Russell Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
Tuesday, March 15, 2022, 6:30 p.m.
Hubbard Room, Russell Library

Present: Trustees Atherton, Becker, Berlind, Carnegie-Hargreaves, Fulton, Hadley, Harris, and Wisneski; Library Director Burkey; staff member Ann Smith.

Missing: Trustees Duggan, Nelson, Russell, and Williams

1. Call to Order: President Wisneski called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.
   a. Review of Community Dialogue Framework: President Wisneski asked Board members to look over the Framework attached to the agenda.
   b. Mission Moment: Trustee Berlind mentioned that members of the Friends book sorting group were excited to use the brand new self-checkout machines in the library lobby that morning, and that it was nice to be approached by an enthusiastic staff member offering help in using the machine.
   c. Public Comment: There were no comments from members of the public; President Wisneski reported an email from Vietnam to the trustees that consisted of the number 1, and that there was an offer from a martial arts studio in Cromwell for self-defense training and a martial arts demonstration.

2. Approval of Minutes
   a. MOTION: It was moved (Trustee Harris) and seconded (Trustee Becker) to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2022 Board Meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Administration Report – Ramona Burkey, Library Director
   a. Director Burkey reported that the above-mentioned self-checkout machines are installed and running. The money for them came from an Everybody Learns COVID relief grant which also included money for an air purifying system. She spoke about the Passport to CT Libraries program which encourages patrons to visit as many libraries as possible in April with small prizes as an incentive; a packet of wildflower seeds, Russell Library’s “prize”, was handed to each Trustee. Other announcements were: April 5 is National Library Worker Day; Library Giving Day is on April 6; the United for Libraries website has many resources; the Lunch and Learn series of informal meetings with staff is underway; she will speak to an HR firm later in the week to see about hiring a consultant to help with issues raised by the staff climate survey; and that there is a notary public available through the library.

4. Committee Reports
   a. Executive Committee: Trustee Wisneski reported that the committee met on March 1 and discussed the COVID response now that masks are optional in many parts of the city, the work of the facilities committee, EDI training, and progress on hiring an HR consultant.
b. Finance Committee: Trustee Becker reported that the committee met on March 10 and discussed grants and the submission of the FY23 budget to the City. An engagement letter from Donald Perlroth and Associates, the accounting firm, was discussed and will be presented to the Board for approval. Director Burkey and Assistant Director for Administrative Services Doyle met with the Mayor and City financial personnel on March 15 to go over the budget and the capital request. A formal appearance before the Common Council is scheduled for April 12 at 6:00 p.m.

c. Governance Committee: Trustee Hadley is now chairing this committee with Trustee Williams as vice chair. A revised display and public posting policy has been finalized and is ready for Board approval. In the future, policies to be revised will be brought to the committee by Assistant Director for Administrative Services Doyle, revised by the committee, then made available to staff for comment before being brought to the Board. Trustee Hadley asked for Board input on the feasibility of making available to the public items that will be voted on at an upcoming Board meeting. Documents shared with the Board on Google Docs are editable, therefore not suitable for wide sharing. The consensus was to add to the agenda a note saying that the documents are available upon email request to library administration.

d. Strategic Planning Committee: Trustee Wisneski reported that the committee did not meet in January.

e. Facilities Committee: In the absence of Trustee Nelson, Trustee Becker reported that the committee met on February 17 and is working on four items relating to the future of a new library: program, financing, schedule, and site. The goal is to have an end result by January 2027. The committee will meet on the first Thursday of each month at 5:00 p.m. Members are Trustees Nelson, Wisneski, Atherton, Becker, Hadley and Carnegie-Hargreaves.

5. Unfinished Business
   a. Meeting Format: This meeting is taking place in person. State law may require that after April 30, public meetings must take place in person or via a hybrid process; as of now, the library does not have hybrid technology.

6. New Business
   a. MOTION: It was moved (Trustee Harris) and seconded (Trustee Hadley) to accept the revised display and public posting policy. Staff have been given the opportunity to comment. The motion passed unanimously.
   b. MOTION: It was moved (Trustee Becker) and seconded (Trustee Atherton) to accept the FY 22 engagement letter from Donald Perlroth and Associates. It was then moved (Trustee Harris) and seconded (Trustee Atherton) to amend the motion to read "to authorize Director Burkey to engage Donald Perlroth and Associates as auditors." The motion to amend passed unanimously, and the original motion as amended also passed unanimously.

7. Announcements: Trustee Atherton told of a recent conversation with one of Middletown’s state senate representatives; the senator had no idea of the loss of purchasing power the library has undergone in the past five years. It was suggested that the facilities committee send out information on the library’s needs and their associated costs, perhaps in a summary of the Facilities Assessment Report. Trustee Fulton was asked about jobs program partnerships and was assured by Director Burkey that the partnerships were in place and that there was regular contact with the Chamber of Commerce.
8. **Open Forum/ General Good and Welfare:** Trustee Becker said that the website for Library Giving Day was well designed making it easy to give, and noted how important it is to have 100% Trustee participation. Trustee Carnegie-Hargreaves commented that it has been a great meeting.

9. **Executive Session**
   a. **MOTION:** It was moved (Trustee Harris) and seconded (Trustee Fulton) to enter Executive Session at 7:43 p.m. to discuss matters related to strategy, personnel, contracts, and property. The motion passed unanimously. It was moved (Trustee Harris) and seconded (Trustee Fulton) to exit Executive Session at 8:06 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

10. **Adjournment:** It was moved (Trustee Harris) and seconded (Trustee Fulton) to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

   **Next regular board meeting:** Tuesday, April 19, 2022, 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Berlind

Wendy Berlind, Secretary
Library Director’s Report

to the Russell Library Board of Trustees
March 15, 2022

“We empower people to grow, connect, strive and thrive.”

Foundational Strategy: Practice equity and inclusion, and listen to youth voices.

- We are in the early stages of partnering with Wesleyan’s Jewett Center for Community Partnerships and the Middletown Youth Services Bureau on focus groups that will help to identify the needs of Middletown’s teens as well as give them a platform (YSB’s “Talks Too Much” podcast).
- Russell Library Community Engagement Coordinator Ayanna Wright continues to work with Kerry Kincy from the Free Center in order to get needed information and resources to their BIPOC breastfeeding group; there may be some overlap possibilities with Reverend Robyn Anderson’s “Pregnant with Possibilities” group.
- Ayanna is also in contact with Juneteenth coordinators in town to see how the library can be involved this year. Juneteenth is a paid federal holiday for library staff, and the library is closed for the day.
- Teen volunteers will now be able to help out at our Friends of the Library book sales.
- The tabletop gaming table, ordered with Youth Violence Prevention funding, has shipped and should arrive soon.

Goal 1: Strengthen Community

- We still have some free wifi hotspots available for Middletown students: https://www.middletownpress.com/middletown/article/Russell-Library-offers-free-Wi-Fi-hotspots-to-16825774.php
- A Middletown Pride Earth Day Family Fun Event, as well as several other Pride events in June, are being planned.
- Ayanna Wright is working with community organizations on ways to share their resources and information in-person at the library as we navigate this “next phase” of Covid.
• The Russell Library podcast, “Middletown Strong,” has begun recording its second season! Several staff members have joined the podcast team, bringing new ideas, energy and excitement. 
https://middletownstrong.buzzsprout.com/

Goal 2: Create a Safe and Welcoming Destination
• I continue to draft the building program. Staff were issued a survey with prompts for feedback on how a new building would feel and function based on their experiences on the “front lines.” I will also meet with the Friends of the Library about the building program. The building program will also reflect the priorities of the Vision Committee and our Strategic Plan.
• Our self-checkout machines will be installed and active soon; our Digital and Emerging Technologies staff had to shift attention to network issues and cybersecurity insurance compliance work.

Goal 3: Foster a Thriving Economic Ecosystem
• Our internal budget meeting with the Mayor and City staff is scheduled for March 15. The hearing with the Common Council is on Tuesday, April 12 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at City Hall. Trustees are encouraged to attend the April 12 hearing to show support.
• On March 1, I spoke with staff from the offices of Senator Chris Murphy, Congresswoman Jahana Hayes, and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro about the critical importance of federal LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act), IAL (Innovative Approaches to Literacy), and library infrastructure funding.
• Christy Billings completed our CDBG grant application for Job & Career program funding; emphasis this round will be on EDI in the workplace. Christy is also connecting with the new state CareerConnect program, a partnership between colleges and training organizations, perhaps to present at our Job & Career sessions.
• Librarian Wafaa Razeq is hosting an online program on cryptocurrency in April for Money Smart Week. Librarian Stephanie Rush will be offering a Money Smart Week storytime, possibly with an SDA (Self-Directed Activity) kit for youngsters to take home.
• Yvonne Daniels, Mathematics Curriculum Supervisor (grades 6-12) for the Middletown Public Schools, is planning a week-long half-day “Entrepreneurship Camp,” which we will host here at the library in late June, for rising Middletown 6th through 8th graders. Topics will include math skills and even writing a business plan.
• The Friends of the Russell Library book sale will run 3/31-4/2 in the Main Reading Room:
  ○ Thursday, 3/31 from 9am to 8pm
  ○ Friday and Saturday, 4/1 and 4/2 from 9am to 5pm
  ○ Cash and credit cards are accepted
• Last but not least, we hope to attain 100% Board participation in this year’s Library Giving Day campaign. The amount you give is up to you! https://secure.iglforms.com/form_engine/s/aFYollvm3fkXXdZEmBvV3A

Goal 4: Promote Lifelong Love of Learning
• Librarian Shannon Wild, along with Kymberlee Powe from the CT State Library, will be presenting “Reimagining School Readiness” workshops this spring to public library staff around Connecticut. More info: https://bayareadiscoverymuseum.org/resources/educator-resources/librarian-toolkit
• This year’s Summer Reading theme is “Read Beyond the Beaten Path.” Our staff are cooking up great activities for readers of all ages – kids, teens, adults and seniors:
  ○ Geocaching/letterboxing around town, emphasizing city parks
  ○ Story Walk at Crystal Lake, funded by the Rockfall Foundation
  ○ “Trail Tracker” (kind of like Candyland) to track reading
  ○ End-of-summer finale party at Crystal Lake
  ○ And more!
• Five Russell staff members, including myself, will be attending the Public Library Association’s biannual conference in Portland, OR from March 22-26.
• We are working on the last few sections of collection inventory: youth nonfiction, adult fiction, DVDs, and Young Adult graphic novels.
• We are participating in All CT Reads, Connecticut’s year-long initiative to promote lifelong reading, learning and connection. There are three titles this year:
  ○ Snapdragon by Kat Leyh (kids)
  ○ One of the Good Ones by Maika Moulite and Maritza Moulite (teens)
  ○ Transcendent Kingdom by Yaa Gyasi (adults)
• We’re trying out a staff “Lunch and Learn” concept: meeting monthly to discuss “big” issues (such as intellectual freedom), but also to provide skill-sharing and general coworker fellowship opportunities. There are many things that staff want to talk about, but the physical layout of our building(s) doesn’t allow for serendipitous conversation. So we’re engineering it!
**Dashboard (Selected categories: not comprehensive):**

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**Happy Customers/Brag Sheet:**

Spending time at the library with my little ones ❤️

*From Facebook*

Check out Councilman Phil Pessina’s key ring!

*Check out Councilman Phil Pessina’s key ring!*
Community Connections/Meetings, Professional Development:

- Meeting with Cooper-Robertson staffers, Mayor and City staff, and representatives from the YMCA to discuss how our organizations may fit into long-term/riverfront/downtown development in Middletown
- United Way Women’s Initiative
- Grant proposal presentation to ARPA Task Force
- Meeting with Representative Q Williams, Maryellen Shuckerow (Executive Director of St. Vincent dePaul Middletown), Michele Rulnick (President and CEO of Northern Middlesex YMCA) to discuss potential infrastructure funding options
- ALA (American Library Association) Legislative Meetings and briefings
- Weekly Admin Team meetings
- Biweekly Leadership Team meetings
- Radio interview: WMRD/WLIS
- Individual meetings with staff
- Weekly office hours/staff chats
- Executive Committee
- Governance Committee
- Facilities Committee
- Finance Committee
- Hosted Chamber of Commerce Central Business Bureau monthly meeting (at the Chamber)
- Monthly meeting with Friends President Sandy Becker
- Recreation/Library summer collaboration meeting
- LGBTQ+ training at City Hall
- Common Council - Questions to Directors
- United Way Executive Committee
- Webinar: “New and Updated Cyber Laws in CT”
- Youth Enrichment Forum with State Representative Quentin Williams
- Staff “Lunch and Learn”
- LCI Board
- Friends of the Library - building program discussion
- Budget meeting with Mayor Florsheim and City staff

Respectfully Submitted,

Ramona A. Burkey

Ramona Burkey
Library Director