Governance Committee
of the Russell Library Board of Trustees
Regular Meeting, February 2, 2022, 5:00 PM
(Online meeting via Webex)
Approved Minutes

Present: Brandie Doyle (Assistant Director), Jennifer Hadley (recorder), Thomas Russell IV, Bryan Skowera (chair), Alison Williams
Absent: Gregory Harris

1. Call to Order: Chair Skowera called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

2. Review of Community Dialogue Framework

3. Approval of Minutes
a. MOTION: Trustee Williams moved and Trustee Skowera seconded to approve the minutes from the January 5, 2022 Governance Committee Meeting. The motion passed unanimously.
b. MOTION: Trustee Williams moved and Trustee Skowera seconded to approve the minutes from the January 14, 2022 Governance Committee Special Meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comment - No public present.

5. Unfinished Business
a. Policy review (Display/Public Posting Policy)

Assistant Director Doyle submitted a revised draft, incorporating suggestions from Trustee Harris as well as recommendations from Director Burkey.

Trustee Skowera raised the issue of ALA’s interpretation of the first amendment and its own Bill of Rights which asserts that a library could either have a library-only bulletin board or must open display space to all. We discussed his suggestion to add a statement requiring that advertised events must be open, relevant, and available to all. Trustees Williams provided examples when events might best serve more limited audiences. What about events that might be problematic to some? Trustee Russell suggested adding language connecting with the library’s mission. Trustee Skowera also suggested including a disclaimer next to any display.

**DISPLAY POLICY**

Russell Library’s display area provides a central location for patrons to access community information. Depending on available space, the Library may offer bulletin boards, tables and/or racks upon which materials may be affixed or disseminated.

The Display Policy is an extension of Russell Library’s mission, vision, and strategic goals. We empower people to grow, connect, strive and thrive. Everyone feels welcomed and included. We
strengthen community, create a safe and welcoming destination, foster a thriving economic ecosystem, and promote a lifelong love of learning.

Displays are intended for educational, cultural, or informational purposes. Display space is limited. In general, Russell Library intends to prioritize its use of available space as follows:

1. Materials concerning Russell Library
2. Materials concerning Library-affiliated organizations
3. Materials concerning the City of Middletown
4. Materials concerning other official government postings
5. Materials concerning not-for-profit organizations
6. Materials that originate from Middletown organizations
7. Materials that are timely and relevant
8. Materials that fit the available space.

All materials meant for display must be submitted to the Russell Library in advance for approval. The Library undertakes no duty to keep, protect, preserve, or return submitted materials, approved or unapproved. Placement (location) of approved materials within the display area will be at the Library’s discretion. Placement of displays shall be at the discretion of the Library. Unsolicited items which do not meet the above criteria will be discarded. Materials posted without approval will be removed and discarded.

Removed materials will be discarded.

No materials will be accepted for permanent continuous display.

Display of submitted materials does not constitute the Library’s endorsement of the materials, their content, or their submitters. The Library will post the following disclaimer for any display which includes externally submitted materials:

“The Russell Library makes this space available as a service for the public. Display of these materials does not constitute Russell Library’s endorsement of the materials contained herein.”

Because display space is limited, Russell Library will in its discretion limit the size and number of materials, the duration of their display, and the frequency with which a group or organization may display their materials. Materials will be displayed for a limited period of time and removed by Library staff in order to make room for newer materials.

Individuals with questions about the display policy or objections to materials on display should contact the Library Director.

Trustee Hadley moved that we amend the agenda to immediately consider the solicitation of input during policy reviews. Trustee Russell seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Trustee Hadley suggested sending a link to draft policies to staff before meetings so there is time to comment. She said that while this might add time to policy review, that it was worth it and could also help us avoid mistakes. Trustee Skowera suggested that prior to Governance Committee and Board meetings a link to the agenda and a link to draft policies be sent to the staff, so the materials could be reviewed prior to the meetings and people could come for public
comment. Trustee Williams asked if there was a way to email comments if a person could not attend the meeting. Trustee Skowera suggested that our minutes could list upcoming policies to be reviewed so that staff would have advance warning and could submit comments in person or via email even prior to a draft. Assistant Director Doyle asked how information would be distributed and how comments would be collected. Could a staff member send this information to the staff email list? Trustee Skowera suggested that all board members should receive all comments to review and they should be entered into the public record. We discussed using the board email address. Incoming email could be forwarded to a google sheet. That would also help individuals avoid entering into discussions over comments. Assistant Director Doyle expressed concern that this would delay the policy review process, and that leadership had responsibility to review policies. These suggestions should be brought to Director Burkey’s attention and she might have comments. Assistant Director Doyle was also concerned that this might open up a direct line to the Board of Trustees bypassing supervisors and might stall some change efforts that are necessary and overdue. Trustee Skowera said that since the Board of Trustees are officials and part of our constituencies include employees, there should be an avenue for all opinions to be aired. We would need to listen, not debate. This may not slow down the process too much since it would be part of the regular comment cycle. Assistant Director Doyle asked if this process gave privileged access to the staff over the public? Trustee Skowera replied that it’s not privileged if we make sure our agendas and documents are all publicly available. Emailing the agenda and documents to the staff is a courtesy. We decided to continue this discussion at the next meeting since the process might hinge on available email mechanisms.

Trustee Williams moved and Trustee Hadley seconded accepting the updated draft display policy and advancing it to the Board for formal review. The motion passed unanimously. Trustee Hadley expressed the desire that we ask to have the staff informed about the draft policy in case they have some comments even though we have not yet worked out a better communication process.

6. New Business
   b. Communication channels for the Board of Trustees

Trustee Skowera expressed concerns partially based on feedback from the climate survey, that the Board of Trustees email address doesn’t have a mechanism to be reliably checked and that the form on the website only routes to public comment, that the public including staff do not have any appropriate level of access to public officials (the Board) as they should. If folks want to reach out, they should be able to do so. Trustee Skowera suggested that contact information and committee membership be included on the webpage. The Board President has the responsibility to check the Board email. Should information only go to one person? Are there other mechanisms? We could use personal email addresses, or be provided with email addresses at russelllibrary.org. That would give library oversight in case of FOI requests. Could a filter be put on the Board email address so that emails get forwarded to all Board members? All of our email correspondence is FOI-able. We should empower people to connect (per our mission). For the city, if you are a member of a committee or commission that is responsible for
fiscal spending, you are issued a city email address. If not, you are expected to use your personal email address. The city wishes to maintain archival records for any commission with fiscal oversight. Since the Board does have fiscal responsibility, that might be good for us, too. Brandie will check with tech staff to see if the library has the capacity to issue board members email addresses or if they have any other suggestions.

c. Executive Session to discuss strategies and negotiations about pending claims or pending litigation involving the agency or a member. Jennifer moved and Alison seconded entering Executive Session. The motion passed unanimously and the trustees entered Executive Session at 6:31. After a unanimous vote, we exited the Executive Session at 6:32.

7. Discussion of Items to Be Placed on Next Agenda:
   - Communication channels for the Board of Trustees
   - Solicitation of input during policy reviews

8. Announcements - Letter to the mayor was distributed.

9. Open Forum/General Good and Welfare - No comments

10. Additional Public Comment: None

11. Meeting Adjournment: Trustee Williams moved and Trustee Russell seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:34.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Hadley