

## **Meeting Minutes: Regular Board Meeting: September 19th, 2023, 6pm**

**Call to Order:** At 6:00 pm, President Ruggeri called the Regular Meeting of the River Forest Public Library Board of Trustees to order. The roll was taken:

- Trustees Present: Deborah Hill, Cathy Ruggeri, Elan Long, Scott Delano, Ann Berens, Jim Hopkinson, Kosha Baxi Carstens.
- Also Present: Emily Compton (RFPL Director) and Shannon Duffy (RFPL Operations Manager).

**Visitors and Guests:** River Forest residents Jane Ditelberg, Elizabeth Treatman, Tom Engoren, Mindy Credi, and Megan Keskitalo  
River Forest Public Library staff members Melaina Maraldi (Head of Children's Services), Shannon Gruber (Head of Adult and Teen Services), and Lisa Engoren (Tech Services Associate and River Forest resident).

### **Visitor Comments:**

Ms. Ditelberg stated that libraries are important for learning about people who live different lives and about the things we have in common. She appreciates that the Library offers and features books on a wide variety of subjects. She shared that she has a child who is transgender and gay who used the Library growing up. She expressed her opinion that stories of LGBTQ members of the River Forest community and of the world must be offered, recommended, featured and promoted just like the stories of other groups in the community and the world.

Ms. Treatman stated that she came to the Board meeting in support of the LGBTQ+ materials and pride display at the Library. She thanked the Library and the Board for their inclusivity.

Ms. Keskitalo stated that she came to the meeting to thank the Library staff for the welcoming atmosphere and excellent collections and services. She shared that she has a transgender child and especially appreciates that the Library is a safe space for her children.

Ms. Credi stated that she believes discussions of sexuality and gender identity should be between parents and their children. She has concerns regarding the age appropriateness of some of the LGBTQ+ materials and materials in the Children's collection that she views as sexually explicit.

Ms. Maraldi stated categorically that there are no sexually explicit materials in the Children's collection. She described the process used to evaluate materials for purchase, including borrowing a title from another library for staff review if necessary and that the Children's Department follows the Collection Management Policy set by the Board of Trustees.

**Trustee Berens read the Library's Vision and Mission Statements from its Strategic Plan.**

**Consent Agenda:**

- a. Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting: July 18, 2023
- b. Minutes of the Special Board Meeting: August 4, 2023
- c. May 2023 and June 2023 Capital Reserve Fund
- d. June 2023 Revenue and Expense Reports (both corrected)
- e. July 2023 Revenue and Expense Reports
- f. July 2023 Bill Payment List and Credit Card Charges
- g. July 31, 2023 Capital Reserve Fund
- h. August 2023 Revenue and Expense Reports
- i. August 2023 Bill Payment List and Credit Card Charges
- j. August 31, 2023 Capital Reserve Fund
- k. Policy update: Oversight II- Fiscal Accountability

A motion to approve items a-k was made by Trustee Berens and seconded by President Ruggeri.

Discussion of the consent agenda included a clarifying question regarding the Capital Reserve Fund balance and comments on the expected timing of Cook County property tax payments. Trustees asked about the expiration of the Comcast discounted rates and the increasing monthly charges from Outsource Solutions Group (OSG) which are partially due to services being added, including monthly server backup, Office 365 backups for staff, and cyber security precautions. Trustees asked if there was a seasonal pattern to the Hoopla charges. Director Compton explained that Hoopla charges per download, and there is no cap on the amount charged. The consent agenda was approved on a roll call vote.

Roll Call Vote:

Ayes: Trustees Berens, Hill, Long, Ruggeri, Delano, Hopkinson, Carstens

### **Patron Suggestions:**

Director Compton reported that a patron requested new library bags to replace the current ones which are worn. Director Compton also reported receiving an email from River Forest resident Carol Schweig reiterating and expanding on her statements at the July Board meeting asserting that the Library staff is promoting LGBTQ+ ideology. Ms. Schweig asked that the Library staff not promote LGBTQ+ materials and programs. Ms. Schweig also sent the email to Trustees and asked that it be made part of the public record.

### **Director's Report:**

Director Compton highlighted the community art display in the lobby of the Library. Children's Services Associate LucyRose Till-Campbell spent the summer encouraging both patrons and RFPL staff to join her in painting 5" x 5" canvas squares. She and fellow Children's Services Associate Marissa Walentschik then created a mural using those canvas squares.

Library staff have been contributing blog entries for the RFPL website. Recent entries include Children's Services Associate Jenn Meadows's love letter to libraries; PR and Marketing Specialist Fran Arnold's experience using Mango to learn a foreign language; and Adult and Teen Services Librarian Brian Wolowitz's recommendation to use Kanopy to watch documentaries made by Frederick Wiseman.

## **President's Report:**

President Ruggeri had no additional items to note in her report that were not going to be covered elsewhere in the meeting.

## **New Business**

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Facilities Committee**

- Chairman Hill reported that the Village inspections of the new mechanical room are going well, but there is some condensation from the unit pooling outside of the air handler enclosure. The Library's contractor and Williams Architects believe that the condensation issue may be resolved once the unit's controls are fully installed and the system is tested and balanced.
- IMEG inspected the project per the Library's request and prepared an interim punch list.
- Two change orders were approved by President Ruggeri and Vice President Hill for the addition of an outlet and for a header in the bathroom.
- The air handler unit was turned on as of August 21, and the rented supplemental air conditioning units were returned at the end of August. The Library did not need to spend the full amount the Board had previously approved for the AC units.
- Williams Architects sent the Library a check for the cost of replacing the installed two-way valve with the necessary three-way valve.

#### **Finance Committee**

- Chairman Ruggeri stated that the Finance Committee met on August 29<sup>th</sup> to consider the draft audit with the Library's auditor's, Lauterbach & Amen. Overall, the audit was in good shape. L&A will revise the audit after the Library makes adjusting journal entries and the Village provides the auditors with information regarding the pension plan. The tentative plan had been to present the final audit at the October Board meeting, but it is unclear whether L&A will get the information it needs in time to meet that timetable.
- \$50,000 of the operations fund was put into a long-term CD to take advantage of current high interest rates.
- The Finance Committee raised the issue of replacing the monthly Balance Sheet report with a Fund Balance report. The Library's accounting consultant advised Director Compton that some libraries prepare Balance Sheets while others use Fund Balance reports. RFPL does not have an accountant on staff and, therefore, some items on the Balance Sheet are not updated during the course of the fiscal year. The Committee worked through the elements of the Balance Sheet that provide meaningful information for Board oversight and noted that some elements do not change throughout the year. Director Compton created a mock Fund Balance report

that captures all of the key elements aside from the credit card balance which will be separately reported. Trustees considered the request to replace the Balance Sheet with the Fund Balance report and agreed to move forward with a monthly Fund Balance report, with a full Balance Sheet to be presented to the Board in May and November. Staff also will list the CD's in the order of maturity date.

### **Policy Committee**

Chairman Long reported that the Policy Committee did not meet since the last Board meeting and plans to meet before the October Board meeting. There was a suggestion that the Committee consider developing a display policy outlining the criteria the librarians use to create displays and to select books for display.

### **RFPL Foundation Liaison**

Liaison Hopkinson reported that the Foundation hosted a successful donor event on September 16<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with the Dooley concert. The Foundation is currently working on its annual appeal letter. The master contact list was circulated to Foundation Directors to determine the best contact for each person on the list.

### **Village of River Forest Collaboration Committee Liaison**

Liaison Berens reported that the Committee met on September 13<sup>th</sup>. District 90 has begun full-day kindergarten and is in the process of reviewing its literacy curricula. The Village expected the bank to foreclose on the property at the corner of Lake and Lathrop. District 200 broke ground on building a new running track south of the tennis courts and is preparing to celebrate its 150-year anniversary. The Park District noted the puddling in the soccer field near the Library's new enclosure.

### **Summer Reading Program Report - discussion**

Director Compton reported that 832 people came to the Library's Summer Reading Program Kickoff. 726 people registered for the program: 426 children logged 9,891 days of reading, 109 middle schoolers and teens actively logged reading time, and 102 adults logged 475 books. This year, the Library implemented an adult program called River Forest Reads, in which the entire adult community is invited to read the same book. This program featured three events: a lecture on great comediennes, an author visit with Eden Robins, and a book discussion.

The Library received a variety of feedback on the Summer Reading Program Kickoff and River Forest Reads. For the kickoff, people were happy with how smooth registration went and enjoyed the bubble show, which was new this year. The crowd also loved the face painter, but the lines were too long, and the Library plans to hire two face painters next year. The dairy-free ice cream was well-received and ran out early; more dairy-free ice cream will be ordered next year.

There were some complaints during Public Comment at the July Board Meeting regarding the sexual content in the River Forest Reads book *When Franny Stands Up*. The Library also received positive comments from patrons, thanking the Library for choosing the book.

Feedback at the River Forest Reads events was positive as well. One patron emailed Director Compton to inquire why the book was chosen but added that she hadn't read the book and didn't have an issue with it. Director Compton explained that this historical fiction book was chosen because the Library could organize a program with its author since she was local, the setting was also local, there were similarities to the popular TV series "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel," and it addressed a number of meaningful topics such as sexism, antisemitism, and racism.

Next year the Library plans to schedule the book discussion at a more strategic time than an evening in August, as vacations and the beginning of the school year contributed to low turnout. The Library also would like to incorporate all ages into the program and make it truly community wide by selecting two books: one for adults and one for children. It also plans to have a cross-departmental committee choose the titles.

### **Collection Development Practices Report - discussion**

Director Compton outlined how the Library's collection is developed. Librarians with an MLIS degree are assigned to different areas of the collection and given a budget to work within. Every subject has a librarian responsible for it. Books are selected based on factors such as how well the subject circulates, whether there's a gap in the subject area in the collection, and whether there is growing interest in the community on that subject. Each department meets to discuss what patrons are requesting, whether the Library has gaps in those areas, and what they should order to best address the demand. They then use established review journals such as School Library Journal, Kirkus, and Booklist to help select titles.

Recent years have seen an uptick in the publishing of LGBTQ+ materials as conversations involving that topic have increased nationwide. The local demand for materials on different aspects of the topic has also increased, and the Library selects well-reviewed titles to address that demand. Director Compton acknowledged that there may be people in the community who are uncomfortable with LGBTQ+ topics but noted that the River Forest community also includes LGBTQ+ people and parents of LGBTQ+ children who thank the Library for representing them and their families in the collection. She also acknowledged concerns that certain titles in the collection are not age appropriate and clarified that reviews of books for children through teenage years have age recommendations in them specifically so that those titles can be placed in the proper section. She added that if a librarian is unsure after reading a review where to place an item, they will check out a copy of the book from another library and read it before acquiring it for the collection. In determining the section in which a book should be placed, librarians consider content, subjects of interest, book length, and reading difficulty.

Director Compton ended her report by commending the RFPL staff for being thoughtful and hard-working despite recent bomb threats at public libraries and accusations that librarians select materials for the Library's Children's Collection that are inappropriate for children.

President Ruggeri added that the librarians are implementing policies that have been adopted by the Board. The Library's collection policy provides that materials cannot be excluded because some people find them objectionable. People can choose not to read those materials, but they cannot veto their availability for other patrons.



In discussion, Trustees noted that RFPL has adopted the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights as part of its collection development policy. Trustees agreed that the Library needs to take patron concerns seriously and think about the entire community when making selections while leaving the decisions on collections and programs to the professional librarians on the Library's staff. Trustees agreed that, with the exception of Pride Month in June when interest and attention are higher, there has not been a disproportionate emphasis on LGBTQ+ materials in displays and programming.

Trustees acknowledged the time and work that goes into collection development and thanked Director Compton and the staff for their expertise and their dedication to the River Forest community.

## **Old Business**

### **Air handler relocation and mechanical room renovation**

Director Compton gave an update on the air handler relocation and mechanical room renovation. The air handler is now running, drywall work has been completed, and painting has started. A metal ceiling grid has been installed, and the bathroom header is in place. The controls work for the unit is done although the system still needs to be tested and balanced. The condensation issue is expected to improve once the unit is running with the controls and the system is tested and balanced.

Construction Solutions of Illinois (CSI) has not confirmed a plan for raising the wall on the enclosure. Williams has agreed to determine the final height of the wall.

The room is scheduled for substantial completion in October. The Library will receive a certificate of occupancy following an inspection.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22pm following a motion by Trustee Hill, which was seconded by Trustee Berens. All approved, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Elan Long, Secretary