

Fort Madison Public Library Board of Trustees

Minutes of the regular meeting held October 21, 2017, 5:30 p.m. in the Sheaffer Memorial Meeting Room at the Fort Madison Public Library.

Present: Sharon Groene, Brenda Graham, Candice Smrt, Ron Welder, Anne Heitz, Samantha Lang, Jean Hoffmeister and Fred Winke

Excused Absences: Phil Hecht.

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

A motion to approve excused absences was made by Welder; 2nd – Heitz. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Hoffmeister; 2nd – Smrt. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comments: There were no public comments on items not on the agenda.

Approval of Minutes: Motion to approve the minutes of the September 21st meeting – Welder; 2nd – Winke. Carried unanimously.

Correspondence: There was no correspondence.

Approval of Bills: Trustee Heitz inquired how often Service Master comes in. The director said that is was Monday through Friday and this price has stayed the same for quite a while. Trustee Groene inquired about the bill from the Copyright Office. The director explained that this is to keep the library in compliance with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) and prevent us from being sued if users illegally download content. Motion to approve the October 2017 bills – Welder; 2nd – Graham. Carried unanimously.

Director's Report: In addition to the attached report, the director handed out a record of areas she believes she is showing improvement in personnel areas. The director inquired if this was something the board would like to see in the future. The board indicated that they would and the director will continue to include this in the board packet for the meetings. Also, under facilities, Fred Winke brought a picture of W. A. Sheaffer that we will be adding in the meeting room above the picture of Craig Sheaffer. Trustee Welder inquired if the library had found a new window cleaning service. The library has and they were washed just before Rodeo weekend.

Unfinished Business:

Report on Lee County Libraries Advisory Board Meeting: Trustee Heitz reported on the Lee County Libraries Advisory Board Meeting. This is the meeting where the five libraries in Lee County meet to discuss their budget request for the Lee County Board of Supervisors. This year, the directors are recommending that the libraries request a \$10,000 increase to be divided equally between the libraries, \$2,000 each. West Point plans to purchase new furniture for the children's area, Keokuk is looking at new PC management software and tablets to loan out, Donnellson is looking at storage and appliances for their new activity room, Fort Madison would use this to offset the cost of Novelist and Montrose would put more money toward books and technology. This was followed by a discussion of Novelist

which Trustee Heitz thought was hugely productive. Not all of the libraries were aware of it and so the discussion turned to approaching Novelist with a proposal for a group purchase which might lower the cost per library. In the past, this was an optional add-on to databases from the State Library. Since the State Library changed their vendors, we're now dealing with the company directly and might be able to negotiate a better price, especially if we're bringing in new customers, since Keokuk and Fort Madison are the only libraries that currently subscribe.

New Business:

Library Parakeets: The director was asked to put this on the agenda for this meeting and started with a summary of what has happened since the beginning of September. The library has had parakeets for several years. At one time we had two but, one died and we were down to one. The director's plan, that she thought she had communicated to everyone, was that, when the remaining parakeet passed away, we would be done with living creatures in the library. When the director returned from vacation the first Saturday in September, she discovered that, while she was gone, a second parakeet had been abandoned at the library based on what she was told by employees. The director had several conversations with the other employee who was working that day, who is in favor of having the parakeets. At the end of the day, the director stated her decision to try and find another home for the parakeet and, if that was not possible, make other arrangements. The other employee said she would just talk to the person who dropped it off but then, at the end of the day, took both parakeets home with her. The director left it at that. The director was told there would be members of the public at the September board meeting to talk about this. No one from the public attended that meeting but the director was asked to add it to the agenda for the October meeting. At the staff meeting after the September board meeting, the parakeets were discussed. The director's primary concerns are that they need to be taken care of on long weekends. They seem to be okay from Saturday to Monday for one day but in the case of three or four day weekends, someone needs to come in and make sure they have food and water. This has been the director, since she is salaried and overtime is not a concern. The last two times we've had to do this, though, the director has been on vacation and we've had to give a part-time employee comp time to come in, check on the book drop, check in items that are returned and check on the bird. The second area of concern was veterinary care. There isn't a vet in town who sees birds and it can be very expensive. The employee who currently has the parakeets has said that she will take them home on long weekends and, apparently, it is not common practice to take parakeets to the vet. That is where things stand right now. The director believes there have been comments made to other board members, she hasn't received any and no one has talked to her or sent her any correspondence about this.

Trustee Smrt shared some letters from patrons talking about the birds and they only knew about this by word of mouth, nothing was posted about it. Every single one of the letters is "Please bring the birds back". Senior citizens coming in here and not seeing the birds anymore, they seemed to make the place happy and chirpy. Trustee Smrt shared that her son, the first thing he did when he came in here that day was to go and look at the birds and they weren't here and they'd been here a long time. These are just some of the patrons that have heard that we wanted their feedback. People miss the birds. Trustee Smrt indicated that, as far as the vet goes, she understands the director's point of view but, it's a \$15 bird and the vet bill is high. Trustee Smrt also indicated that the public has been told that it is the library board that doesn't want the birds and that it was the board's decision to get rid of the birds. That it was all the board's fault.

Trustee Welder had a couple of questions. First, if the person currently taking care of the birds retired tomorrow, could bird care be made a requirement of the next person hired, as part of their job duties? The director indicated that it would affect the library's ability to hire. Secondly, apparently this bird

was dropped off unbeknownst to the director. What if someone else drops of a dog, a cat, a gerbil, another canary, would we take anything in addition? Trustee Welder's feeling on this is that the board should involve itself in policy, finances and personnel. For the day to day activities of the library, in which he would include the parakeet, he would defer to the director. That's why she was hired, that's why we put our faith in her. If the director believes that we are comfortable with taking "x" or keeping the parakeets, I'm comfortable with that. If the director believes that they were going to die off and we took one we shouldn't have, maybe, I'm comfortable with that.

Trustee Winke inquired if anyone was aware of other libraries that have parakeets or pets in the children's department. Trustee Heitz indicated she went online and wasn't able to find anything, whether there were or there weren't. Trustee Graham indicated that the Muscatine children's department has a fish tank that doesn't seem to be well maintained.

Trustee Welder added that he always goes back to his previous career, anytime you bring something in, you always worried about allergies. Is there such a thing as bird allergies? There may be. What if we were to have children here that have breathing difficulties and there is a problem with the parakeet. Trustee Hoffmeister added that there is definitely a dander with parakeets. Trustee Welder stated that he is not in favor of animals in a public facility, even as small as birds or fish.

Trustee Heitz added that the letters were touching. One kid wrote, "I came and talked to the birds every time I was here." And one has a little drawing at the bottom. She added that quite a few people had approached her and were in favor. She asked the director if anyone had expressed the opposite opinion, being opposed to the birds. The director replied that she had not. Trustee Heitz added that she has talked to adults and she enjoyed bringing kids back to see the birds but there are a lot of considerations.

Trustee Groene agreed that there are a lot of considerations and she kind of agrees with Ron, that it is not the board's place to make a call about this. The board trusts Sarah to do what she thinks is right.

Trustee Welder added that he also has a problem giving someone overtime to come in and take care of the birds. The director clarified that it is not overtime but comp time that they can then use for paid time off. Trustee Welder stated that he still has a problem with it.

Trustee Heitz inquired if the employee coming in on long weekends to check on the birds would be coming in any way to check in books. The director informed her that no, they would not be.

Trustee Hoffmeister said that she agrees with Trustee Welder and doesn't think it is the role of the board to do anything but receive finances and set policy.

Trustee Groene states that she hates pushing it back on the director, she doesn't want to do that, either

Trustee Welder stated that he would be comfortable making a motion that the library have no pets, period.

Trustee Hoffmeister inquired if the director had talked to the city attorney. The director state that she had not. Again, Trustee Hoffmeister is concerned about the legal issues of a child with allergies having breathing difficulties in the children's section because of the bird.

Motion that the library not have, accept, maintain or care for pets of any kind – Welder; 2nd – Winke.

In Favor: Groene, Graham, Welder, Lang, Hoffmeister and Winke - 6
Opposed: None
Abstain: Heitz, Smrt
Motion carried.

Trustee Graham did add that she recalled this coming up several months ago that if the remaining bird were to die, the library would not replace it, and the board was okay with that.

Trustee Education: The library director presented an overview of two library resources, Novelist and Transparent Language. She demonstrated how Novelist can be used on its own or in combination with the library catalog. Transparent Language is a good resource for anyone wanting to learn a second language. It also has resources for English as a second language (ESL) learners.

Motion to adjourn the meeting until November 16, at 5:30 pm – Hoffmeister; 2nd – Smrt. The motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.