

**DOWNERS GROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES
OCTOBER 26, 2022, 7:30 P.M.
LIBRARY MEETING ROOM**

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Land Acknowledgment.** President Gigani called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance. President Gigani read aloud the Downers Grove Public Library Land Acknowledgement.
2. **Roll Call.** Members present: Trustee Carissa Dougherty, Trustee Dave Humphreys, Trustee Barnali Khuntia, Trustee Bill Nienburg, President Swapna Gigani. Absent: None.

Also present: Library Director Julie Milavec, Assistant Library Director Jen Ryjewski, Business Office Manager Katelyn Vabalaitis, Media Lab Coordinator Ed Bromiel, Business Office Assistant Scott Anderson.

3. **Welcome to Visitors.** President Gigani welcomed visitors and thanked them for their interest in the library.
4. **Approval of Minutes.**
 - a. September 28, 2022 Regular Meeting. Prior to the meeting, the Board received an updated draft of the minutes with the following additions/corrections:
 - Addition of a paragraph at the beginning of public comment stating President Gigani's guidelines that were given for this portion of the meeting
 - Addition of President Gigani's reminder to the audience to avoid applause and background comments
 - Addition of President Gigani's request for the audience to not repeat points, followed by the list of points made by that time as well as Trustee Nienburg's statement against editorializing comments
 - Addition of a note after Jim Wool's comment that detailed the events of President Gigani noting his time was up, his continued comments, President Gigani's efforts to have him stop speaking, and then the exit and entrance of Trustees during that process.
 - Correction of a member of the public's name spelling from Ezra to Ezri and a correction of the word "see" to "say" in the second sentence of their comment
 - Correction of a typo in the bit.ly link given by an unnamed commenter

- Added results of the roll call to Trustee Nienburg's motion to take a five-minute recess at the end of the public comment section

It was moved by Nienburg and seconded by Khuntia THAT the Minutes of the September 28, 2022 Regular Monthly Meeting be approved as amended. Motion passed by voice vote.

5. Financial Matters.

a. September 2022 Financial Report. Library Director Julie Milavec presented the report. The library is 75% through the year. As of the end of September, revenue was 100.69% collected. This represents 97.48% of the property taxes collected. The library has received significantly more in personal property replacement tax, which has been explained in previous meetings. Expenditures were at 71.9% spent and in the months to come, trustees should be looking for jumps in the Special Legal line as the invoices for the attorney's support with FOIA requests start coming in. The Intangible Assets line will increase as well, as the library needed additional software such as Google Vault licenses to help with the FOIA requests. Milavec directed the Board's attention to the TMC Furniture invoice, which was the purchase of new play equipment for the Kids Room that was funded by the Downers Grove Public Library Foundation.

b. October 2022 Invoices. It was moved by Khuntia and seconded by Humphreys THAT the payment of October 2022 Capital Replacement Fund invoices totaling \$33,528.96, the payment of October 2022 Operating Fund invoices totaling \$125,533.93, the acceptance of October 2022 Operating Fund credit memos totaling \$22.26, and the ratification of September 2022 payrolls totaling \$255,215.29 be approved. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Nienburg, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

6. Public Comment on Agenda Items. President Gigani invited comment. There was none.

7. Public Comment on Other Library Business. President Gigani invited comment. Noel Manley addressed the library's Land Acknowledgement. He noted that he is an Anishinaabe man from White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota. They are also commonly known as the Ojibwe or Chippewa people. They range from southern Ontario through northern Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and eastern North Dakota. Here we are in the year 2022 and the Downers Grove Library is taking upon itself to advocate on behalf of native people almost 200 years after the founding of Downers Grove in the end of the Blackhawk War. Well, the library is a little too late. What is the library's motivation to make this statement? The statement stems out of the cultural Marxism that

Librarian Julie Milavec and her staff are pushing for the RGW Consulting Discovery Report. Those listening will recall that the Downers Grove taxpayers paid over \$86,000 to this consultant who advised the Downers Grove Library must not be a neutral institution in the community, but rather an advocate. The Land Acknowledgement is just another example of cultural Marxist oppressor victim narrative that the library staff and its consultant are pushing on the community. As for the statement itself, it really says nothing. It paints native suffering in the broadest possible terms while serving as a liberal Marxist virtue signal that appropriates the suffering of native people. The library's statement says nothing about native strength nor its resilience. It does not even have the decency to mention the Potawatomi people, who occupied this area prior to white settlement. Shame on the library. He suggests that instead of focusing on native suffering, why doesn't the library focus on need of sovereignty and success in the face of adversity. There are hundreds of examples: Jim Thorpe, George Bender, Eli Parker, Ira Hayes, Chief Joseph Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Red Cloud, the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, and the Indian Gaming Act of 1988. To further illustrate the fact that native people have moved on, he brought a recent copy of his tribe's monthly newspaper, the Anishinaabe Today. It's interesting to note that the paper is completely devoid of any resentment of past injustices. Tribal Chairman Michael Fairbanks wisely stated the following in this month's remarks: "This grandfather teaching of the rock or a scene reminds us that it is better for us to forgive and move forward than to fill our pockets with heavy weights of resentment and anger, which can lead to illness and troubles." This is from the largest Ojibwe band in Minnesota. The library needs to understand that native people are now empowered and are moving on. They do not need empty gestures that are designed to drive division in this community.

Brian Sewell commented that something is badly amiss at the library. It's time for the public to take a look. It takes time and effort to ferret it out because FOIA requests are delayed beyond legally acceptable parameters. Also, the subject of many of the FOIAs is the FOIA Officer herself, Julie, but there is no conflict of interest, she advises. While captured by DEI obsession, the library has been transformed from a user pay (taxpayers using it) to an inclusive environment for all. Do we all feel better about ourselves now? Guilt assuaged? Such a burden lifted. But there's a problem at this library. In a rush for inclusion at any cost, no progressive case is not considered, we've created a dangerous environment for our children. Of course, it's the children that are going to suffer – the people with the smallest voices. FOIA requests to the Downers Grove Police Department indicate dozens of responses to complaints at this address, every month. He has witnessed the mentally ill screaming at children and following them through the library for imaginary transgressions. But wait, that's not all. The worst is yet to come. He has learned that there was an occasion this month in fact, on the 11th, when a man was caught masturbating and then washing his hands in the

drinking foundation at Downers Grove Public Library. There was also an occasion when pictures were taken of a patron while they were using the restroom stall, underneath one of the walls. Predators are just that – they look for weakness in a system and they capitalize on it. A hobo was caught bathing in a sink unclothed. Didn't hear much about that. Drug use has been reported in the upstairs bathroom by staff. What about Joe H.? Mr. Sewell won't use his full name but he's pretty sure the library knows who he is. He has threatened several staff with violence, including alluding to a firearm and checking out books on machine guns. Tutors are now afraid to use the library, refusing the services to those that probably need it most because they are uncomfortable and they feel unsafe. Three months ago, a second homeless man was caught masturbating downstairs. Were the police called? He's not sure. Nothing to see here, right, Julie? What would have to occur for the library to issue a statement condemning harassment and predatory behavior within its own library? Never mind what is happening around the world or in Minneapolis or anywhere else. Here. How many PIT reports are being concealed? How many times have people been banned and the police are not called and what is the policy involving the police? How do we decide someone's masturbating and washing their hand in a urinal – does that qualify or do they need to be convicted in a court of law before it is something that is worthy of recording in the library's records, if they keep them at all? The public has no idea of the scale but a KPI would expose this problem instead of burying the problem from the patrons. Mr. Sewell would like a plan to notify the public every month of how many bans are issued and if the police were called, if they are patrons or not, do they have a library card or not. Is this just a homeless shelter that the library has opened? He would also like some type of detail that would inform the public the nature of the issue. He has a nine-year-old daughter. Eight-year-olds are allowed to be left at the library unattended, according to library policy, while there are people masturbating, shooting up, and threatening library staff. The public also needs a security preview, not by the Board, but by people who know about security like the police or some type of consultant. This is a minimum that will allow parents to evaluate if the library is a safe space for their children. It is absolutely terrifying that he is learning about this. He's not learning about it through any of the library's virtue statements that are being putting out. He has to ferret this information out from people who work at the library and people who have seen these issues firsthand. Some of this knowledge was gained by his own first-hand experiences. Parents expect a safe place for their kids, not a publicly funded drop-in center for lewd acts near children, and he's not even talking about the drag queen story hour. The Board has a role and it's not just to rubber stamp whatever the director puts in front of it. To say additional oversight is required is a massive understatement. Let's get this under control before there is a more serious incident. We have no idea who is in this library – homeless people, sex offenders – and there's children right there. Mr. Sewell also requested a review of the Library Director's performance.

She's an at-will employee, she's been very divisive, and she's putting children in danger. She has no business being around children.

Robin Tryloff has lived in Downers Grove for more than 30 years. Her professional background and expertise include the study and evaluation of non-profit organizations and their roles in democratic society. She's evaluated organizations for the federal government and for private sector entities, analyzing groups administrative, financial, and programming capabilities. Having served on the Downers Grove Public Library Foundation Board of Directors since 2017, she has had the opportunity to observe this library's operations firsthand. She's here tonight to give her professional analysis of the library, albeit in a much more concentrated and truncated form than she would otherwise. The library's statements of purpose and values are clear, well-defined, achievable, and well matched to its size and resources. Its Administration, programs, and professional staff are aligned with its stated purpose and goals. In fact, Library Journal recognized the library as a four-star library in 2020; one of only 16 in Illinois to receive a star rating based on its quantity of services as compared to its peers. Further, staff members have been recognized by their profession. Public Relations Manager Cindy Khatri and Adult & Teen Services Assistant Manager Van McGary were awarded the Library Journal's 2022 Movers and Shakers award. Library Director Julie Milavec was elected Treasurer of the Illinois Library Association Executive Board this past July, in recognition by her peers of her budget and finance skills, knowledge, and experience. While staff expertise is excellent, overall employees are stretched to manage the breadth of the library's responsibilities and could use additional support. The library's programs and activities are measurable and are measured. Anecdotally, she can confirm this because when the Foundation Committee she chairs proposed a project to staff, they had already studied the idea and found that it would garner sufficient community interest. The library is transparent in all of its work. It's financial information, bids, requests for information, reports, studies, plans, programming, policies, and services are all easily accessible online. Strategic planning is considered an essential best practice for public libraries to deepen their understanding of and connection to the communities they serve. The process by which the library's strategic plan was created included public focus groups, and online survey, and widespread press and social media promotion, effectively inviting community-wide input for its planning. In fact, the Downers Grove Public Library was featured in a case study in a Library Journal article advising libraries on how to write an anti-hate statement. Library Journal is an American Trade publication for librarians. The library's more recent Equity Strategic Plan informs the library's larger strategic plan and will be incorporated into its next strategic plan for which planning is underway now. Professional practice has found that an anti-hate statement is a useful tool to support historically, intentionally, and traditionally marginalized people and groups and serves as a learning resource

for all community members. The library's six anti-hate statements are on its website. The library engaged a consultant to help make recommendations leading to the library's equity work. The resulting report notes, "Patrons of Downers Grove Public Library that represent dominant culture people groups frequently cite themselves as taxpayers who should inform the direction of the library as just cause for disengaging issues of DEI. The sentiment is that if they pay taxes, they should have resources and experiences that are aligned to their own value system. The challenge in this sentiment is that there are also taxpayers who represent historically, intentionally, and traditionally marginalized people groups, also known as HITMPGs, as well as HITMPG allies who pay taxes and far less frequently see their interests represented in the integral acculturation of the library experience. The challenge that the library faces is how to halt all the competing interests of its tax paying patrons, honoring the library as a public square that welcomes everyone while also upholding the interests of people who have had their interests most primarily neglected, historically. By law, public libraries cannot discriminate in the provision of access to books, media, or programming. The Illinois Public Library core standards require the library to adhere to the American Library Association's Code of Ethics, Library Bill of Rights, and intellectual freedom statements and interpretations. In addition, the library has a first amendment right to speak its own voice as a government agency about important matters. She applauds the Board of Library Trustees and the outstanding professional staff for standing strong for professional ideals and intellectual freedom, and for working to address the breadth of the community's needs. As a resident, taxpayer, devoted library patron, and professional evaluator, she's in attendance at the meeting to voice her unqualified support for the library and its extraordinary professional staff. There were many other residents in attendance to support the library and she closed by asking everyone who is in attendance to support the library, its staff, its DEI initiatives, its strategic plan, and its programming to raise their hands.

Last year, the library held focus groups and surveyed the community. One of the threads that you can see for yourself in the feedback is a desire for more recognition of and services for underrepresented groups. This wasn't new. It was also visible in previous community surveys. The Library Board heard all this feedback and included it in the Equity Strategic Plan. When Director Milavec and the staff implement the tenants of that plan, they are literally doing their jobs and doing them well. During last month's public comments, a speaker complained that in 2004, he questioned why the library had books on gay and lesbian topics when they weren't checked out. This shows a profound lack of understanding of what it's like to be an LGBTQ+ person, especially how it was 18 years ago, and the inability to empathize with other people. The reason those books weren't checked out is that LGBTQ+ people aren't always comfortable taking a book up to the Circulation Desk. Remember that back then, there weren't the self-

checkout machines that we have today. Were those books read? She guarantees they were. It just happened in the library where people felt safer. She says this based on experience, but if someone wants to use the metric of activity to measure need and worth, let's go ahead and use that metric. Based on the Equity Plan, library staff planned the drag queen bingo event for National Coming Out Day. All 40 slots immediately filled up and there was a waiting list. So if the complaint is that in 2004 there were fewer checkouts of gay and lesbian books so the library shouldn't have had them, then the same argument applied today means the library should hold more programs like drag queen bingo. People who are scared of difference can't on the one hand argue that no one checked out this handful of books in 2004 so they shouldn't have been there and on the other hand say today this program was full but it shouldn't be held. At last month's Board meeting, the Board heard from a few of the teenagers who were directly affected by the cancellation of the bingo program. Their parents were fine with them attending the program and yet those parents' rights were taken away by threats of violence. The Board also heard from people who weren't directly affected by the cancellation but who decided they should have the right to make decisions for those teenagers and their parents. The ripple effect of the threats of violence led to the cancellation of a program about race because some of the participants no longer felt safe attending it. And now we know, a swastika was carved into a library window. Staff and Board members had already seen a need for DEI programs and services in the feedback from the community and acted on it to combat fear and ignorance. Now we see quite clearly why it's needed. This illustrates how they see pieces of the community that a single Board Trustee or Village Councilor might not. It's a shame the library couldn't hold two of the programs asked for by the community because of fear and ignorance. It's a shame that the people who could have just talked to their teenagers about their personal beliefs and not attend the program instead forced staff to spend their time responding to comments, tallying feedback, and working on security plans. But in the end, that turned out to provide useful information, because what it showed is that the community overwhelmingly supported the bingo program. 61% of the overall feedback supported it and the staff. After the program was cancelled, that number increased to 82%. It's important information. Library staff were literally doing their jobs and what's indisputable is that the community responded with support. So can we use words like controversial and contentious about the drag queen bingo program or a non-existent critical race theory program and services? The numbers tell us we can use those words when referring to debate in this room and the Village Chambers, but that's about it. It's been two months now and outside of these two rooms, the vast majority of the community, 98%, doesn't view it as enough of a controversy to even weigh in, let alone stop using the library. Every statistic for library activity in September went up from the same time period last year. Total circulation, number of visitors through the doors, new library cards issued, use of rooms, computer use, and

program attendance – every statistic went up. That is not the reaction of a community that thinks its library did something wrong. As the Board works on the new strategic plan, it can do so knowing the majority of feedback overwhelmingly supports these efforts and recognizes the false narratives that there was no reason to have LGBTQ books 18 years ago and that there's no racism in Downers Grove today. When Trustees hear someone say something like, this is a waste of money or is inappropriate, they need to add the words "for me" at the end of their opinion. They have every right to respectfully voice their opinions but they only get to make decisions for themselves and their family. When she says "this is a good use of my money as a tax paying resident," or "this is appropriate," add "for me" at the end there too. Her opinion counts just as much as everyone else. Last year, a small group of people tried to use an external group's talking points to ban books, wanting to tell everyone else what they can and can't do. The community made itself heard and said no. Last month, a small group used external groups' talking points to try to cancel a program, wanting to tell everyone else what they can and can't do. The community made itself heard and said no, it supports this staff and Board. Next, they used external group talking points to go after the library's work around diversity and inclusion. The community is here yet again to say no, it supports the staff and this Board. What will this small group of people try to stop the rest of us from doing next? The library is so well-run and responsive to the community that it's getting harder for these folks to come up with new grievances, but she's sure they will keep trying. It doesn't matter what talking points they use to try to decide things for the rest of the community, the community will be there again to say no, it supports this staff and Board.

8. **New Business.** There was none.

9. **Unfinished Business.**

a. Strategic Planning Consulting Proposals.

- i. Virtual Interviews of Consulting Firms. The Board conducted two consultant interviews via GoToMeeting, speaking with Fast Forward Libraries and ReThinking Libraries.

It was moved by Nienburg and seconded by Dougherty THAT the Board take a five-minute recess. Motion passed by voice vote. The Board took their recess at 9:18 p.m.

President Gigani opened the floor to discussion of the two consultant interviews. Trustees discussed their takeaways from each candidate and came to a general consensus that they were most comfortable with ReThinking Libraries.

It was moved by Khuntia and seconded by Humphreys THAT the Strategic Planning proposal from ReThinking Libraries with the variable cost option be approved.

Trustee Nienburg noted that the proposals were not listed on the agenda as an approval and final selection, but rather were listed as a review of the proposals. He commented that the proposals had just been reviewed for the first time, they were just included in the Board packet and made available to the public for the first time, and the public heard the interviews for the first time. He suggests that if the Board is serious about process, protocol, transparency, and input from the public, they should consider it to be New Business and table the final selection to the next meeting. This gives the public the chance to comment on this because they did not have that chance tonight.

It was moved by Nienburg and seconded by Dougherty THAT the vote be tabled to the next meeting in the interest of allowing the public to consume the interviews and make comments. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Nienburg, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

- 10. Library Director's Report.** Library Director Julie Milavec presented her report. The library has received 28 Freedom of Information Act Requests since August 28. They are taking a huge amount of staff time and legal fees. The November Board meeting is on November 16, the week before Thanksgiving. The library received the Talk Story Grant from the American Indian Library Association and will be hosting programs associated with that grant on November 6. There is a program for adults and teens and then there is a craft and storytelling event for children. The library received an additional \$250 in the grant that was not part of the original project budget, so there will be an additional program coming in the upcoming months. Milavec announced that Adult & Teen Services Manager Lizzie Matkowski has accepted a position at another organization and will be leaving in early November.

Trustee Nienburg asked if there was a plan to publish what the FOIA requests were, who the requestor was, and the status of the request. He also asked about a rough estimate of the legal fees associated with the FOIA requests. Milavec responded that she will create a status report of the FOIA requests. Only one invoice has been received from the legal firm so far, but the Board will be updated as more arrive.

Trustee Nienburg asked what the protocol is for informing the Board of incidents within the library, referencing public comment from earlier in the meeting. He

feels like the Board should know if those kinds of incidents are happening. Milavec noted that all trustees have been provided with the login and password for the Patron Incident Tracking Software (PITS) and can go in at any time and look at all of the incidents that have occurred. Trustee Dougherty commented that there is a lot of detail in the PITS reports and while it is helpful for the Board to see, they need to be mindful about the privacy and confidentiality involved with having that information.

It was moved by Nienburg and seconded by Khuntia THAT the Trustee Comments and Requests for Information agenda item be moved to agenda item 11, prior to the Executive Session. Motion passed by voice vote.

11. Executive Session.

- a. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1), for discussion of the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of a specific employee. It was moved by Nienburg and seconded by Humphreys THAT the Board move into Executive Session. Motion passed by voice vote.

The Board moved to Executive Session at 9:49 p.m.

President Gigani reconvened the Public Session at 10:54 p.m.

12. Action for Items Discussed in Executive Session. There was none.

13. Trustee Comments and Requests for Information.

Trustee Humphreys wanted to point out and thank the staff for receiving the grant from the American Indian Library Association to cover the cost of a couple of very interesting looking programs to be held during the month of November.

Trustee Khuntia asked about sending a card around for trustees to sign to wish Lizzie Matkowski well with her new position.

Trustee Nienburg asked if the Board is informed any time there is an enforcement of penalty for incidents in the library. President Gigani commented that it's a matter of checking the database periodically and the Board is informed when there is an appeal and when there are charges filed.

14. Adjournment. President Gigani adjourned the meeting at 10:55 p.m.