

# MILWAUKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 28, 2023

Central Library  
Rotary Club of Milwaukee Community Room  
814 West Wisconsin Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53233

**PRESENT:** Teresa Mercado, Matthew Kowalski, Michael Morgan, Felicia Saffold, Ald. Scott Spiker, Erika Siemsen, Sup. Kathleen Vincent, Joan Johnson

**EXCUSED:** Michele Bria, Ald. Milele Coggs, Mark Sain

**STAFF:** Rebecca Doherty, Melissa Howard, Yves LaPierre, Tammy Mays, Jennifer Meyer-Stearns, Joseph Moretz, Marian Royal, Rebecca Schweisberger, Kelly Wochinske

### **OTHERS**

**PRESENT:** INPOWER Solutions: Aziz Abdullah, Raven Eggson, Emani Taylor

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Presiding Officer Teresa Mercado called the meeting of the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees to order at 4:04 p.m. on November 28, 2023 with a quorum present. Trustee Mercado attended virtually; Trustees Spiker, Siemsen, and Vincent participated by conference phone. As a point of order, Library Director Joan Johnson noted MPL is awaiting confirmation that the two newest Trustees, Alderwoman Larresa Taylor and Venice Williams, have been sworn in. As such, the quorum requirement for this meeting was seven to ensure compliance to the Bylaws. The agenda items were taken out of order but are presented here in numerical sequence.

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### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Library Director Joan Johnson introduced Rebecca Doherty, Library Services Manager – Rare Books Room. Ms. Doherty shared a brief overview of her professional experience and her goals for community access to the Rare Books Collection. She invited Trustees to contact her with ideas for programming or suggestions for supporting community engagement.

### **SPECIAL COMMUNICATION**

1. **Introduction of New Trustee.** This item was held for the January 23, 2024 meeting.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

2. **Regular Board Meeting Minutes October 24, 2023**
3. **Committee Reports.**
  - Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes – October 24, 2023
  - Building & Development Committee Meeting Minutes – November 2, 2023
  - Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – November 15, 2023
4. **Administrative Reports**
  - a. Financial Report
  - b. Library Director's Reports
  - c. Statistics

## 5. Updated 2024 Board Meeting Schedule.

Chair Mercado asked the Board if any items should be removed from the Consent Agenda presented as attachment A, pages 3-20 of the agenda. Trustee Morgan moved to remove the November 2, 2023 Building & Development Committee minutes to allow Yves LaPierre, Library Construction Projects Manager, the opportunity to present an update on the Martin Luther King branch redevelopment project. Trustee Kowalski seconded. Motion passed.

Mr. LaPierre shared work has begun on the library site, also known as Building A. The elevator core is in process for Building B, on the north end of the site. However, the project is now behind the original schedule. The Department of Natural Resources encountered delays in securing permits for utility work. Also, the process of handling recycled rubble from the former buildings and stabilizing the soil took longer than anticipated. Work has begun to prepare the footings and components for the library building. The developer and library architect continue to collaborate and sync work following the delays. The library construction documents are close to completion and will be out for permitting soon. The timeline for bids going out has been shifted back from December and the development team expects to have more firm dates in January 2024. Due to the delay in getting documents out to bid, Mr. LaPierre believes the completion date will be pushed back from November 2024. Trustee Morgan thanked Mr. LaPierre for his work on the project, sharing this information with the Board, and also trying to ensure the Board has an accurate timeline for the project.

Trustee Morgan moved to accept the modified consent agenda; Trustee Siemsen seconded. Motion passed.

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## REPORTS

6. Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) Board Meeting. Library Director Joan Johnson reported on the November 27, 2023 meeting.

- Library Directors Advisory Committee (LDAC): System Library Directors are in discussion about a system-wide fee card. Fee cards allow non-residents to borrow materials from any MCFLS member library. Currently, MPL and a few other system members offer their own fee cards and costs vary. Concerns about offering a system-wide fee card include the card cost and member compensation. The fee card is likely to become part of the MCFLS strategic planning process.
- Legislative issues: There are several State bills that could impact library services. Senate Bill 598 would require public libraries to immediately alert parents about the materials their children check out. MCFLS is working with the Wisconsin Library Association and their lobbyists to ensure legislators have all pertinent information and can make an informed vote. If passed, the bill would have a financial impact on libraries, as the cost to invest in technology to send notifications could be significant. The City's Intergovernmental Relations Division contacted Director Johnson for additional information and how the bill would impact MPL. MPL has a procedure in place to provide parents with information about materials checkouts of children under the age of 16. Additionally, parental rights to access to information is already mandated by the State Statute 43.30.
- Strategic Plan: The MCFLS Legislative and Systems Committee is coordinating activities for their strategic plan. As part of the plan, they conducted a survey of patrons and a survey of Library Directors. Director Johnson is working on the survey, which is due on December 8, 2023. The public survey conducted in fall received over 10,000 responses.

Director Johnson will request additional data about the survey responses. The strategic planning retreat is scheduled for January 18, 2024 and is open to system Library Directors, and the MCFLS Board and staff. Director Johnson will share a report from the retreat.

- Diversity in Librarianship Initiative: Director Johnson, MCFLS Director Steve Hesel, and the Library Directors of Marquette University and UWM are working together to identify funding opportunities to help get diverse candidates into the pipeline for library positions, especially librarians. The team will work together to find grants, submit applications, and work together to support potential candidates for library school and internship opportunities.

Informational item.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

7. **2024 Final Budget Update.** Deputy Library Director Jennifer Meyer-Stearns shared a summary of the adopted 2024 budget, which is attached at the end of these minutes. The amendment to add Sunday hours year-round was a significant change to the adopted budget. MPL received an additional \$797,000 to the operating budget and the addition of 20 positions. MPL is developing a staffing plan to support Sunday hours year-round. In 2024, all City departments will use American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars to fund part of their salaries and operating. For MPL, approximately 60% of salaries and operating will be funded with ARPA. MPL has been assured that the regular funding will be restored for the 2025 budget. Funding was added for additional security equipment for public-facing staff. Informational item.
8. **Community Engagement Report.** Library Director Joan Johnson introduced the INPOWER Solutions team, Aziz Abdullah, Raven Eggson, and Emani Taylor. The INPOWER team presented the executive summary report and shared an overview of the various reports that will be shared with staff and the public. The summary is attached at the end of these minutes.

In response to potential budget cuts and service model changes, MPL began community engagement work in January 2023 and partnered with INPOWER Solutions in April. The INPOWER team developed the 'Get Loud for Libraries' campaign, which offered community members the opportunity to share their preferences, needs, and suggestions for services, as well as personal experiences and memories about the library. Data collection methods included: online surveys, paper surveys, listening sessions, and engagement events. The team shared information about participant demographics, feedback from the responses, and shared audio clips from participants highlighting key points that were shared by the community. The executive summary, a detailed report with comparative analysis of responses, and the audio clips will be available to the public in a digital format online. INPOWER also prepared a series of thought-starters and recommendations for MPL Administration and staff.

Director Johnson thanked the MPL team for their work on the community engagement process: Melissa Howard, Chantel Clark, Chris Murphy, Gwen Long, and Rebecca Schweisberger. The information gleaned from the community engagement process and report will inform MPL's strategy for increased engagement and responsiveness to community feedback.

The Board thanked INPOWER Solutions and MPL staff for this comprehensive report and their continued efforts. The INPOWER team expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to partner with MPL on this project.

Informational item.

**NEW BUSINESS**

9. **2024 Library Hours.** The Board reviewed the 2024 proposed library hours of operation, listed as Attachment B of the agenda. The library hours include the addition of Sunday service hours, 1:00-5:00 p.m., year-round at Central Library and two branches. Depending on recruitment and selection activities, MPL expects to begin offering Sunday hours at the selected branches in July 2024. Trustee Saffold moved to approve the hours as presented; Trustee Vincent seconded. Motion passed.

**CLOSING REMARKS**

The Board participated in the annual holiday donation.

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With no further business, the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees meeting of November 28, 2023 was adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

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