

**DOWNERS GROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES
MAY 24, 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 7:41 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 Marti Sladek, President Swapna Gigani. Absent: Trustee Bill Nienburg.

Also present: Library Director Julie Milavec, Assistant Library Director Jen Ryjewski, Business Office Manager Katelyn Vabalaitis, IT Manager Paul Regis, Children's Services Manager Allyson Renell.

3. **Welcome to Visitors.** President Gigani welcomed visitors and thanked them for their interest in the library.
4. **Approval of Minutes.**
 - a. April 26, 2023 Committee of the Whole Meeting. It was moved by Khuntia and seconded by Humphreys THAT the Minutes of the April 26, 2023 Committee of the Whole Meeting be approved as presented. Motion passed by voice vote.
 - b. April 26, 2023 Regular Meeting. It was moved by Khuntia and seconded by Humphreys THAT the Minutes of the April 26, 2023 Regular Monthly Meeting be approved as presented. Motion passed by voice vote.
5. **Financial Matters.**
 - a. April 2023 Financial Report. Library Director Milavec presented the report. The library is 33% through 2023 as of the end of April. The fund balances are negative, which is expected this time of year. The library has an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Village of Downers Grove that allows the library to go into arrears while waiting on tax disbursements. Revenues are running at 1.9% received, which is expected due to the majority of the library's income coming from property taxes, which arrive in June and September. The library received the award letter for the Illinois Public Library Annual Per Capita Grant, which was fully funded at the amount that was

budgeted for the year. On the expense side, the library is on track in nearly all budget lines. Milavec noted that budget line 545000, Cleaning Services, will go over budget due to the new cleaning company that was hired.

- b. May 2023 Invoices. It was moved by Humphreys and seconded by Sladek THAT the payment of May 2023 Capital Replacement Fund invoices totaling \$74,817.52, the payment of May 2023 Operating Fund invoices totaling \$119,991.10, the acceptance of May 2023 Operating Fund credit memos totaling \$39.06, and the ratification of April 2023 payrolls totaling \$263,985.34 be approved. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Sladek, 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. Ilene Briner from Downers Grove asked for an update on the personnel matter the library hired an attorney for, wanting to know what stage it's in: investigation, litigation, arbitration, or settlement. She'd like to know. She also commented on Library Director Milavec's letter to the community on the website under DEI. The letter states that "by openly condemning hate and violence, the library demonstrates that it is a safe place for people of color and people who look or think or act differently." Ms. Briner said that the term "people of color" sounds inclusive because basically we all have color. White is a color. It's a combination of all primary colors. But alas, "people of color" is a woke term to refer to everyone except white skin color people. She finds it strange to fight racism with a segregating term like "people of color." How do you fight racism with a new racism? The library should be uniting us all under the banner of our humanity. We all belong to the human race. Our dignity is derived from our humanity. We're all the same on the inside; stop focusing on the outside. By Library Director Milavec saying, "by openly condemning hate and violence..." she makes it sound as if Downers Grove is full of hate and violence. Downers Grove is better than that. The statement does not make the library safe. Making sure that drugs are not being ingested and sold on the premises makes the library safe. Ejecting persons who fight in the library and threaten violence in the library makes us safe. She thinks Library Director Milavec should be more focused on safety of all patrons and employees at the library, regardless of what group they belong to. The next time Ms. Briner sees "POC" in the library communication, she hopes that it will be referring to "piece of cake" or "point of contact."

Anne Wick wanted to express her appreciation to the Board and library staff for the outstanding programming brought to the community. She has thoroughly enjoyed the wide range of programs provided, as has her family. She wanted to

share a bit about how one of the library's programs with the Potawatomi touched her and members of her extended family. Ms. Wick's family oral history includes her great great grandmother who, in the early 1800s, was one of the first settlers of European descent in the Northwest Territory (Northeast Indiana). She ended up alone with three young sons. The local Native Americans brought them food and supplies and helped sustain them throughout the winter. Her family would not have survived without their assistance. After watching the library's program, Ms. Wick wondered if perhaps the Native Americans were Potawatomi. She did some research and yes, they were Potawatomi who were removed from their lands and sent to what is now Kansas on the Trail of Death. They were later moved to Oklahoma where they currently reside as The Citizen Potawatomi Nation – People of the Place of the Fire. She reached out to their tribal Vice Chairman Linda Cass with her family's story and they had a lovely conversation. She later received a call from Kelli Mosteller, Executive Director of the Harvard University Native American Program and registered citizen of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Ms. Wick was able to express her family's profound gratitude to their ancestors for their kindness and generosity 200 years ago. She was also able to learn more about their past and current challenges, as well as the work they are undertaking to overcome those challenges. Ms. Wick has an open invitation to visit and she greatly appreciates the connection they were able to make. She believes the library's programs impact people in so many positive but often hidden ways and she wanted to share one small example. Ms. Wick also commented that her daughter was in Boston the past weekend at the Taylor Swift concert. While she was waiting in line in the rain to get in, people were discussing how far they traveled to see the concert. Her daughter mentioned that she was from a Chicago suburb called Downers Grove. Someone in the crowd said, "Oh, I've heard of Downers Grove. You have that really great library." She wanted the Board to know that the work of the library is being positively recognized throughout.

Terry Pavesich attended to speak about the treatment of 40 shelvers and clerks that work in the library's Circulation Department. They were allowed to swap hours for more than 10 years. The reason behind this was that they were given set hours every week and their weekend schedule is made a year in advance. Who knows what days you will need off that far in advance? Most people don't know what they are doing in two months, let alone a year. Right now, there is no ability to swap unless you use all of your personal time or vacation time. The administration has decided that it is inconvenient for them to allow switching, unless all personal time and vacation time are used. Again, you get three personal days for the year and each employee is given vacation, either two weeks or more, depending on how many years they've worked. They should be using that at their discretion, not because maybe they have a flat tire. Vacation should be used for vacation. You never know what little things life will throw at

you. This is causing people to use sick time instead and they are calling off. It's not a good thing to use your sick time for those things. Many times, they are not being replaced and therefore it puts more pressure on the people who are left behind. With the department goal being to emphasize good mental health and taking care of yourself, this seems like just talk. If they truly cared about the people in the department, this policy would not have been changed. There should be a better solution. She realizes that scheduling is not an easy task but because it's complicated, maybe the person who's doing it, who doesn't really like to do it; maybe they need to find a person who would be able to get the job done properly. Many employees have communicated that they are displeased with this change, but they're afraid to voice their opinion because of retaliation, which should never happen in the workplace. This is wrong, when someone's rights are taken away in that manner. Things to remember are that these jobs are 16-18 hours set schedule per week and weekend schedule is a year in advance. Personal time should be used for personal time and vacation time should be used for vacation time. It is a time to recharge. Each individual should have that opportunity. Sick time should be used for sick time. You never know what's going to happen when you walk out that door. It is up to the Board to make this right. Switches should be put back. Do the right thing and give 40 employees their right to switch back. She is sure administration will have excuses on why not to do this but the average person finds this a vital necessity.

Jim Wool helped to organize the painting of the library windows for Memorial Day; something that should not have been controversial. Painting the library windows to remember, as Abraham Lincoln stated in the Gettysburg Address, "that from these honored dead we take increased devotions and that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion." The controversy began when in an email he received giving him permission to paint the windows. Jen Ryjewski stated the following, "You'll be able to paint the library windows for Memorial Day. It's the first time that the library windows will be painted by an individual rather than part of a community or downtown event with other businesses and organizations participating, like Halloween or Pride Month. As our beta test for window painting beyond these larger community events, the library will use this to evaluate how and when it approves such requests should there be more in the future." First, in Jen's email she makes it clear that Halloween and Pride month will not be beta tested but Memorial Day will be. She made it clear that Memorial Day is not on the same level as Halloween or Pride month. She said it would be beta tested and the library would evaluate how it went and improve should there be more requests in the future. How appalling that Jen and Julie demand a beta test for Memorial Day; a day that is far more significant than Halloween or Pride. Second, it was not an individual who painted the windows; it was 17 young students and six adults who assisted in the painting of the windows. He also had to submit what would be painted on the windows, which was a reasonable

request and he complied. Three days after the students painted the windows, he received an email from Jen. He thought the email was to thank the students and to recognize their effort. He was wrong. He was taken aback by her email. The email stated the following: "I noticed that the quote on your window is slightly different from the text you submitted to me and that the word God is capitalized on our windows. This is not what you submitted to me in writing and will be corrected." So her whole reason for changing the word God was based on what was written on the window. It was not exactly the same as what was submitted in the email. In his response email to Jen, he asked why the decorations were not removed from the window because they were not submitted in his email to her. So based on her reasoning, the decorations should have been removed. Well, they were not. In her email, she avoided answering the question and also, Jen said she noticed that what was written on the window was not exactly the same as what was submitted in that email. When he questioned Jen if she actually read the quote to make sure it matched word for word or if someone complained, Jen again tried to avoid the question. Finally, Jen admitted the truth that the change was made to the word God because a patron demanded that the word should be correct, so Jen lied to him. That's the reason why the word God has changed. Instead of taking pride in what the students did, the painting of the windows, and focusing on a message and the importance of Memorial Day, a bitter, angry, and narrow-minded individual demanded that the library make a change to the word God. How different Jen and Julie's response was to a single patron demanding a change to the window and the whole drag queen fiasco. Julie, in her emails, was adamant that the drag queen event would occur, regardless of the opinion of the community. But when one person complained about a petty matter, Julie and Jen jumped into action. Shame on Jen and Julie for not educating the person to appreciate the overall beauty of the Memorial Day message and the work that the students performed. Instead, Jen and Julie got him tangled up in the web of deceit, denials, and dishonesty. Jen and Julie bowed to the pettiness of a patron. When you compare how they handled the Memorial Day window painting to the drag queen event, it's quite evident that Jen and Julie work by their own standards.

Ed Briner, longtime resident of Downers Grove, stated that the Downers Grove Library is not safe for children. Our library is open to individuals with alcohol, drug, and possible mental issues. The library is not an alcohol, drug, and rehab center or a mental facility. The library is not helping these individuals by just allowing them to hang out all day long with nothing to do. Sadly, there are no overt signs that the library has done anything about this situation since he brought this up during the November Board meeting. Since then, November 2022 through April, there have been a disturbing number of calls from the library to the Downers Grove Police Department where the police were needed. He reviewed four incident reports, though there are quite a few more. Infraction: open

possession, using, or under the influence of a controlled substance. This first call came from the Children's Room. There was a grown man staggering through the shelves of the Kids Room. He was drunk, obviously, but why he was there, who knows. But certainly not safe for kids. Secondly, another open possession, using, or under the influence of a controlled substance; not following reasonable directions from the staff; and interfering with another person's comfort or safety. Thirdly, early one morning an individual, a woman, was found in the northwest garden playing in the dirt and acting strangely. At 4:30 on the same day, the same woman was again outside in the garden digging and covered with dirt. Fourth, an infraction of viewing pornographic videos; trespassing; and history of inappropriate conduct in the Downers Grove Public Library. The Downers Grove Library is a ticking time bomb. When one of these individuals might have an alcohol, drug, or mental episode, they could injure a child, pre-teen, or a mother with her baby or babies, who are often here in the morning. The library is a great resource to Downers if, he says if, it's a safe environment. Currently, this is not so. Julie, if you want to help these individuals, you should be offering these programs, services, resources, and working with the Mayor and DuPage County to help these folks with their addictions and/or mental issues. Julie's number one responsibility in running the library is to make it a safe place, not a place that's enter at your own risk. He would like Julie to address this situation tonight in her Director's Comments and let the public know what she's doing and are planning to do to ensure safety in the library.

Werner Kiuntke is a resident of Downers Grove. He wanted to address the true issue of divisiveness that we have truly seen in some of the discussions here in the library. We've spoken about people of color; we've spoken about the LGBT community and whether or not you should have books about that on the shelves; we've talked about the Bible; etc. What is concerning is that in the last meeting, someone made reference to the dumbing down of programs because they weren't adhering to a lot of the white students. He has found that Downers Grove is not a highly accepting community. People of color do not feel welcome here and there is a lot that we can see, even in the comments that occurred tonight. One of the issues is what's raised about mental health. He spent 40 years working in mental health. He would not give DuPage County a five star rating for mental health. There are a lot of lacking services and because the people are homeless, because the people are in need of places to stay during the day, and because the shelters are shut down, they come to the library. If we are concerned, we need to develop a dialogue among the people here, sitting in the audience, not the Board, and talk about how we're going to resolve this stuff. By pointing at the Board and saying how awful it is, the programs, and so forth, it does not do anything. It is the community's job to fix it, not the library's job. We need to work with DuPage County in terms of mental health issues and we need to work with DuPage in terms of homelessness and food pantries. He welcomes

anyone who's sitting in the audience to get together and resolve the issue; not focus on the Board continuously.

It was moved by Gigani and seconded by Dougherty THAT the Summer Reading and Kids Room presentation by Children's Services Manager Allyson Renell be moved before New Business. Motion passed by voice vote.

Summer Reading and Kids Room presentation by Children's Services Manager Allyson Renell. Children's Services Manager Allyson Renell presented the details of the 2023 Summer Reading Club, Dive Into A Great Story, outlining the Read-to-Me, Readers, Teen, and Adult clubs.

Renell also detailed other projects and changes that have occurred in the Children's Department over the last year. They finished up 2022 with great outreach numbers and also had two long-term staff retirements. Most of the fall into winter was taken up by the workroom renovation. Renell thanked the Board for approving the renovation and explained how much of a life saver it has been for her department. During the renovation, the Kids Room had to scale back on some programming and storytimes, but as soon as they got their spaces back, attendance increased back to pre-pandemic numbers. The Kids Room now visits 14 different preschools regularly. Kids Room staff frequently work with the schools in District 58 for various events and programs. When books are withdrawn from the collection that are still in good shape but just not needed anymore, they are given to local partners, including the schools and the West Suburban Community Pantry. Kids Room staff have continued to work on diversity audits of their collection and this year they focused on the summer bibliography list and the storytime collection. They also audited book lists back through 2017 and were pleasantly surprised to see that the lists are already about 40/60, with 40% having diverse authors or characters and 60% having non-diverse authors or characters. There are also plans to rework some of the space in the Kids Room and to move some of the collections around.

8. New Business.

- a. Illinois Non-Resident Library Card Program. Library Director Julie Milavec reminded the Board that they must vote annually to participate in the non-resident card program. Historically, the Board has preferred using the General Mathematical Formula, which is easier to calculate and it allows non-residents who live in areas served by Downers Grove school districts to purchase cards. Using this formula, the fee would decrease by \$1 to \$291 beginning August 1, 2023.

It was moved by Sladek and seconded by Khuntia THAT the library participate in the Illinois Non-Resident Library Card Program, using the General Mathematical Formula, resulting in a fee of \$291.00 per household per year, effective August 1, 2023 as presented. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

- b. FY2024 Salary Schedule. Similar to 2019, the library used HR Source, a nonprofit HR association located in Downers Grove, to complete a full market analysis which led to an overhaul of the full salary schedule. That process begins with updated job descriptions for every job in the library. An average is pulled from that data of what you should expect to pay for each particular job in this year and those figures are broken down into a minimum, midpoint, and maximum for each job. These full overhauls are completed about every three to four years. The proposed schedule would take effect on January 1, 2024.

It was moved by Khuntia and seconded by Sladek THAT the FY2024 Salary Schedule be approved as presented. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

9. **Unfinished Business.**

- a. Bylaws Update. Trustee Sladek commented that after the last Board meeting, she went back and incorporated the recommendations that came from the other trustees and staff and that draft is what was posted with this meeting's Board Packet. Trustee Nienburg emailed prior to the meeting that he is aligned with the changes that were made. If no other changes come up in the next month, this draft will go before the Board to be voted on in June.

10. **Library Director's Report**. Library Director Milavec presented her report. The last month was all about strategic planning. The retreat was wonderful, with 26 participants who got together two nights in a row and did great work. Staff cannot wait to see what ReThinking Libraries comes back with as a draft plan. Over 140 people participated in the focus groups and over 2,000 people answered the survey. The last time ReThinking Libraries had over 2,000 responses, it was in a community that was more than twice the size of Downers Grove. Staff hope to see the draft in June or July. Milavec thanked the group that did the Memorial Day window painting; they did a lovely job and unfortunately some of their best artwork was hidden. They did a really great purple heart but it's under the eaves of the building and harder to see from the street. The painting will go away on May 31 in preparation for the Pride Month window painting, which is painted by EQDG throughout the downtown area. In October, the Rotary Club of Downers Grove will do the Halloween painting throughout the downtown. Staff are working on procedures for window painting should any additional requests come in. Someone in public comment had asked about the personnel investigation.

Business Office Manager Katelyn Vabalaitis updated the Board via email earlier in the week. The third party investigation of a personnel matter is an investigation that is ongoing and they just interviewed a bunch of staff.

11. Trustee Comments and Requests for Information.

Trustee Humphreys commented that the Strategic Planning Retreat was so thorough and mind-boggling and it was an amazing team that was assembled by the consultants and staff, including people from a number of organizations and different segments of our community. The Mayor spent two full nights with us, as well as the Village Manager, people from the Foundation, people from the school districts, and staff and Board members. It was just an amazing group of people. He has lived in Downers Grove all his life and he has never sat in a room with that quality of people all in one place, especially for seven or eight hours. The Kids Room presentation tonight was just mind-boggling. You look at the kids room and there's books and kids and staff and you think that it's all just happening but now the Board has a feel for what really goes on in there and how much creativity goes on in the way of staff. He also highlighted the fact that starting June 1, there will be an amazing exhibit in the library called The Legacy Wall. It's an amazing exhibition that is touring around the United States and this is the only place it's going to be for the month of June in the entire Chicago area. He also noted that there's a sister city exchange between the District 99 High School's music departments and a city very much like Downers Grove that is a suburb of Stuttgart, Germany. Every two years, a group from one of the sister cities visits the other city and the first week of June, a group of 100 people, mostly kids from their high school, will come to Downers Grove to spend almost a week in our community. They stay in the homes of music students in Downers Grove. They visit the local community and the area and they go to Chicago. He was asked by the Mayor and the school district to host a tour of downtown Downers Grove, which will start in Fishel Park and go past some high points in Downers Grove and end up at the Tivoli Theater for a tour of that building. He will definitely be pointing out the library and encouraging them to stop in and visit it. It's a wonderful exchange opportunity.

Trustee Dougherty echoed Trustee Humphrey's comments on the Strategic Retreats and all the focus groups. She really appreciates Jen for putting all of the stuff together; it's pretty amazing, all the stuff that has been going on and is continuing to go on for the next little while to bring us to a place where we have the next strategic plan. Allyson Renell's presentation reminded her of the strength of the partnerships that the library has with school districts and community partners and daycares and all the different businesses. It's something that is discussed a lot among the Board but she's not sure if everyone in the community knows about it. It's something that came up as a strong point as we

talked about the strengths of the library and what to build on. She's excited to see what comes of all the conversations around the Strategic Plan.

President Gigani shared the same sentiments as Trustee Dougherty and Trustee Humphreys. She thanked Children's Services Manager Allyson Renell for highlighting the Kids Room. Even having children go through there for so many years, it's easy to take for granted the amount of foresight it takes to plan out "Things That Go" and what's in the toddler's reach and all of the details. It was very interesting to hear about the audits and it's great to see that at the forefront of what's driving the next set of books that come into the library. President Gigani thanked Jen and Julie and everyone at the library for a really smooth and wonderful strategic planning processes. The consultants at ReThinking Libraries did a phenomenal job and it was really great to get all the input from all of the community leaders. She thinks the two big takeaways were the value of the staff at the library, which goes back to the Board's enthusiasm over the salary schedule as well as the partnerships. The Kids Room has huge partnerships but also partnering with the Foundation to have social work interns to help us with those that are in need in the community to partnering with the Police Department to partnering with organizations like Hope's Front Door and People's Resource Center. The library has a wonderful working relationship with so many and she thinks it's really important to point that out. The library is constantly working to help solve community issues; it's not something that's being ignored, brushed to the side, or not taken seriously.

Trustee Humphreys commented that another community partnership the library has is with Equality Downers Grove, who worked to bring the Legacy Wall to Downers Grove with other sponsors in the community that are funding this exhibit. He reiterated that the library is not funding the exhibit. Something close to \$10,000 has been raised in the community for this exhibition but the library is not spending any tax dollars on that project.

Trustee Sladek commented that the other thing that came out of the strategic planning was issues that come up like public access to the library, social services gaps, and things like that. They came up in the process but it also became apparent after listening to the consultants, who have worked with libraries all over the country and even in a couple of other countries, that these issues are not unique to Downers Grove. It's something that not just public libraries but public entities in general are dealing with and she appreciated the idea that more community involvement in the solutions and pressure on other government bodies as well is needed. The library is not trying to blow it off but it has some restrictions on what it can do so if somebody comes up with some great ideas it will spread far and wide beyond Downers.

Trustee Gigani thanked Children's Services Manager Allyson Renell and she wanted to say that she appreciates the intentionality between the audit and the impact it has on children to see people that look like them and for children who don't look like them to see other kids who don't look like them. It's really powerful and the Board appreciates it and she appreciates it as a parent. She also thanked Julie and Jen for their work on the strategic planning process. The retreat was a very long but rewarding process.

12. **Adjournment.** President Gigani adjourned the meeting at 9:08 p.m.