

**MILWAUKEE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES
Wednesday May 13, 2009
Central Library Meeting Room 1
814 W. Wisconsin Ave.**

PRESENT: Ald. Milele Coggs, Sharon Cook, Ald. Ashanti Hamilton, Art Harrington,
Ald. Nik Kovac, Joan Prince, David Riemer, Gretchen Schuldt, Paula Kiely

EXCUSED: John Gurda, Dir. Charlene Hardin, Marty Schreiber

STAFF Meg Diaz, Bruce Gay, Joan Johnson, Dawn Lauber, Kathryn Mlsna,
PRESENT: Sandy Rusch Walton, Taj Schoening, Crystal Sura, Judy Zemke

OTHERS Amy Hefter, Legislative Reference Bureau
PRESENT: Jake Miller, Budget and Policy Division
Leslie Silletti, Mayor's Office
Community Residents

President David Riemer called the meeting of the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees to order at 5:33 p.m. on May 13, 2009 with a quorum present.

PUBLIC COMMENT President Riemer provided an introduction to the focus of the meeting. He stated that the city and state are facing a severe budget challenge which impacts the library. The Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees and library administration have been looking for options to lower library spending. In the last few years, the library has reduced hours, materials purchases and services to meet their budget allocation. This pattern of reductions significantly weakens the library system. The MPL Innovation and Strategy Committee explored options and opportunities that may change the library system while continuing to provide quality library service to the community. Discussions included consolidating libraries, building area libraries, express centers and mixed-use facilities. President Riemer stated that no decision has been made by the MPL Board. President Riemer then invited and encouraged the public to comment.

Alderman Joe Dudzik commented that as alderman, he represents the Zablocki Library area. He stated that by the library's own data, Zablocki Library is one of the most heavily used libraries in the system and should not be closed. He stated that the Board should not look at usage of computers or videos but usage of books because the library is a place for books. He believes the southwest side of the city is being abandoned by the library system. Alderman Dudzik asked what authority the MPL Board has over the libraries in the city and what authority do they have with regards to the libraries within the system.

A citizen asked when the decision will be made to reconfigure the library system.

A citizen stated that she finds it frustrating that the public is asked to comment when there has not been any specific information shared.

OLD BUSINESS

1. **2010 Budget and Long Term Library Facilities Plan.** President Reimer stated that Library Director Paula Kiely submitted the library's budget for 2010 to Mayor Barrett. Ms. Kiely explained that all city departments were requested to submit a cost-to-continue

1. **2010 Budget and Long Term Library Facilities Plan.** (continued)

budget that assumes no cuts to services. The library will begin working with the Budget Office in early June to reduce costs. President Riemer asked the Board to consider what reductions in spending would do the least harm and might have some positive good connected to them. The easy solution is to keep the library system the same and reduce hours and materials. Trustee Cook inquired, assuming the library will receive a similar reduction to their budget as last year, \$1.2 million, what is the cost of a neighborhood library? Ms. Kiely responded that it costs roughly \$500,000 a year to operate a neighborhood library. This cost includes staffing, collections, security, utilities and maintenance. Discussion ensued regarding the library's scheduled maintenance plan. The plan indicates that seven libraries currently require new mechanical systems. Ms. Kiely stated that it is time to decide if the library spends money on the older buildings or reconfigures the system. Trustee Cook stated that library-user needs are important to consider in this decision process. Trustee Coggs stated that it is critically important that as the Board examines usership, they include computer use as a major component of the library's mission and purpose because many patrons do not have computers at home. Trustee Harrington commended the process of the MPL Innovation and Strategy Committee and added that given the pressures of the budget, the library would benefit from a plan that will provide long-term savings. President Riemer presented another option that would replace one library with a small library and replace a second nearby library with a larger library. Ms. Kiely stated that this option may not provide operating cost savings. Annual operating costs of area libraries, learning campuses, express centers and typical neighborhood libraries were discussed. Trustee Cook commented that there isn't enough time for a new option and added that reducing hours, materials and services is not the optimal way. Trustee Kovac said that there is an obvious trend to the budget reductions and the library needs to develop a more sustainable system. He added that continuing to cut library hours is a waste of capital investment resources. Trustee Riemer suggested that the community may understand and accept libraries downsizing more than closing a library. Trustee Hamilton stated that if there is a continuation of cutting hours and services, people will stop going to the libraries. He asked if the three-tier model is the direction that the Board recommends, how does the library make it work financially, logistically, and operationally. Discussion ensued.

President Riemer stated that the Board's desire is to keep the libraries open but there is the need to be fiscally responsible. Director Kiely stated that she would appreciate a recommendation from the Board to take to the Mayor with her budget proposal. Trustee Harrington asked why isn't the Board making a decision – is there consensus on the Board? He added that the data has been presented and there has been enough time to review it. Trustee Hamilton agreed that the Board should make a recommendation. Trustee Kovac reiterated that the library system is more sustainable if a library building is closed. He noted that it is true that any plan decided on will not have an effect on the 2010 budget but a visionary plan may be accepted by the Mayor and the Common Council. Ms. Kiely stated that library administration has studied staffing patterns and costs for all models. Trustee Schuldt stated that she is interested in the cost savings of opening express center models that may provide more access if a library is closed. President Riemer requested Director Kiely to provide three different specific options, to capture the range of costs for all models, to be presented for action at the June 17, 2009 regular MPL Board meeting.

No action was taken.

ADDITIONAL NEW BUSINESS. None.

With no further business, the Milwaukee Public Library Board of Trustees meeting of May 13, 2009 was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.
