



Board Meeting
Russell Library Hubbard Room
Tuesday, January 21, 2020

- . **Present:** Trustees Atherton, Becker, Berlind, Duggan, Fulton, Hadley, Jones (7:15), Murdock, Russell, Skowera, and Wisneski; Library Director Burkey; Staff Member Ann Smith; Friends President Howard Rulnick; Director of Property Management and Security Robb Prchal; Jeff Hush

- . **Excused:** Trustee Nelson

- 1. **Call to Order:** President Wisneski called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

- 2. **Public Session/Comment:** Howard Rulnick, President of the Friends, introduced himself but had no further comment.

- 3. **Approval of Minutes:** It was moved (Trustee Skowera) and seconded (Trustee Hadley) to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2019 Board meeting with note of two typos needing correction, and the misspelling of Trustee Skowera's first name; it is Bryan, not Brian. The motion passed with the abstention of Trustees Becker and Duggan.

- 4. **Administration Report – Ramona Burkey, Library Director**
GOAL 1: “A cohesive team of coworkers who buy into a shared vision of the future of the Russell Library, understand their roles in that future, and feel that their skills and abilities are fully utilized within the context of their daily work.”
 - Christy Billings, Gary Brown, and Andres Ortiz have been promoted to Library Associate, Computer Technician, and Custodian/Maintainer, respectively. This is in recognition of the increased complexity of their work, the skill with which they do it, and the operational needs of the library.
 - Stephen Randolph began work as our new full-time Security Guard on December 16.
 - Shannon Wild began work as our new Youth Librarian on December 30.
 - Cate Tsahalis will begin work as our Executive Assistant on February 10.
 - I will invite all newer employees to a future Board meeting for introductions. Board members will be welcome to stop by our in-house meet-and-greets for new staff members as well.
 - On January 10, we hosted our second half-day professional development session, with technology workshops about email and our publicly-available downloadable products, training in Active Shooter/Active Threat response, and a visit from City of Middletown Payroll/Pension Administrator Ne'Cole Carr. During lunch, we welcomed Jean Baur and her therapy dog Rudy, who helped us all to de-stress.
 - Six staff members will be attending the Public Library Association's bi-annual conference at the end of February; it will be held in Nashville. This is perhaps the most interesting and useful national conference for public librarians; I always get a lot out of it and I know my coworkers will too.
 - I have been invited to attend the American Library Association's annual Legislative Fly-In in Washington, D.C. again this year. I will be in D.C. from February 9-11 talking with our federal legislators about the importance of federal IMLS and LSTA funding, and the positive impact it has on constituents in Connecticut. I am honored to be invited back to this important event.

- I recently reviewed my FY2019-2020 Goals and Objectives, and we are very much on track. I look forward to discussing our progress with the Executive Committee. I say "our progress" because our success is very much a team effort

GOAL 2: "Groups and individuals think of the Russell Library as a driver of community connection, problem-solving and innovation, a transformer of lives, and a source for reliable, quality information."

- Our upcoming events and classes include a Fancy Fairy Party (all ages!), Black History Month Inspired Mask Making, a Lunar New Year Celebration, our Racial Justice Book Group, and much more. Please visit our Events calendar at <http://www.russelllibrary.org/> for a full listing of events.
- The Friends of the Russell Library and the Friends of Wesleyan Libraries will hold a joint book sale in the community in March. More information will become available when details have been confirmed by all parties.
- We will be an open/drop-in Summer Meals site this year. Free breakfast and lunch will be provided for anyone under the age of 18, Monday through Friday in the Activity Room. This federally-funded program is administered by Middletown Public Schools Food Services.

GOAL 3: The Russell Library is a "destination": A place of wonder and discovery that is welcoming and comfortable for all.

- Mark Your Calendars: Saturday, April 4 is the Russell Library's 145th Birthday celebration.
- Staff from several departments worked very hard all last autumn to clean out the basement room affectionately known as the "Hitchcock Room." This is where we had stored old, disused items, and where the Friends of the Library have traditionally sorted donated books for upcoming sales. We got rid of tons (literally) of moldy, smelly and unusable items, gave it a thorough cleaning and a coat of nice paint, and rearranged it into useful space. It's still a bit of an ongoing process, but it has already received a lot of positive comments from staff and Friends. Our Friends have been extremely patient and hardworking during this project, too!

GOAL 4: The Russell Library is a strong and sustainable organization.

- I'm thrilled to announce that our grant proposal to the Community Foundation of Middlesex County was approved at the full amount of \$5,000. Thus far, Brandie and I have secured \$10,000 in grant funding to offset the cost of our strategic planning consultant.
- I have submitted a grant request for \$5,000 to the Connecticut State Library (Urban Libraries Quick Grant) to pay for comfortable seating and developmentally-appropriate toys for the Children's Room.
- We will soon be submitting our Fiscal Year 2020-2021 budget request to the City of Middletown (due in the Mayor's office by Friday 2/14). Particular challenges include facilities maintenance costs, the need for modern technology such as cloud-based rather than onsite servers, replacement of our Reagan-era telephone system, and fulfillment of skyrocketing demand for downloadable materials (eBooks, e-audio, etc.) while still providing materials in physical formats. We will also need to obtain a 40% match of \$24,000 or more for our network wiring upgrade project, to go along with the 60% that would be funded by e-Rate. Complicating all of this is Mayor Florsheim's request that all departments submit "flat" budget requests for Fiscal Year 2020-2021. The Mayor has also asked us to submit sample budgets representing a 5% decrease, along with any "wish list" items.
- We had a power outage on Broad Street early in the morning on Tuesday 1/7. When the power came back on (we do not have a generator), one of our air handler motors burned out. Risk Management informs us that this is not a covered expense under the City's insurance policy, because it was not a lightning strike, so we'll have to absorb the full cost of this repair. Our building is getting more expensive to maintain year to year as equipment ages; this is yet another example of these costs.
- Captain Gary Wallace from the Middletown PD and Fire Chief Rob Kronenberger will be assisting us as we strengthen our emergency operations plans, which haven't been updated in many years.

- Community Connections, Meetings, Conferences Attended (does not include internal meetings with staff) since last scheduled Board meeting:
 - I have set up a regular (bi-monthly) schedule of meetings with Mayor Florsheim, beginning in early February. I intend to continue the discussion about the RFP and appropriation for a Facilities Assessment with him at upcoming meetings.
 - I have been invited to join Middletown's Complete Count Census committee, which is officially being formed by the Common Council at their February 3 meeting.
 - Middletown Senior Center 5-Year Anniversary Reception
 - Census meeting at City Hall, with Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz
 - United Way Women's Initiative
 - I have been invited to join the board of the Middlesex United Way.
 - Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce: Central Business Bureau monthly meeting
 - City Department Heads
 - Joint BOE/Recreation dept./Russell Library summer/"out of school learning" collaboration meeting

5. **Old Business:** There was no old business.

6. **New Business:**

- a. *Update from Robb Prchal, Director of Property Management and Security:* Prchal began with a mention of his many years of work in both commercial and residential property management, including work on older buildings. He said that there were many challenges in managing the three separate buildings that have been combined to constitute Russell Library. The HVAC system and the elevator are 30 years old and need constant repair. The roofs of the buildings are nearing the end of their lifetimes, and wiring in the combined buildings is difficult to access. Prchal's property management crew consists of two maintainers and one part time custodian; due to their skills, much of the routine repair and painting can be done in-house. The crew has been focusing for the last few years on improving the appearance of the interior spaces. Prchal also supervises a security staff of one full-time security officer and three part-timers, so that the buildings have full-time coverage. There were many questions and a lengthy discussion of the importance of assessing the buildings before making costly repairs or replacements when the need for a major renovation is becoming more urgent.
- b.
 - i: The schedule of Board meetings for calendar year 2020 was discussed and it was decided to change the February 18 meeting to Wednesday February 12 (at 6:00 p.m.) due to the public school vacation the week of February 18.
 - ii. Board members were given a copy of the revised by-laws as approved at the Company meeting on December 11 2019.

*At this point it was moved (Trustee Atherton) and seconded (Trustee Hadley) to re-open the Public Session to accommodate a late arrival. The motion passed unanimously. Member of the public Jeff Hush introduced himself saying he had been a patron of the library since moving to Middletown in 2011. Director of the Middletown Green Community Center, he is involved in monthly presentations at the library of a program on lifestyle medicine. The program is connected with the public school system, sponsored in part by Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Connor, and is part of a statewide initiative, the Health Advancement Community. The aim of the program is to bring physicians, nurses, and coaches into contact with low-income citizens and to help make healthcare more available to this group. The program meets from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. one Saturday a month at Russell Library. Jeff Hush asked Board members to assist in outreach to the community to publicize this program.

- c. *Russell Library Fiscal Calendar 2020-2021*: It was moved (Trustee Berlind) and seconded (Trustee Atherton) to approve the Russell Library Fiscal Calendar for 2020-2021. The motion passed unanimously.
- d. *Green Street building and feasibility study*: President Wisneski reported that Mayor Florsheim will be making a behind-the-scenes walk-through of the library buildings. The Common Council has tabled the \$50,000 proposal for a feasibility study, but it is hoped that the money will soon be on the table again so that a comprehensive assessment of the buildings' condition and needs can be made.
- e. *Elimination of overdue fines*: Library Director Burkey presented a Company budget that compensated for the loss of income in library fines, and distributed a FAQ sheet explaining how the new system would work, if approved, beginning in July 2020.

7. Committee Reports and Recommendations:

- a. *Executive Committee Report*: President Wisneski noted that the newly approved by-laws have re-organized the committees to number just three. Assignments have not yet been made, so the Executive Committee has not yet begun meeting.
- b. *Finance Committee Report*: Trustee Becker, Chair, reported that the committee had voted to recommend the fine-free policy to the full board and that both City and Company budgets were on track for this point in the fiscal year. The endowment value is \$1,285,000. It was moved (Trustee Becker) and seconded (Trustee Duggan) to approve the elimination of overdue fines effective July 1, 2020. The motion passed unanimously.
- c. *Governance Committee Report*: Again, with the new committee structure, this group has yet to meet. It was noted that a report from the consultant Maxine Bleiweis employed by the Strategic Planning Committee had just been received and that the committee would meet soon to act on the report and to continue its planning work.

- 8. Adjournment:** It was moved (Trustee Fulton) and seconded (Trustee Jones) to adjourn at 8:45 p.m.. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Regular Board meeting: Wednesday, February 12, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Berlind

Wendy Berlind, Secretary