

Duluth Public Library Board Meeting Minutes
September 24, 2024

Present: Sue Henke, Bill Arezzo, Jose Gonzalez, Lizzy Luoma, Betty Ramsland, Lori Steinbach

Also in attendance: Carla Powers, City Councilor Azrin Awal, Jim Filby Willaims, Library Staff Member Byron Johnson, League of Women Voters observer Carolyn Baird

Absent: Michelle Foshay, Ellen Hatfield, Matt Rosendahl

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 4:29 PM by Sue Henke, President

Review and approval of agenda

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

Approval of minutes of August 27, 2024

Motion by Ramsland, seconded by Gonzalez, to approve minutes with changes. Motion passed unanimously.

Reports

Library Manager

- New Calendar Software – New software is in place for publicizing events and booking meeting rooms. Having the bookings online might put more pressure on the meeting rooms, which already are heavily used. The public can use the software to book rooms up to 60 days out. Library programs have priority over outside use of the meeting rooms.
- Community Passes – These passes were checked out all summer long. Byron has helped set up all the logistics of the program and is currently working on getting passes to the Duluth Children’s Museum.
- Statement of Concern – A patron asked for a book to be moved out of the juvenile section where it is now. Under a new state law that took effect this year, book challenges must to be reported to the State Board of Education. The library’s policy is that parents have the responsibility to decide what is appropriate for their own children. The decision was to leave the book shelved where it is currently. The patron was informed of this decision and has not reached back out.
- Library Safety – After an incident in which a person was wielding a large pipe outside the Superior Street entrance of the Main Library, off duty police are doing shifts there for two weeks during all open hours. Incidents have calmed down considerably since this began.
- Library Staffing Update – As of October 7th when three new staff members start work, the library will be fully staffed for the first time since 2020. With two full-time Library Safety Specialists there is coverage for the majority of open hours at the Main Library. Currently on the top floor of the library, MNsure navigators, HDC, Police Substance Use Resource Team and Workforce Center all have regular office hours.

Library Usage Report

The library continues making progress toward pre-covid levels of library usage. Usage is tracking higher than last year. The number of physical materials checked out was down in August, but usage of digital materials was up. There was a discussion of similarities and differences between Libby and Hoopla. Most titles on Libby can only be used by one person at a time, and often there is a hold list. The limit of Libby titles that can be checked out is 10 at one time. Hoopla has a limit of 5 titles per month, and all titles are available instantly. The titles on each service are fairly different, although there is some crossover. Mt. Royal July and August numbers for self-directed activities appear to be lower than expected. Powers has followed up with branch staff to make sure they are accurate.

Duluth Library Foundation

- The last Foundation Board Meeting was held on September 26th.
- Foundation committee is contracting with a firm called Media Cause to develop a marketing and communications plan.

Friends of the Library

- The Friends recently wrote a check to the Library for \$25,000,
- Round up at the Whole Foods Co-op brought in \$12, 674 during the month of August. The Friends receive half of the amount, which comes to \$6,337.
- There was some discussion at the last meeting about merging the Friends with the Foundation. Many on the Friends Board are against this. However, it will be discussed further. Examining the relationship of the Friends and Foundation is in the Foundation's strategic plan.

Old Business

Main Library Facility Update

There is little new information at this time. The City has been approved for \$1.7 million in Congressionally Directed Funding. Originally the funding was meant to go toward predesign of a new Main Library. Other options are being examined, such as using a portion of the funds to renovate other community centers.

New Business

Budget presentations to the City Council have wrapped up. Mayor Reinert included an additional \$45,000 in the library's budget in 2025 to make the new Library Safety Specialist position full-time.

Advocacy

Advocacy role for the Library Board and Foundation is not needed at this time, except to thank the Mayor for the \$45,000 budget increase. An increase in the library's materials budget may be requested in a future budget year. Library advocates are encouraged keep an open mind about the Main Library operating out of leased space, should that opportunity arise. The Mount Royal Branch works very well in leased space, although details matter.

Meeting adjourned at 5:36 pm by Sue Henke, President