

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

**Central Library –
Rotary Club of Milwaukee Community Room
814 W. Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53233**

PRESENT: Michele Bria, Teresa Mercado, Ald. Milele Coggs, Michael Morgan, Erika Siemsen, Ald. Scott Spiker, Ald. Larresa Taylor, Sup. Kathleen Vincent, Joan Johnson

EXCUSED: Matthew Kowalski, Mark Sain, Felicia Saffold, Venice Williams

STAFF: Tammy Mays, Joey McMahon, Jennifer Meyer-Stearns, Joe Moretz, Karli Pederson, Victoria Robertson, Marian Royal, Rebecca Schweisberger, Kirsten Thompson, Kelly Wochinske

OTHERS

PRESENT: Milwaukee County Federated Library System: Steve Heser

Vice-President Michele Bria called the meeting of the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees to order at 4:12 p.m. on March 26, 2024; a quorum was reached at 4:40. Trustees Coggs, Siemsen, and Vincent participated by conference phone. Agenda items were taken out of order but are presented here in numerical sequence.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Library Director Joan Johnson introduced Joey McMahon, Research and Policy Coordinator. Mr. McMahon gave a brief overview of his professional experience in public health policy administration and how it informs his role at MPL.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

1. **MPL Department Spotlight.** Library Services Manager Kirsten Thompson reported on the work of the MPL Arts and Humanities Department. Each year, Ms. Thompson prepares an annual ‘holiday letter’ to the Arts and Humanities staff highlighting special projects and accomplishments. The 2023 letter and an overview of collections work are attached at the end of these minutes. Many of the department’s public-facing services and programs are supported by extensive internal work, ensuring the physical, digital, and special collections are properly indexed and accessible. Arts and Humanities staff engage in professional development and offer remote reference assistance. The department also regularly partners with the Milwaukee County Genealogical Society and local history librarian Dan Lee has contributed several articles to their publication. In addition to the services offered at Central Library, items from various collections are available during special programs at branch libraries. In 2023, MPL was awarded the Governor’s Archives Award for Archival Innovation from the Wisconsin Historical Society for work with the socialist geocache program and the socialist documentary video *Remembering Milwaukee’s Socialist History*. The Board thanked Ms. Thompson and the Arts and Humanities teams for their extensive work and great service. Informational item.

CONSENT AGENDA

2. **Regular Board Meeting Minutes January 23, 2024**
3. **Committee Reports**
 - a. Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes – January 23, 2024
4. **Administrative Reports**
 - a. Financial Report
 - b. Library Director's Reports
 - c. Statistics

Chair Bria asked the Board if any items should be removed from the Consent Agenda presented as attachment A, pages 4-20 of the agenda. Hearing no objection, the Consent Agenda was approved.

NEW BUSINESS

5. **Board of Trustees Oversight of Foundation Gifts.** Deputy Library Director Jennifer Meyer-Stearns presented a memo, listed as Attachment B of the agenda, related to disposition of gifts from the estate of Mary A. Klug. The final gift amount and expenditure recommendations for use of the funds will be presented at upcoming meetings. Trustee Morgan moved to authorize Library Director Joan Johnson and her designee, Deputy Library Director Jennifer Meyer-Stearns, to complete the necessary legal forms to receive the funds from probate and various held annuity accounts for the Mary A Klug estate. Trustee Mercado seconded. Motion passed. The MPL Board offered thanks to decedent Mary A. Klug, her family, and estate for this very generous gift.

OLD BUSINESS

6. **State Annual Report.** MPL prepared and submitted the annual report, listed as Attachment C of the agenda, to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). President Sain viewed and approved the report and Chair Bria entertained a motion for the Board to ratify his approval. Trustee Spiker moved to approve; Trustee Taylor seconded. Motion passed.

REPORTS

7. **Milwaukee County Federated Library System (MCFLS) Board Meeting.** MCFLS System Director Steve Heser reported on the January, February, and March 2024 meetings. The MCFLS Board is in the process of creating a strategic plan for 2025-2028. Visioning sessions were held in January and February to help inform and focus the plan. The new strategic plan will be presented to the MCFLS Board in May 2024. The plan will assist MCFLS in making any necessary changes to contracts with member libraries which expire at the end of 2024. MCFLS is partnering with member libraries and community literacy services to offer collaborative spaces and resources to promote adult literacy. Additional information and resources are available at www.mkereading.com. On March 19th, staff from MCFLS and member libraries toured the Community Reintegration Center in Franklin and discussed possibilities for collaboration and access to resources. Marian Royal, MPL Public Services Area Manager (Central Library), presented the 2023 Resource Library Report to the MCFLS Board. Mr. Heser thanked Director Johnson and the MPL staff for being exceptional, collaborative partners. Informational item.
8. **Library Services & Programs Committee Meeting.** Trustee Morgan presented the action items from the March 6, 2024 meeting.

- MPL Policy Update. MPL regularly reviews its policies and procedures for salience and accuracy. More recently, the review process includes assessment for equity and inclusion purposes to ensure a welcoming environment for all, regardless of race, age, religion, ethnicity, economic status, physical and mental abilities, gender identity, etc.

Chantel Clark, Associate Library Director - Strategic Initiatives and Public Services, presented a request to remove the phrase “wearing hoods” from the MPL Code of Conduct. Asking patrons to remove a hood (to comply with the Code of Conduct) can lead to negative interactions, particularly if there is no other violation of rules. MPL staff conducted thorough research on the policies of peer institutions and possible security implications of rescinding the rule. The MPL Race, Equity, and Inclusion (REI) Committee also discussed revising the rule to be more in line with MPL’s REI goals. It was noted that in the event of a security incident, staff may still ask patrons to remove their hood for identification purposes.

Trustee Morgan moved to approve the change as recommended; Trustee Bria seconded. Motion passed.

- Foundation Request for Program Support. On behalf of Library Director Joan Johnson, Deputy Library Director Jennifer Meyer-Stearns presented a request for approval to allocate funding from the MPL Foundation. A copy of the memo is attached at the end of these minutes.

City funding covers the costs of infrastructure and staffing, and MPL sought approval to use funding from the MPL Foundation to cover various costs for programming, LibraryCorps, materials, and the Director’s Fund. Trustee Morgan moved to approve the request to allocate a total of \$860,000 for the recommended priorities outlined in the memo; Trustee Mercado seconded. Motion passed.

9. **Building & Development Committee Meeting.** Chair Morgan presented the action item from the March 7, 2024 meeting.

- Capital Projects Foundation Funding Request. On behalf of Library Director Joan Johnson, Deputy Library Director Jennifer Meyer-Stearns presented a request for approval to allocate funding from the MPL Foundation. A copy of the memo is attached at the end of these minutes.

MPL sought approval to use funding from the MPL Foundation to help cover the cost of special features at the new Martin Luther King, Jr. branch. Projects include the makerspace and artistic and architectural features. Trustee Morgan moved to approve the request to allocate \$300,000 for the recommended priorities outlined in the memo; Trustee Taylor seconded. Motion passed.

- Martin Luther King Branch Redevelopment. Chair Morgan invited Library Construction Projects Manager Yves LaPierre to present a request for an extension of the Martin Luther King branch construction timeline. There is an array of agreements that cover the construction of the library development. One of the agreements pertains to the developer creating a core and shell for the library space; MPL will complete the buildout. The original date of transfer of the core and shell was March 31, 2024. The library is seeking approval to negotiate an extension on the shell completion date. The delay is not expected to

impact the library opening timeline. Trustee Morgan moved to authorize MPL staff to work with the City Attorney's Office to negotiate an extension on the shell completion date, up to 90 days. Trustee Spiker seconded. Motion passed.

10. **Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting.** Chair Mercado presented the action item from the March 22, 2024 meeting.

- **Disciplinary Appeal Hearing.** On March 22, 2024, the Committee met to conduct a hearing on the appeal of Joseph Payne regarding discharge from employment at MPL.

After both parties stated and rested their cases, the Committee moved into closed session to deliberate. The Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law regarding the discharge hearing was approved by the Committee. A copy of the document is attached at the end of these minutes.

Trustee Mercado moved to sustain Library Administration's decision to discharge Joseph Payne; Trustee Morgan seconded. Motion passed.

11. **Closing Remarks.** Vice-President Bria congratulated Trustee Mercado on the creation and publication of the book *Mexican Fiesta Milwaukee: Building Community Through A Celebration of Culture*. Trustee Mercado gifted a copy of the book to MPL. Vice-President Bria also congratulated Library Director Johnson for being selected to participate in the Marquette Law School's Lubar Center for Public Policy Research and Civic Education: "Get to Know" series with Lubar Center Director Derek Mosley. All Trustees are invited to attend the interview session on April 3rd.

With no further business, the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees meeting of March 26, 2024 was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.
