

**DOWNERS GROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES
APRIL 26, 2023, 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, Trustee Marti Sladek, 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.

3. **Welcome to Visitors.** President Gigani welcomed visitors and thanked them for their interest in the library.
4. **Approval of Minutes.**
 - a. March 22, 2023 Regular Meeting. It was moved by Khuntia and seconded by Humphreys THAT the Minutes of the March 22, 2023 Regular Monthly Meeting be approved as presented. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Nienburg, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.
5. **Financial Matters.**
 - a. March 2023 Financial Report. Library Director Milavec presented the report. The library is 25% through the year. The fund balances are dipping as expected, prior to June when property tax revenue starts to come in. Revenue is at 1.4% received for the year and Milavec noted the robust interest income that has been received throughout the first quarter of 2023. On the expense side, the Capital Replacement Fund is at 55% spent. All of the invoices for the workroom renovation project should be submitted to the Board by the May meeting. Operating expenditures are at 21% spent now, which is right on track in most budget lines.
 - b. April 2023 Invoices. It was moved by Dougherty and seconded by Khuntia THAT the payment of April 2023 Capital Replacement Fund invoices totaling \$120,979.44, the payment of April 2023 Operating Fund invoices totaling

\$159,692.06, the acceptance of April 2023 Operating Fund credit memos totaling \$56.87, and the ratification of March 2023 payrolls totaling \$267,738.92 be approved. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Nienburg, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

6. **Public Comment on Agenda Items.** President Gigani invited comment. Laura Hois spoke about Agenda Item 9, which references the revisions to the bylaws. At last month's meeting, this Board discussed amending the Downers Grove Public Library's bylaws and put Trustee Marti Sladek in charge of preparing an outline of proposed changes. The library's current bylaws require Board members to avoid situations in which their personal interests might be served and to disqualify themselves whenever the appearance of a conflict of interest exists. Recognizing that the Board members hold positions of public trust, they are expected, per the bylaws, to conduct themselves according to the highest ethical standards and to maintain truth, integrity, and honor. As a resident and a taxpayer of Downers Grove, she expects these provisions to remain in the revised bylaws and she asks this Board to provide ample notice of the proposed changes to the bylaws before proceeding to vote.

7. **Public Comment on Other Library Business.** President Gigani invited comment. Werner Kiuntke is a resident of Downers Grove and he wanted to draw the Board's attention to the Discovery magazine that everyone gets in their mailbox. On the last page, there's a little part about the indigenous lands. Through the survey that's going on with the library right now, where about 2,000 people have completed the survey, the library is going to get thousands of gold stars. The reason for that is that the library is an extremely welcoming community. They acknowledge the Native Americans like they do on the back of the magazine. They also acknowledge the LGBTQ community, African-Americans, Asian, Hispanic, homeless and by acknowledging we begin to show empathy and understanding and begin to develop a dialogue. All of these areas cumulatively, together with programs, staff, and all the things that occur here at the library, make it a welcoming community. However, he has seen persons who have come to these meetings and have begun to question about certain literature, history, the way it's taught and so forth. There is a movement larger where one state, Missouri for example, has just taken the libraries out of their total state budget until they can determine what books are on the shelves. For him, that becomes very personal, as he was born in post-World War II Germany and the burning of books was something that was there. Non-white persons in the Downers Grove community have commented to him that at times, they don't feel Downers Grove is a very welcoming community. His question for the Board is, how can he, as an individual, or how can we, as a larger group, be supportive of the library so that its welcoming community extends beyond the walls and into areas that the community is involved with that?

Ed Pawlak was at the focus group last night and he wanted to give the Board some feedback. He thought the consultants did an outstanding job. They facilitated the discussion but they didn't lead the group to any specific points to say. He thought they did a great job decomposing the services and the role of the library in the community here so that the group made sure to cover all of the different topics. They were very attentive and actively listening and taking things down. He was very pleasantly surprised at how good the session was and wanted to say the Board did a great job picking them. He was also happy that the meeting room was full with a lot of people taking about how great the library is as a byproduct of the discussions. He thanked the Board for what they are doing and for hiring the strategy consultants.

Ilene Briner commented that in two of the last meetings, there's been mention of a personnel matter and the hiring of an attorney. She would like an update each month. She knows the Board cannot talk about any of the details because it's a personnel matter but she'd like an update every month as to where that case is going. Is it in investigation? Is it in litigation? Is it in negotiation? Where does it stand?

Laura Temple commented that during this Library Appreciation Week, she'd like to say how much she appreciates the Board. Being on the Board is an extensive commitment and she's grateful to each of the trustees for serving Downers Grove this way. She also thanked Julie for her strong and visionary leadership. She is really grateful that Julie is steering the ship. After having attended several of these meetings, she has learned about all the different departments and people that go into making this place run and she's supremely grateful for all that work and for everyone that works at the library. They make this library just an essential part of the fabric of the community, so she hopes the library feels appreciated, because it is.

Laura Hois wanted to address the issue that she brought up at November's Board meeting that, wherein, she urged this Board to fire the library's diversity, equity, and inclusion consultant, RGW. She was in this room earlier today for the senior meeting where there was various discussion about great things about the library's facilities and discussion about people's various experiences, and one of her colleagues, who usually disagrees with her, agreed that the RGW consulting report is racist, which came as a surprise to her. She thinks that when she points out the issues again, which she will remind the Board tonight what she said in November, that that is the way the library has gone. Unfortunately, the library for the past three years has accepted RGW's recommendations for strategic planning and it's really disappointing to her and many residents who would certainly not have gone down that path. So why does she say this? By way of reminder, RGW had pushed for radical left changes to our library's culture and

policies in ways that violate the Constitution, civil rights laws, local library law and the Downers Grove Public Library's current bylaws. RGW had spent six months in 2020, starting in March of 2020, discovering that Downers Grove Public Library was systemically racist. Well, this is not true. She does not believe that our community is racist, but the library director and the majority of this whole Board agreed that that was true and accepted RGW's promotion of the idea that we should deeply integrate DEI, diversity, equity, and inclusion, to spur redistribution of power, wealth, access, and privilege to favor the allegedly oppressed historically marginalized people and urged Downers Grove Public Library to take from the oppressors, indicated as white people, and give to the oppressed. RGW said residents do not have the right to expect taxpayer money to be spent according to what they want in our library; they should not have this power and privilege. RGW also said taxpayers don't deserve to have library resources aligned to their value system. Instead, white-centered patrons must be forced to embrace the interest of neglected, historically marginalized individuals. Very disappointing, this is still on the website in the RGW report, and she wishes more people would read it to understand where she's coming from. We're not going to be unfair here, we're just saying, look, this is a great community, this is a caring, charitable, kind, wonderful community. She's lived here for 40 years and she and the people here wish that we would get past this categorization of people of by skin color. Because until you know who she is as a person, until you had a chance to talk to her and find out where she's coming from, let's not put up barriers that are based on skin color and that's exactly what this library has done by accepting this plan. RGW said our library must be DEI centered, not a neutral institution. Not a neutral institution means that you're prioritizing certain classes of people, perhaps people of color, perhaps people of certain sexual orientation. That's not right because the library is here to serve the whole community. So RGW attacked the American history, tradition, meritocracy, and rejected our foundation of equal rights under the law. A lot of people in our community think equity is a good thing because they think equity means equality. It is the opposite of equality; it is giving preference to certain categories of people. That's what's happening in our schools as well, preferences being given to minorities. White students are not being given the opportunities and everything is getting dumbed down. So, it's tough to take. She and others in November demanded the return of eighty six thousand dollars in tax dollars that this Board has spent on RGW Consulting. In her opinion, this is harmful to the community, divisive, and a complete waste of taxpayer dollars. Here is today's update for all of the folks here that are honest, hard-working, high tax paying residents; we all got to know this. For the period from March 3, 2020 through the present, Downers Grove Public Library has paid a whopping \$157,367 to RGW Consultants' Resheeda Graham Washington for her anti-racist consulting and training for the staff. Her monthly pay has ranged from \$3,300 a month to over \$7,000 per month. RGW's \$45,000 yearlong work plan fee, which required a non-refundable cash deposit of

\$22,500 that was paid in the lump sum by we the taxpayers here, that yearly plan commenced April 1, 2022 and ended March 31, 2023. So she questions, are we going to continue to use RGW consulting or can we finally end this? RGW is making a whopping amount of money and she has the same agreement with numerous libraries in the area that have the same deal going. Can you imagine how much her monthly take home is for RGW but she is the principal and she is the one that has invited us to join in the anti-racism effort which is really divisive and harming our community, especially when you consider that so many other libraries are following the same program. She is thinking okay, in her correspondence she says that RGW can be emailed to her personal email address. Okay, unusual, and our website still states to this day that the Equity Strategic Plan is structured on the four quadrants of racism. The plan was created by the library's Equity Advisory Team composed of staff members and Downers Grove community members led by RGW Consulting. This plan was approved by this board April 27, 2022, exactly one year ago. What is the problem with this? Well, as she said, the library's approval of this Equity Strategic Plan itself is racist. Unfortunately, the Board accepted the plan and promoted policies that RGW recommended and it divides our community, black, white, Hispanic. Why are we doing this? Why are we doing this? Why can't we be united and work together and care about each other? The basis should be love, not skin color. That's what brings us together. She has a recent email, as recent as February 27, where Director Julie Milavec in an email referenced continuing with the resource-targeted programming and staff training provided by equity consultant RGW. So it is continuing even in the event there's push back and Laura Hois would be one of the people that's saying, I'm pushing back against this because this is just fundamentally not right, all right? [Milavec's email continues] As we are dependent on this work being done by our BIPOC staff members, BIPOC means black indigenous and people of color, please know that [Milavec] by no means is shying away from DEI efforts, in fact she's doing the opposite. Julie, our director, is doing the opposite - she's supporting the continuation of this racist plan. Please stop forcing racial division in our library and discontinue it. This library recently declined a request to do a book reading for children that was Christian-based and she's not saying it needs to be just Christian but it was declined because it's not consistent with the strategic plan. So does this library truly serve the entire community and every facet of it, and she's not saying just Christians, she's saying other religions as well? It should serve everyone. Yes, she is coming up on perhaps too much time but (another speaker in the audience announced they would yield their time to current speaker), she would caution the Board, look at what happened in the news last week with Bud Light. Bud Light lost 6.5 billion dollars in stock value. In just a few days, its sales dropped seventeen percent and its volume dropped twenty-one percent. This related to the ongoing boycott of Bud Light following the company's decision to partner with transgender social media influencer Dylan Mulvaney, a

biological male who identifies as female. We the people think Bud Light fans know the honest to God truth; Dylan Mulvaney was born male and he does not become female by dressing like a woman and posting on social media. Dylan Mulvaney brought disaster to the Bud Light company. Please do not bring disaster to our community by continuing down this road. Acknowledge, please, that this plan is racist and tell the truth, that's all we're asking.

Zoe Rei thanked the Board for continuing to do the DEI work that they library does. It is incredibly, deeply meaningful to her and so many people in Downers Grove and the variety of people that come to the library. She really appreciates that the library has consultants to work with on all the difficult work.

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

9. **Unfinished Business.**

a. Bylaws Update. Trustee Sladek created a new draft of the bylaws after last month's meeting and then exchanged ideas with Trustee Gigani before sending it to the rest of the Board. She received feedback from most of the other trustees, so the draft that was included in the Board Packet is not the final version. The Board discussed all of the proposed changes to the published draft. Trustee Sladek will make the changes discussed and provide another draft for review at the May 24, 2023 meeting.

10. **Library Director's Report.** Library Director Milavec presented her report. The library's cleaning company quit and broke the three-year contract that was supposed to go through January 2024. A new cleaning company will be starting on Monday. They currently clean the Gail Borden Public Library in Elgin and has for more than a decade with good recommendations. The workroom project is completely done and the punch list is finished. The library came in \$43,000 under budget. Building Operations Director Ian Knorr is at the Public Library Safety and Security Conference today and tomorrow. Milavec gave a special thank you to Assistant Director Jen Ryjewski, who has been the person in charge of all of the focus groups that have been going on since the middle of last week. It has been quite the job to handle all of the physical details of the rooms, setups, snacks, water, and supplies needed for the focus groups.

11. **Trustee Comments and Requests for Information.**

Trustee Sladek congratulated Trustee Humphreys on the article about him in the Daily Herald about ten days ago. She looked at the paper online and there was Dave's face and a lovely feature about all that he's done for the Downers Grove community over the years he's been involved.

Trustee Humphreys thanked Trustee Sladek for all of her work on the bylaws. He also commented to Assistant Director Ryjewski that the most important thing for all of her efforts is apparently people have been doing up to the focus groups and that's even better, because we are going to get a good cross-section which is going to be helpful.

Trustee Nienburg referenced public comments from earlier in the evening and asked if the library is still engaged with RGW Consulting. Library Director Milavec noted that the contract for year two work did expire at the end of March and there are no current contracts with her. She does some separate hourly coaching for a staff member for the library but that's about it. Trustee Nienburg also confirmed that the current strategic planning process is not subordinate to the previous DEI strategic planning process. Milavec confirmed that it may be folded into the strategic plan or it may continue as a separate plan but that will be up to the Board when voting on the new plan. Trustee Nienburg commented that there are portions of that report that he finds extremely unnecessarily offensive but that does not mean he is not supportive of DEI objectives. There are portions of that report that he thinks were outrageous and unnecessarily divisive and he personally wants to make sure that that does not carry through the strategic plan. There's good in there but there's also some elements that he doesn't think are constructive.

President Gigani asked about the circulation statistics for March 2023. There was about 11,000 self-checkouts versus 33 staff desks checkouts, which is almost flipped from March 2022. She was wondering if there was some issue with the self-checkout. Milavec commented that the numbers were accidentally transposed. President Gigani also thanked everyone that participated in the focus groups. It's a lot of time out of people's personal schedules and she appreciates everyone that was involved. She's very excited and encouraged, having sat through the Board's strategic plan focus group. She's very excited about the company we went with and she's encouraged by what's to come next. President Gigani also thanked the library and all the library workers as a belated National Library Workers Day, which was yesterday. Thank you again to the staff as usual for their incredible knowledge and customer service. She also gave a quick shout out for the Downers Grove Public Library Foundation's fundraisers this week. Tonight there is Foxtail, tomorrow is Gia Mia, and Friday is Panera. She also thanked Children's Services for a lot of programming for spring break. Her family was out of town but kind of bummed to miss some of the programs. She has noticed in the last few months that there has been a bit of an uptick with some patron incidents involving our youth so she reminded parents that are in the room or grandparents or people that have neighbors that fall into this demographic to remind them to be respectful in the library. It's disappointing when you are excited to have your own children go to the library and do school

work or hang out with friends and then there's children that are disruptive to that experience or are disrespectful to our amazing staff. She would love to see those numbers start going down.

12. **Adjournment.** President Gigani adjourned the meeting at 8:43 p.m.