Library. President Groene will not be able to attend so we will need to appoint another board representative. It is an open meeting so everyone is welcome to attend, even if you are not a board designee. The Lee County Library directors are recommending an increase of \$5,000 above last year's budget to be split evenly between databases and special projects for each of the five libraries. Fort Madison uses the databases money to pay for Ancestry and HeritageQuest and this additional money could be used to purchase additional content for Bridges.

Motion to appoint Candice Smrt as the board designee and approve the \$5,000 increase recommended by the library directors – Heitz; 2nd – Whitcomb. Motion carried unanimously.

Trustee Education: Trustee Handbook Chapter 15: Intellectual Freedom and Chapter 16: Library Buildings

There was a brief overview of intellectual freedom as this was also discussed a couple of months ago. The director emphasized the first paragraph, “The role of a public library in a democratic society is to ensure free and open access to information and materials for all as guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. Library boards protect and defend intellectual freedom.”

The chapter on library buildings discusses both laws regarding existing buildings as well as the construction of new library buildings. Library meetings rooms need to be open to all groups, the library board cannot pick and choose favorites. The exception to this is political groups as the board can prohibit all partisan political activities but they can't ban only one political party while letting others use the room. We do not have any prohibitions on political parties using the meeting room as long as they follow all library policies. If the board does pursue any capital projects, grants need to be approved through city council and projects over a certain dollar amount need to follow official bid letting guidelines. The city level is either \$20,000 or \$50,000 which is lower than the state level. Buildings do need to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and one of the advantages of having a newer building is that it is easier to stay in compliance. Libraries are required to use architects in the design of new buildings.

The director handed out director evaluation forms for the October board meeting. Board members were asked to return their evaluations at the September board meeting, or drop them off at the library, and Sharon will collect them to compile the responses for the October board meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 6:20 pm until September 15, 2022.