Russell Library Board of Trustees Regular Meeting
Tuesday, May 17, 2022, 6:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present: Trustees Atherton, Becker, Berlind, Carnegie-Hargreaves, Duggan, Fulton, Hadley, Harris, Nelson, Sanders and Wisneski; Library Director Burkey

Missing: Trustees Russell, 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; he read the bullet point "challenge and debate the merit of ideas, not the person supporting them."
   b. Mission Moment: Trustee Sanders, a former trustee, spoke about her lifelong love of libraries, beginning with her local library named for Louisa May Alcott where she did research relating to a theater project and how she loved sitting in the stacks, learning without having to be in school. As president of the Board of Trustees and as a member of ACLB, she learned much about what goes into running a library and through these experiences has continued to grow, connect, strive, and thrive.
   c. Public Comment: There were no comments from members of the public and no emails to the trustees.

2. Approval of Minutes
   a. MOTION: It was moved (Trustee Harris) and seconded (Trustee Becker) to approve the minutes of the April 19, 2022 Board Meeting. The motion passed with Trustees Duggan and Sanders abstaining.

3. Administration Report – Ramona Burkey, Library Director
   a. In addition to her extensive written report, Director Burkey announced that Russell Library has a spot in the June 4 Middletown Pride parade and that all are welcome to join and march with the group. She read a comment received by a librarian in the information department from a couple who came in to use the new digital equipment to transform their wedding video into digital format and how pleased they were to use the machinery purchased by patron donations—including their own.

4. Committee Reports
   a. Executive Committee: Trustee Wisneski reported that the committee had a special meeting on April 28 to discuss in Executive Session letters that were issued to individuals who spoke about the library budget at the April 19 City budget hearing. The regular Executive Committee meeting scheduled for May 3 was canceled.
   b. Finance Committee: Trustee Becker reported that the Finance Committee met
on May 12 to discuss grants updates, Library Giving Day, the FY23 Russell Library Company budget, and an investment update from Essex Financial Services, reporting on recent declines in the securities market.

c. **Governance Committee:** Trustee Sanders reported that the Governance Committee met on May 4 to review the policy on unattended children; the policy was approved in general and sent to staff for their input. The policy should be in place before summer. The committee will also be working on the whistle blower and personnel policies after collecting input from staff and administration.

d. **Strategic Planning Committee:** Trustee Duggan reported that the committee has not met recently but that the Vision committee which met last summer has done related work. She requested information on the demographics of library staff including race, gender, economic status, and residence.

e. **Facilities Committee:** Trustee Nelson reported that the committee will be looking into results of the city arcade RFP to see how a library building might fit into that proposed development. He mentioned the building program that Director Burkey and staff have been working on; it is still being edited.

5. **Unfinished Business**

a. **Meeting Format:** Due to the recent rise in covid infections, this meeting is taking place virtually. State law allows for public meetings to continue to be virtual for the time being.

6. **New Business**

There was no new business.

7. **Announcements:** Trustee Harris told the trustees that he had recently attended a talk by former Polish president Lech Walesa, who was in Connecticut on a fund-raising trip for Ukrainian refugees sheltering in Poland. He found Walesa to be an entertaining and inspiring speaker.

8. **Open Forum/ General Good and Welfare:** There were no comments.

9. **Executive Session**

a. **MOTION:** It was moved (Trustee Harris) and seconded (Trustee Atherton) to enter Executive Session at 7:05 p.m. to discuss matters related to strategy, personnel, contracts, and property. The motion passed unanimously. It was moved (Trustee Atherton) and seconded (Trustee Nelson) to exit Executive Session at 8:01 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

10. **Adjournment:** It was moved (Trustee Nelson) and seconded (Trustee Harris) to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.

**Next regular board meeting:** Tuesday, June 21, 2022, 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Berlind, Secretary
Library Director's Report
to the Russell Library Board of Trustees
May 17, 2022

"We empower people to grow, connect, strive and thrive."

Foundational Strategy: Practice equity and inclusion, and listen to youth voices.
- The new Summer 2022 Teen Volunteer intake form is live on our website, now with a "Reading Influencer" option.
- Our staff Project READY (https://ready.web.unc.edu/) sessions will begin on Friday, May 20 during our half-day professional development closing.

Goal 1: Strengthen Community
- The community Earth Day event with Middletown Pride, Middletown Recreation, ReBoot Eco, cinder+salt, and many others on Saturday, April 23 at Harbor Park was a great success.
- The StoryWalk at Crystal Lake is up, and the kickoff event was lovely. This month’s book is From Tadpole to Frog. June’s book is From Egg to Butterfly. Many thanks to the Middletown Public Works and Parks and Recreation Division staff for installing the StoryWalk, and to the Rockfall Foundation for funding it!

Photos of the beautiful StoryWalk at Crystal Lake
• We have reserved a spot for Russell Library staff, Trustees, and Friends to march in the Middletown Pride parade on Saturday, June 4! Please contact me if you are able to join us.

• The library will host a table at the second annual Juneteenth festival, held this year on Saturday 6/18 at Smith Park.

**Goal 2: Create a Safe and Welcoming Destination**

• Three locust trees were removed from the courtyard in mid-April. As I reported to the Trustees in September 2021, the trees had overgrown the space, had dead/dying branches that were threatening to fall on people, were clogging hard-to-reach gutters with debris, and their overgrown root systems have buckled the concrete steps and walkways, creating tripping hazards. Fortunately, we were able to preserve the double cherry tree. Additional investments in safety and accessibility will be required in order to make the courtyard usable by all.

• We will be making sorely-needed repairs to library roofs, sidewalks and driveways this spring/summer.

**Goal 3: Foster a Thriving Economic Ecosystem**

• On Friday, May 6, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (CT-3) and Congressman John Larson (CT-1) visited the Russell Library to discuss how Middletown’s $29M in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds will benefit our community. Other local officials and stakeholders, including Mayor Florsheim and Middlesex Chamber of Commerce Director Larry McHugh joined the conversation as well. Many thanks to Trustees Berlind, Carnegie-Hargreaves, and Nelson for stopping by to show support.

*ARPA grant discussion at Russell Library, May 6, 2022*
• The Russell Library will be the beneficiary of two substantial ARPA grants: One, for $250,000, will allow for much-need improvements in our lobby and adjacent public restrooms (and makes us eligible to apply for an additional $250k from the Connecticut State Library). The other, a $491,000 collaborative project with Middletown Recreation and Senior Services and Middletown Arts and Culture, will provide programming, events and services to bring the community together post-pandemic.

• On May 10, the Common Council approved the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 City of Middletown operating budget. As expected, we are flat-funded again, with the exception of contractual increases.

**Goal 4: Promote Lifelong Love of Learning**

• Several staff members were panelists, presenters, or award recipients at this year’s Connecticut Library Association conference in early May:
  o Jennifer Billingsley and three colleagues from around the state won the CLA Intellectual Freedom Award for their Dr. Seuss discussion panel.
  o Christy Billings presented “Delivering Programs and Services to Veterans, Military Members and Their Families.”
  o Brandie Doyle presented “Opening the Job Candidate Pool”
  o Shannon Wild contributed a poster to a poster session on “Reimagining School Readiness.”
  o I moderated the “Your Legislator Is Coming - Now What?” panel and served as a panelist on “Advocacy Tips and Tricks” and “Going Fines-Free.”

• The American Heart Association is bringing their "Libraries with Heart" Initiative to the Russell Library. Partnering with the Community Health Center, a medical professional will be on hand to provide free BP readings, and an AHA rep will be available to offer free resources to interested patrons biweekly in the month of May.

• Our Youth and Family Learning staff will be offering outdoor in-person storytimes in June, July and August.

• Summer reading program materials and plans are firming up, and staff are planning camp/summer school visit outlines and activities (we will be going to visit groups where they are, due to transportation and other logistical issues on their part).

• Items ordered through the state summer learning grant are starting to arrive.

• The summer Entrepreneurship Camp will be offered at Beman Middle School; our staff will visit and provide enrichment activities.
• Congratulations to staffer Shannon Barillari on her recent promotion to Tech Associate in the Digital and Emerging Technologies department.
• Congratulations to Sarah Terrill, long-time Friends of the Library member and officer, for her Individual Lifetime Achievement Award from the Friends of Connecticut Libraries!

**Dashboard (Selected categories; not comprehensive):**

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

• From a patron: "I took advantage of the services of an attorney that was offered free at the library. Staff were helpful prior to my appointment time. The session with the attorney was a redirect that I needed to proceed. Thank you."

🌟🌟🌟🌟 15 hours ago

For a public library in Middletown, this is a great place. I love the online access capabilities and all the perks to having a library membership with this library. Now that they joined with other libraries, it’s even better! Thankful that these still exist and looking forward to many more visits (in person or online). Hopefully people/gov keeps funding so they can keep their doors open! Take advantage of their programs, classes, events, etc. #LibraryLife

• "Dear Christy and Lisa (resume reviewer),
I have good news to share, I’ve accepted a position as [...] and will start next week. The company is [...] and I think it’s going to be a great fit. I wish to thank you and the Russell Library for the resources that are provided through your Career Program and the many inspiring speakers. The opportunity for personal and professional growth is invaluable, and it’s been a pleasure to have worked with you!

With sincere gratitude,

N.A.

- From Jenn Billingsley: "We just heard back from the DLD about the "I’m Your Neighbor Books" books project and this is what Kirsten Cappy (Executive Director I’m Your Neighbor Books) had to say about our library: 'What a fabulous collection Russell Library has - one of the best I have seen.'"

- Seen on Instagram:

Community Connections/Meetings, Professional Development:

- Earth Day community event at Harbor Park
- Connecticut Library Association annual conference
- Narcan training at Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce
- United Way Women’s Initiative (Women United)
- Connecticut Urban Library Directors
- Programming and events planning meeting
- Allbritton Community Advisory Board
- Community Foundation of Middlesex County Leadership Circle Virtual Get-Together
- Executive Committee
- Mayo Florsheim - updates for city directors meeting
- Rockfall Foundation grant check presentation
- Office hours
• Common Council Questions to Directors
• Governance Committee
• Facilities Committee
• Chamber of Commerce Central Business Bureau
• Monthly meeting with Friends President
• ARPA check presentation/discussion with Representatives Rosa DeLauro and John Larson
• Middlesex United Way regional cohort meeting, Executive Committee meeting
• ARPA grant planning with Recreation and Arts and Culture
• CT Library Association Legislative Committee
• Common Council special meeting: budget adoption
• Russell Library Leadership Team
• Russell Library Admin Team
• Finance Committee

Respectfully Submitted,

[Signature]
Ramona A. Burkey
Ramona Burkey
Library Director