Russell Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
Tuesday, April 19, 2022, 6:30 p.m.
Hubbard Room, Russell Library

Present: Trustees Atherton, Becker, Berlind, Carnegie-Hargreaves, Hadley, Harris, Nelson, Russell, Williams, and Wisneski; Library Director Burkey

Missing: Trustees Duggan, Fulton, and Sanders

1. Call to Order: President Wisneski called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. after several trustees returned from speaking at the budget hearing in the Common Council Chambers.
   a. Review of Community Dialogue Framework: President Wisneski asked Board members to look over the Framework attached to the agenda and read the section on discussion leading to deeper levels of understanding.
   b. Mission Moment: Trustee Russell spoke about the way the library supports the community quietly, in an unspoken manner, through empathy, compassion, encouragement, and resilience.
   c. Public Comment: There were no members of the public present.

2. Approval of Minutes
   a. MOTION: It was moved (Trustee Harris) and seconded (Trustee Nelson) to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2022 Board Meeting. The motion passed with Trustees Russell and Williams abstaining.

3. Administration Report – Ramona Burkey, Library Director
   a. In addition to her extensive written report, Director Burkey reported that new carpet will be installed in the Hubbard Room and the hallway leading to it in May. She announced that Kim Spachman has been promoted to head of Information Services and Adult Learning after the retirement of Cathy Ahern. Kim has been in the department of Digital and Emerging Technology for several years. Other good news is that Head of Youth and Family Learning Jenn Billingsley and colleagues have been chosen by the CLA to receive a statewide Intellectual Freedom Award for their work on a panel dealing with the writings of Dr. Seuss. Lastly, Director Burkey informed the board that the HR consultant from KardasLarson is finishing a report on the staff climate survey responses and soon will come speak to staff. She can also speak to the board if desired.

4. Committee Reports
   a. Executive Committee: Trustee Wisneski reported that the committee met on April 5 and is planning a board retreat. Topics under consideration are a Board Basics presentation, a discussion of the pros and cons of the library becoming a City department rather than a part of the Russell Library Company, and
board self-assessment. The Company meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 13 at 6:00 p.m. as a virtual meeting. It was moved (Trustee Becker) and seconded (Trustee Nelson) to approve the appointment of Cyndi Sanders to complete the term vacated by Bryan Skowera until June of 2023. The motion passed unanimously.

b. **Finance Committee:** Trustee Becker reported that there was no meeting this month due to illness of the chair. Trustee Wisneski mentioned that the Mayor had approved a flat-funded budget for the coming year and that Trustees Aherton, Becker, Harris, Nelson, and Wisneski had spoken at the budget hearing in favor of returning $62,000 to the budget for part-time salaries, materials for circulation, and building repairs. A few speakers at the budget hearing spoke against the level of salaries and raises for Library Administrators; Director Burkey told the board that the salaries are at a level outlined some years ago by the City executive non-bargaining scale. A clause in the agreement says that after 2021, these salary increases will match cost-of-living increases but will be capped at 5%. With inflation so high in the past several months, these raises represent a loss of buying power. It was also reported that Library Giving Day exceeded the goals of $5,000 and 100 participants; $6,000 in gifts was received and there were 101 donors.

c. **Governance Committee:** Trustee Hadley reported that new Trustee Sanders has agreed to chair this committee but that she was unable to attend tonight’s meeting. The committee has revised the Conflict of Interest form with minor changes, is formulating a regular policy review schedule, and is working on the whistle blower policy.

d. **Strategic Planning Committee:** Trustee Duggan did not attend the meeting so there was no report.

e. **Facilities Committee:** Trustee Nelson mentioned that he spoke to the Common Council at the budget hearing about the aging building which had last been renovated in 1985. He has asked Director Burkey to develop a building program driven by the expressed needs of staff, the public, and the Friends. The City is actively looking to develop the center of town along with the waterfront and it may be that a new library building can fit into one of those proposals.

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 Nelson) to accept the revised Conflict of Interest policy. The motion passed unanimously.

7. **Announcements:** Trustee Berlind reported that the April 1-2 Friends book sale garnered $3,200 and that the Annual Meeting of the Friends was scheduled for Tuesday, June 14 at 7:00 p.m. in the Hubbard Room. It was then moved (Trustee Harris) and seconded (Trustee Becker) to return to Agenda item #2, Public Comment, in order for Trustee Wisneski to read two emails to the Trustees from members of the public. One message concerned the ending of the contract with Noyes School of Rhythm for the loan and maintenance of the piano in the Hubbard Room, and the other expressed a desire to have the library resume labelling appropriate books with the Science Fiction label.
8. **Open Forum/ General Good and Welfare:** There were no comments.

9. **Executive Session**
   a. **MOTION:** It was moved (Trustee Nelson) and seconded (Trustee Harris) to enter Executive Session at 8:00 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 8:54 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

10. **Adjournment:** It was moved (Trustee Atherton) and seconded (Trustee Williams) to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

   **Next regular board meeting:** Tuesday, May 17, 2022, 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Berlind

Wendy Berlind, Secretary
Library Director's Report
to the Russell Library Board of Trustees
April 19, 2022

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

Foundational Strategy: Practice equity and inclusion, and listen to youth voices.
- Professionally moderated Project READY sessions for staff are planned, beginning in June.
- The tabletop gaming tables have been installed in the Teen Area. Gaming chairs will soon follow. The Dungeons & Dragons sets have arrived as well.

Goal 1: Strengthen Community
- Russell staffers attended Easter Fun at the former Keigwin Middle School on Saturday 4/9; we got to interact with about 150 kids and adults!

• The second season of the Russell Library podcast, “Middletown Strong,” has debuted! https://middletownstrong.buzzsprout.com/
• Our very popular Teen Volunteer program is wrapping up the Spring session. The Summer session will open for signups in May.
• In-house displays for “Reimagining School Readiness” are up. Librarian Shannon Wild, along with Kymerlee Powe from the Connecticut State Library, presented the first statewide session on April 13 to a packed (virtual) house.
- Staff are working on our Story Walk, which is being funded by the Rockfall Foundation; it will be installed at Crystal Lake.
- We distributed 216 Self-Directed Activity (SDA) kits to kids/families in March.

**Goal 2: Create a Safe and Welcoming Destination**
- I continue to work on the draft Building Program, which will include input given by staff and volunteers.
- Our self-checkout machines are now “live” in the lobby and the children’s room.
- You can also check out materials using your phone by using the “MeeScan” app.
- The Digital and Emerging Technologies team is working to ensure continued proper cybersecurity controls for all library functions.

**Goal 3: Foster a Thriving Economic Ecosystem**
- Congratulations to the Friends of the Russell Library, who brought in more than $3200 in their spring book sale.
- This year’s Library Giving Day campaign brought in nearly $6,000, with a total of 100 donations.
- Digital Navigator functions are included in the current in-house posting for Librarian I (Tech Generalist).

**Goal 4: Promote Lifelong Love of Learning**
- We were awarded a State Library Summer Learning grant to purchase a “giant chess” set, Lincoln Logs, and jumbo logs, which we can use in-house and take with us on outreach visits this summer and beyond.
- Summer reading program planning is in full swing! Remember, this year’s theme is “Read Beyond the Beaten Path” – an outdoor focus.
- The Middletown Public Schools’ Summer Learning Academy will visit the library this summer, pending transportation and meal logistics.
- Jenn Billingsley, Head of Youth and Family Learning, continues to work with Beman Middle School on the summer Entrepreneur Camp, which will meet at the library.
Dashboard (Selected categories; not comprehensive):

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Happy Customers/Brag Sheet (these are just a few of the MANY this month!):

- A patron made a point of complimenting our security guard, Stephen Randolph, for helping to bring in a large delivery of donated books without even being asked. The patron has ongoing health issues that would have made multiple trips to and from his car exhausting, so Steve’s help was a lifesaver.
- A couple came in with a text message with a Zoom link to their daughter’s live dissertation presentation. Deb Barberi was able to connect them to a larger screen in the Career Center so they could view this once in a lifetime event on something other than a tiny iPhone screen. They were extremely grateful!
- From a patron to Christy Billings: “Today’s Career presentation with Diane Lang was so insightful. Thank you for emailing the slides; you’re doing amazing work! I’m following Russell Library on Spotify and look forward to hearing all your podcasts.”
- From staff member Diane Marques: “On Tuesday evening [at home] a new neighborhood puppy stopped to say hello and her human and I got to
speaking. After some ‘what do you do’ pleasantries she exclaimed ‘You work at Russell Library! Do Bob and Christy still work there? Many years ago they helped me score my job and I still think of them!’ ‘Seem to be finding Russell love wherever I go...even my front yard.’

• From staffer Briana Gagnon: “Residents from Heritage Commons here in Middletown came to visit the library for a tour with me today! They hadn’t been here since before the pandemic and loved all the changes. They look forward to coming back soon.”

• From staffer Ayanna McKennon: “A family came in today and Mom made sure to pull me aside and say ‘Our library is OK but we prefer to come to Russell because your staff is so much friendlier.’”

• From staff member Cate Tsahalis: “I just got off the phone with one of our very generous donors. She made a point of saying that our library staff is friendlier and more helpful than any of the other libraries she frequents. She comes to Russell at least twice a week to meet her reading needs. She also said that she never would have made it through the pandemic without us.”

**Community Connections/Meetings, Professional Development:**

• Workshop: “The Art of Goal-Setting”
• Weekly Admin Team meetings
• Union contract negotiations
• Police Chief Erik Costa
• Public Library Association conference
• Online class: “Cultivating Civility, Resilience and Reflection in the Library”
• Weekly office hours in the staff room
• Interview panel, City of Waterbury
• Friend of the Russell Library book sale - setup and cleanup shifts
• Cynthia Clegg, Community Foundation of Middlesex County
• Library Speakers Consortium informational meeting
• Common Council Questions to Directors
• Executive Committee
• Governance Committee
• Facilities Committee
• Maryellen Shuckerow (St. Vincent de Paul) and Michele Rulnick (Northern Middlesex YMCA)
• Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz - National Library Week
• Chamber of Commerce Central Business Bureau
• Onboarding meeting with Trustee Sanders
• Monthly meeting with Friends president
Staff lunch for National Library Week/National Library Workers Day
Monthly “Pod” meeting with Mayor Florsheim and City directors
Library Connection, Inc. Board of Directors
Ellen Paul, CT Library Consortium
Easter Fun at (former) Keigwin Middle School
Public service shift at circulation desk
Webinar: “Using Awe and Backward Design in Libraries”
Budget hearing with Common Council
United Way Board
Russell Library Leadership Team semi-monthly meetings
Staff Lunch & Learn
Library updates and check-in w/Mayor Florsheim

Respectfully Submitted,

Ramona A. Burkey
Ramona Burkey
Library Director