

**MILWAUKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**Tuesday, September 26, 2023**

**Central Library  
Rotary Club of Milwaukee Community Room  
814 West Wisconsin Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53233**

**PRESENT:** Mark Sain, Chris Layden, Teresa Mercado, Michele Bria, Matthew Kowalski, Felicia Saffold, Ald. Scott Spiker, Sup. Kathleen Vincent, Joan Johnson

**EXCUSED:** Ald. Milele Coggs, Michael Morgan, Erika Siemsen

**STAFF:** Chantel Clark, Petra Duecker, Kristina Gomez, Melissa Howard, Tammy Mays, Jennifer Meyer-Stearns, Joseph Moretz, Karli Pederson, Marian Royal, Victoria Sanchez, Rebecca Schweisberger, Kelly Wochinske, Zoua Xiong

**OTHERS**

**PRESENT:** City Attorney's Office: Alex Carson  
Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren s.c.: Stephen Elliott

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President Mark Sain called the meeting of the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees to order at 4:01 p.m. on September 26, 2023 with a quorum present.

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**CONSENT AGENDA**

1. **Regular Board Meeting Minutes July 25, 2023**
2. **Administrative Reports**
  - a. Financial Report
  - b. Library Director's Reports

President Sain asked the Board if any items should be removed from the Consent Agenda presented as attachment A, pages 3-10 of the agenda. There was no motion to remove any items and the Consent Agenda was accepted.

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**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Library Director Joan Johnson introduced Melissa Howard, Community Relations and Engagement Director. Ms. Howard has extensive experience in marketing and public relations, in both private sector and non-profit agencies. Director Johnson also introduced Kristina Gomez, who has recently returned to MPL as the Library Services Manager - Coordinator of Business, Technology and Periodicals.

**REPORTS**

3. **Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) Board Meeting.** Library Director Joan Johnson reported on the September 18, 2023 meeting. Trustee Siemsen has stepped down from serving on the MCFLS Board and Director Johnson will present reports until a new assignment has been made. Patron Point Verify is a new service that allows patrons to renew library cards

electronically. Strategic planning is underway and MCFLS has hired Rachel Arndt Consulting to assist with the process. As part of the process, MCFLS will survey member libraries staff and patrons and a retreat is planned for January 2024. Informational item.

4. **Urban Libraries Council (ULC) Executive Committee.** Trustee Bria presented an update on the work of the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) Board. The ULC Board welcomed five new members. Member libraries are facing similar challenges and learning from each other's experiences. ULC strategic planning has begun and includes focus groups, member surveys, and advisory groups. ULC has engaged McKinley Advisors to assist with the process. A strategic planning retreat is planned for January 2024. Based on the information collected so far, emerging themes include: supporting emerging leaders, advocacy, diversity, and succession planning. The Board is examining the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and equipping libraries for the future. Informational item.
5. **MPL Board Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting.** Trustee Mercado reported on the July 25, 2023 meeting.

**Informational items:**

- The Committee approved the minutes from the April 25, 2023 meeting.
- The Committee received the Quarterly Review of Fund Investments and Quarterly Report of the MPL Trust and Gift Funds

**Action item:**

**Contract Awards – Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library and Interlibrary Loan Service.**

Library Business Manager Sarah Leszczynski presented the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL) and Interlibrary Loan Service (ILS) grant agreements for approval. MPL receives these grants from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) each year and they run July-June, in conjunction with the State budget cycle. ILS grant total is \$187,000. This amount covers about 84% of the service and the remainder is covered by Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS). This service facilitates the borrowing and lending of materials to patrons outside of the MCFLS system. The WTBBL total is just over \$1M. This service is 100% funded by DPI. The WTBBL program provides library materials and services to residents across Wisconsin who are unable to read traditional print materials due to a visual or physical limitation. Trustee Layden moved to approve the contract awards; Trustee Bria seconded. Motion passed.

6. **MPL Board Building & Development Committee.** President Sain reported on the September 7, 2023 meeting.

**Informational items:**

- The Committee approved the minutes from the July 6, 2023 meeting.
- The Committee received an update on the Martin Luther King Branch Redevelopment project.

**Action items:**

**Real Estate Update.** The Llewellyn library was replaced by the Bay View branch in 1993. On June 15, 1994, the MPL Board deemed the former library to have no relevant use but wished to maintain a future interest in the property. In the interim, it approved a lease agreement with Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) to house the Redcat Academy. The building is no longer in use by MPS and MPL plans to sell the property. In order to begin the listing and sale process, the property must first be deemed surplus. Trustee Bria moved to deem the former Llewellyn library building and property as surplus. Trustee Layden seconded. Motion passed.

**Mitchell Street Financing Update.** The Committee received information about the developer's intent to refinance the Alexander Lofts and the process for unwinding the financial agreements for Mitchell Street branch. The lease agreement between Gorman & Company and the MPL Foundation will remain in effect until June 30, 2026. When the unwind is complete, MPL will own the note and mortgage on the library condominium. As documents pertaining to the financial unwinding were not available at the time of the meeting, the Committee voted to move the item without recommendation to the full Board. The completed documents were sent to all Trustees in advance of the regular Board meeting. Assistant City Attorney Alex Carson and Attorney Steve Elliott presented information related to the financial unwinding process and updated, final documents. Trustee Kowalski moved to authorize Library Director Joan Johnson to sign and execute the agreements as presented. Trustee Mercado seconded. Motion passed.

#### **SPECIAL COMMUNICATION**

7. **Board Photo.** The Board took a brief recess to participate in the annual photo. Informational item.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

8. **2024 Budget.** Library Director Joan Johnson and Deputy Director Jennifer Meyer-Stearns provided a summary of the Mayor's proposed budget for MPL. The cost to continue budget, totaling \$28.3M, remains intact. There will be no reduction in public service hours, staff, locations, or operations. In all departments, exempting Police and Fire, a portion of the salaries budget will be funded with unspent money from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which will expire at the end of 2024. The offset funds will be put into City reserves. For MPL, approximately 65% of the salary budget will be funded through ARPA. It is anticipated that regular salary funding will be restored in 2025. The books and materials budget includes an inflationary increase and funding continues for MPL's condo agreements at East, Mitchell Street, Good Hope, and Villard Square. The Mayor has proposed funding \$3.47M in capital for MPL. Expenditure of these funds will include a facilities condition assessment report at Central Library. To address increased construction costs, the Mayor has allocated an additional \$2M in capital funding for the Martin Luther King branch redevelopment project. MPL administration will continue to review feedback gathered from internal service planning workgroups and the community engagement process. MPL's budget hearing will be held on October 3, 2023. The Common Council will have the opportunity to make amendments in late October and the budget will be finalized in early November. Informational item.

#### **BOARD DEVELOPMENT**

9. **LibraryCorps Update.** Library Education Outreach Coordinators Petra Duecker and Victoria Sanchez and Zoua Xiong, LibraryCorps Program Specialist, presented an update on the LibraryCorps program.

The LibraryCorps program is an outgrowth of MPL's LibraryNow program, which allows students to use their student ID number to access digital materials. The LibraryCorps program focuses on enhancing digital equity by providing access to and training on digital resources while building relationships in and out of school. LibraryCorps is the first AmeriCorps program to be housed in a public library. Members work in partnership with public and private schools and offer after school programs at Center Street, Capitol, Tippecanoe, and Villard Square branches. At these branches, students receive help with homework, engage in academic projects, and participate in hands-on activities like coding, robots, and food programming. In summer, members transition to working with youth-serving organizations to support summer learning, maintain a presence with partner organizations, and continue building relationships with young people.

Initially, MPL was awarded a 2-year planning grant to prepare the program and has recently completed the first full year of service. In that time, members served in 27 classrooms across 9 schools, received positive feedback from partners, offered 264 days of after school programming at branch libraries, and served a total of 377 students and 112 adult caregivers. Additionally, MPL staff completed extensive training to ensure compliance with robust state and federal regulations, created policies and procedures, developed curriculums, and managed budgets, equipment, and timelines.

Goals for the second year of service include maintaining current services, adding additional branches, and assembling a full team of members. Currently, 5 of 20 positions are filled and MPL is conducting interviews for new members. MPL is working to create a model that is right for Milwaukee and that may be replicated in other cities.

The LibraryCorps program also represents a unique partnership between MPL and MPL Foundation (MPLF). MPL and MPLF entered a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to articulate the roles and responsibilities of each entity. MPLF manages all purchasing, payroll, and benefits for the program.

MPL is partnering with the Office of Violence Prevention and EmployMKE to help share information about these programs to engaged youth and create a pipeline to employment.

Library Director Joan Johnson commended Ms. Sanchez and Ms. Duecker for the leadership they have provided for many years and noted this project was achieved through their vision. Director Johnson also acknowledged Ms. Xiong, MPL's first Program Specialist who continues to tremendously help grow the program. Informational item.

**CLOSING REMARKS**

President Sain reminded Trustees that the Milwaukee Public Library Foundation Ben Franklin Awards Dinner will be held on September 27<sup>th</sup>.

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With no further business, the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees meeting of September 26, 2023 was adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

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