

Duluth Public Library Board Meeting Minutes
May 28th, 2024

Present: Bill Arezzo, Ellen Hatfield, Lori Steinbach, Michelle Foshay, Sue Henke, Lizzy Luoma, Jose Gonzalez, and Betty Ramsland

Also in attendance: Carla Powers, Jim Filby Williams, John Ramos (Duluth Monitor), library staff members Nolan Peterson, Jason DeShaw and Stephen Barlow

Absent: Matt Rosendahl

Meeting was called to order at 4:34 PM by Sue Henke, President

Review and approval of agenda

Motion by Ramsland, seconded by Arezzo, to approve agenda as drafted. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of minutes of the April 23rd, 2024 meeting

Motion by Arezzo, seconded by Foshay, to approve minutes as drafted. Motion passed unanimously.

Reports

Library Manager

- **Bill Notification Change** – Beginning May 1 the delivery method to bill for lost items has been changed to patron preference. Can be via text, e-mail or USPS.
- **Staff Development Day** – On April 29th all library locations were closed for the annual staff development day. Jason DeShaw was one of the supervisors to plan the day. It covered topics suggested by staff, including wellness, training for Microsoft Teams and Outlook, and other relevant program overviews.
- **Employee Pulse Survey** – 2024 is the 4th year of having this survey done with staff members. Results will be available next month and will be shared at the June Board meeting.
- **Focus Groups** – With money left on the contract and the building update uncertain, a round of community engagement is taking place to gather feedback on library services. The first focus group, made up of people referred by Chum, had 24 participants and provided helpful feedback. The second focus group took place at Lighthouse for Vital Living. Participants had some specific and doable suggestions. The last focus group will involve downtown business owners and will take place over zoom. The final community engagement report will be delivered in a few weeks.
- **Summer Reading Program** – With a theme of “Read, Renew, Repeat,” the summer reading program started on June 1.

Library Staffing Update

- A 13-hour-per-week Library Aide position has been filled, following the previous aide’s promotion to Library Technician. The new aide started work on May 20th.
- May 20th also was the first day of work for the new Library Safety Specialist.
- Applications will be accepted through May 30th for a vacant Librarian I position in Adult Services.

Foundation

- The annual financial reporting form is available for viewing on the foundation’s website. In addition, the board held wide-ranging discussions about the future of events.

Friends

- Dennis Lamkin gave a wonderful “Bowery to Bookshelves” presentation and spoke about the library’s history.
- The annual book sale will take place June 10th - 13th. Credit cards will be accepted this year. Monday is for members only. The sale raises significant money for the library, with 90 – 95% of the proceeds going to support library programming.

Old Business

Main Library Facility Update

- The bonding bill that potentially would have funded another round of design work was not voted on this session.
- Federal covid relief funding administered by the state must be used by the end of 2026. It is available for multi-use community centers. However, the deadline makes it a poor fit for the library project.
- Filby Williams said there is an opportunity to help define the mayor’s vision on this project. He envisions starting with a programming study and then layering on the co-location with housing. The building could be a mix of public and private ownership.
- There is a question about whether the current building foundation could support a multi-use building plus housing on top.
- The City of Duluth is set to receive \$1.7 million in congressionally directed spending that the previous administration applied for in order to fund pre-design for the Center for Social Innovation project. Filby Williams said perhaps half could be used for the library project and half for the Spirit Valley multi-use community center and recreation area.
- Non-mission critical expensive investments in the current building have been postponed while planning for a new facility takes place.

Advocacy Update

This board has taken advocacy very seriously especially during Covid. The group advocated to the mayor to bring laid off staff back to work. The advocacy team will continue to stay on top of what may come up that needs their support.

New Business

Gifts and Donations Policy

- Powers updated the current policy, which dates back to 2011. A few updates were suggested, which will be reviewed at the June meeting.

Semiannual review of strategic plan

- Powers provided updates on progress made toward goals identified in the 2023 strategic plan update.
- While progress has been made on many of the strategies, the library’s leadership team has identified two focus areas to prioritize.
- Staffing levels and available space may make progress on some of the goals more difficult.

Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 6:09 PM