

**DOWNERS GROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY
1050 CURTISS STREET
DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS**

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES MEETING
AUGUST 23, 2023, 7:30 P.M.**

BOARD TRUSTEES:

Swapna Gigani	President
Carissa Dougherty	Trustee
Dave Humphreys	Trustee
Barnali Khuntia	Trustee
Marti Sladek	Trustee

GUESTS:

Julie Milavec	Library Director
Katelyn Vabalaitis	Business Office Manager
Allyson Renell	Children's Services Manager

REGRETS:

Bill Nienburg	Trustee
---------------	---------

Minutes prepared by Anh Nguyen of Minutes Solutions from a video recording and edited by Business Office Manager Katelyn Vabalaitis.

1. CALL TO ORDER

There being a quorum present, and the Trustees having been given adequate and proper notice of the meeting, the meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Swapna Gigani led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance and read aloud the Downers Grove Public Library Land Acknowledgement.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion made by Humphreys, seconded by Sladek, it was resolved that the minutes of the Board of Library Trustees meeting held on July 27, 2023, be approved as presented. Motion carried.

4. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

a. Financial Statements for the Period Ending July 31, 2023

On a motion made by Dougherty, seconded by Khuntia, it was resolved THAT the payment of August 2023 Operating Fund invoices totaling \$98,267.26 and the ratification of July 2023 payrolls totaling \$266,231.62 be approved. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys,

Khuntia, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

Property taxes are starting to be reflected in the financial statements and the revenue reports for June 2023 and July 2023 are included in the board meeting materials. As of July 31, 2023, the library is 58% through the year and has collected 66% of its revenue. The library has spent 51.4% of its budget and investment income remains strong. Special legal continues to be over budget at 400% due to a third-party investigation, which has concluded with the final report received by the Board, of which \$17,000 has been spent and another \$2,400 is expected for August 2023.

- b. **Invoices for August 2023:** The fund balance and revenue reports for June 2023 were included in the meeting packet.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ilene Briner reiterated her previous concerns regarding disparaging comments towards Catholics in the Land Acknowledgement. She stated that the proposed revisions to the Land Acknowledgement included in the agenda change little, and the line in dispute now reads, "The federal government and officials from Catholic and other Christian churches coerced Native families into sending their children to live and attend classes at boarding schools without visitation." The underlying document that she previously cited that showed the Catholic Church as a minor player has been removed and replaced with a vague document that opens more questions than answers. The new document does not confer any dominance to the Catholic Church in regard to the boarding schools. She queried why the Land Acknowledgement cannot omit any mention of the Catholic Church since there is no evidence of a predominance of the Catholic Church's role in the history in question. She requested that the proposed update to the Land Acknowledgement be rejected pending further revisions.

Marsha Richardson thanked the Board and the library staff for its collection of LGBTQ resources for young people. She stated that she is a proud parent of an adult gay child and wished those same resources had been available for her son during his adolescence and into adulthood, to mitigate his sense of being alone. She stated that she would have been more educated and better equipped to help guide her son had those resources been available.

Bob Camarado echoed the comments made by Marsha Richardson. He stated that he is pleased to see his property taxes are supporting the community.

Laura Hois reported no desire on her part, or in general, to restrict resources from the library; however, she expressed concern regarding marketing and influence, which she expressed started in the public schools and is now pervasive in the library, including "LGBTQ romance flyers" that are prominently displayed throughout the library. She stated her interpretation that the flyers are a "marketing tool that is being used to influence children to follow an agenda", which she finds objectionable. She expressed concern with the increase in children who are being influenced to transition their gender and to focus on sexual materials when they should be focusing on school. She voiced the opinion that "several states, including Illinois, are directing public schools to help young students make gender transitions, and that educators are told to actively engage in these conversations and to keep such information from parents." She stated that the library's "gender-affirmed deviant sexual images" are on books prominently displayed throughout the library, and that their "anti-white policies are directly assaulting children." She emphasized that the Board should stop advancing the "leftist political agenda" that is related to this effort. She objected to the book ban law as a way to silence parents. She noted that the library is prioritizing historically marginalized and LGBTQ people and reiterated the importance of serving all constituents. She

stated that the book ban law is a “highly publicized effort to further the indoctrination and sexualization of children, which many residents deem inappropriate in schools and libraries.” She reported that the library has refused to purchase **Irreversible Damage**, which is a book that expresses Conservative views, on six occasions. She requested that the Board consider more balance in the library and set restrictions to help parents monitor what children are seeing, and to stop prohibiting books and materials that depict and espouse ideas that the Board disagrees with.

Linda Schranz referred to the incident of Laura Ann Carleton, a 66-year-old straight white woman, who was shot and killed because she was flying a pride flag outside of her shop in support of the LGBTQ+ community, unaware that people who show empathy and love for marginalized people could be victims of violence. She stated that she is an ally, and the church that she attends is also an ally. She thanked the library and its staff for the courage that they have been showing to stand up and express their support for the LGBTQ+ community and their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion with the books and programs that are available.

Ed Pawlak noted that none of the literature on being transgender is in the children’s room. It is all located in the adult section on the second floor. He expressed concern with the misinformation being spread and encouraged residents to use critical thinking. He urged the Board to fact-check any information being relayed before making any decisions.

Janet Wittingham reported that she was under the impression that there was a long waitlist for the book **Irreversible Damage** based on comments made at the last meeting. She stated that she obtained a copy of the book, and the long waitlist is actually only 20 people for the audiobook. She reported 10 copies of the book in the library system and that three of them are on the shelf right now for anybody who wants to read the book. She reiterated the Board’s responsibility to faithfully and judiciously guard resources and to use them wisely. She recommended against purchasing the book and instead using the library’s resources for something that is not readily available elsewhere. She thanked the Board for their discernment and professional judgment. She stated that she is also a user of the Interlibrary Loan Services and is happy with the service as a cooperative way to stretch resources across the library system and still serve the public.

Ed Briner hoped that the Board is working with the Mayor and the Village council to address the increasing number of homeless people in the library. He reiterated that helping the homeless is not what the library is meant to do or is qualified to do, referring to examples of the library providing county services, food pantries, meal services, and a substance abuse disorder information session. He requested clarification on social work interns for the library and suggested using the money saved for added security in the library, including possibly partnering with the Downers Grove Police Department given recent events, including an intoxicated gentleman wandering through the children's room and a chair-throwing incident. He reported recently meeting a clinical psychologist and suggested incorporating her services to help the homeless population in Downers Grove. He hoped that the Board is working closely with the Mayor during the budget planning to address and help the homeless.

Noel Manley reported attending the book-banning presentation at the Indian Prairie Public Library. He agreed with comments made by Representative Anne Stava-Murray and Congressman Sean Casten that books should not be banned. He referred to the debate that **Irreversible Damage** is creating and noted that a meaningful debate cannot be had without having the material. He noted availability at another library is not an excuse for the library to not purchase the book on the grounds of misinformation and supported the purchase of the book to encourage debate. He referred to the Native Land statement and stated that cherry-picking historical events for the Land Acknowledgement is a misrepresentation of history.

6. TRUSTEE COMMENTS

Trustee Sladek reported that, in the process of working with the strategic plan and the equity plan over the last few months, her personal take on the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) issue is as follows:

- Equity means each person can pursue their own interests and speak their own truth based on their experiences and aspirations. To become their own best self without the expectation that we all end up alike or equal in every aspect of our lives.
- Diversity means respect for anyone who wants to use the library, regardless of race, age, religion, physical or mental ability, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual belief system, economic status, talents, or where they live.
- Inclusion means the empowerment of more people without disempowering anyone. It is not a quota system or affirmative action but the opportunity to see and learn from each other.

Trustee Khuntia reported efforts by the Board to reach out to the community, including having over 2,000 people respond to the survey, over 140 people attending the focus groups, and several people attending the retreat, to learn what the community wants and expects from the Board, and what the Board wants and expects of itself.

Trustee Khuntia referred to previous mentions of the word “balance” and reiterated that the library never had balance, which is why the Board is conducting an audit of the library to assess the books and programming offered. She noted that in looking at the statistics to see who the majority of books are about, who the books are written for, and the offerings that have always been there for certain people and not for others, there has not been a balance, and she expressed appreciation for the effort being made now to rectify this issue.

Trustee Khuntia reported that the library’s reading program is at larger numbers than pre-pandemic, which speaks to the kind of library that Downers Grove Public Library is. On the issue of unhoused people, she hoped that residents attend Village Council meetings to discuss these issues. She noted the library is air conditioned and considered a safe space, but agreed with the need to partner with the Village Council, and the importance of the Council hearing from the community regarding issues with unhoused people. She expressed that she is proud to be a member of the community and thanked Julie Milavec for her leadership.

Trustee Humphreys echoed sentiments about being proud to be a part of the community. He noted the library serves all of the community, especially certain parts of the community that may not have access to air conditioning. He stated the library is listed as a cooling center by the Downers Grove Village Government. For practical reasons, the library close at 9:00 p.m.; therefore, there are other organizations within the community, such as First Congregational United Church of Christ, across the street from the library, which will be a cooling center for the next 48 hours or so, effective August 23, 2023, with assistance from other churches in town who are providing volunteering services.

Trustee Dougherty stated that she felt compelled to attend the Equity Advisory Team meetings based on comments made by other Board members. She expressed pride in the Board’s recommitment to learning about the evolution of EDI as a Board member, a community, and a library.

President Gigani thanked the Circulation Department for the excellent job in July 2023, when the large sorter machine was out of order for four days. She thanked Access Services for their

continued efforts with cataloging materials and being innovative about how materials are presented, especially in the Children's Department. She reported an increase in visitors for the month of August 2023, compared to 2022 and 2021, and several library cards were issued.

The library has taken significant steps to ensure that public safety is the top priority, from operating with building monitors, specific protocols, and increased dialogue with the Police Department to address safety concerns quickly and in an inappropriate manner. Information was shared at the last meeting by a member of the community that the library misrepresented the number of police interactions.

President Gigani researched the Downers Grove Police Department records and reported that not all calls were initiated by library staff, as some were initiated by patrons requiring medical assistance or assistance with parking lot issues. Several visits were false alarms, lockouts, or extra patrols initiated by the Police Department, and several incidents required multiple police visits, including a juvenile who was involved in a furniture-throwing incident that required a follow-up visit by the Police Department. Another incident was initiated by library staff to the Police Department to help with serving a patron with a ban letter.

Trustee Gigani emphasized that numbers that are inflated or inaccurately reported provide a false narrative of the library's environment. She encouraged residents with sincere concerns to exercise due diligence in evaluating the library's response to patron incidents. She respectfully requested that all fellow parents of the tween and teen population remind their children about what acceptable behavior looks like in a public facility.

7. LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Julie Milavec reported that social work interns for the library are from Aurora University. These students are in Bachelors, Masters, or PhD programs, and are required to do field work as part of their program. There is a stipend available from the Downers Grove Public Library Foundation, which pays for two student interns to be with the library per semester. There were no interns over the summer; however, new interns will be starting the week of August 28, 2023.

Jen Ryjewski, the Assistant Library Director, is on an unexpected medical leave. Allyson Renell, the Children's Services Manager, will be taking the Acting Director role next week while Julie Milavec is on vacation. Depending on Jen Ryjewski's medical leave, Allyson Renell may also reprise her role at the end of September 2023, when Julie Milavec goes on a scheduled medical leave.

Allyson Renell has also agreed to take over the incident tracker software implementation that is to replace the patron incident tracker software that was spearheaded by Jen Ryjewski. An updated statistical report may or may not be provided in September 2023, due to Jen Ryjewski's absence, but Business Office Manager Katelyn Vabalaitis has been working on an updated financial report for the packet that captures all of the information that Trustees have requested.

The Illinois Library Association Conference Trustee Day is October 26, 2023. Two trustees have registered so far, and there is still time to register.

Big projects anticipated for the end of August 2023 include a new security camera system to replace the previous obsolete software and replacements of the damaged public service desks.

8. **NEW BUSINESS**

a. **Bylaws Update:**

On a motion made by Khuntia, seconded by Humphreys, it was resolved to approve the bylaws update as amended. Trustee Sladek abstained. Motion carried.

Julie Milavec reported that the bylaws update is a technical change to comply with the law and a request of the Village regarding vacancies.

An amendment was requested to change, "Trustees serve until their successors are appointed..." to "Trustees may serve until their successors are appointed".

b. **Public Comment Rules:**

On a motion made by Humphreys, seconded by Khuntia, it was resolved to approve the public comment rules as presented. Motion carried.

c. **Update to Land Acknowledgement:**

On a motion made by Humphreys, seconded by Khuntia, it was resolved to approve the update to the Land Acknowledgement as presented. Motion carried.

Julie Milavec reviewed the updates to the Land Acknowledgement, including a new citation to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS), and a citation for the statement "higher rates of suicide". There are numerous updated and new citations throughout the Land Acknowledgement. The electronic board packet provides live links to the new citations.

9. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

a. **2024 Levy and Budget:**

On a motion made by Humphreys, seconded by Khuntia, it was resolved to approve the 2024 Budget with a 4.3% levy increase as presented. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Sladek, Gigan. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

Julie Milavec reported that the budget proposals include both the flat tax rate version as well as a 4.3% levy increase version, which was determined to be the lowest possible to reach all the targets.

The expenditures have been updated to reflect the latest information available, especially the salary lines due to significant changes with retirements, etc., and have brought the personnel line down to a 4.9% increase. This includes the salary benchmarking that was approved in April 2023. The non-personnel lines are down to 4.6%, which is driven primarily by the electronic resources. Cleaning services were also tightened up in the 4.3% levy increase version.

For the 4.3% levy increase option, based on the equalized assessed value (EAV) of all properties in the library service area increase of 3.6%, which is the average of the past five years, results in a 4.3% levy increase and an increase in the tax rate up to approximately 0.2014, which is only a 0.6% increase over the previous fiscal year. The change in the EAV and the change in the levy dollar amount have an inverse effect on the tax rate. This contemplates hitting the target for the

capital replacement fund and reduces the amount to 2% as an increase over the previous fiscal year. The 2% will help achieve the capital reserve target and also to maintain the operating reserve target of \$478,000 in the ending balance, if both revenues and expenses come in as estimated. The budget will likely be in the \$230,000 range, down from the initial estimate of \$588,000.

For the flat tax rate option, in order to reach the target fund balance of \$478,000, the Capital Replacement Fund contribution would have to be reduced. In order to reach the target for 2027, in subsequent years, the capital replacement fund contribution would have to increase by 6.9% annually. The library's actual collections have remained consistent over the years and are still under the levels seen in 2019.

Julie Milavec recommended passing the 4.3% levy increase and budget as presented.

The Board reiterated that the extra few thousand will provide some leeway in the event that projections for capital replacements are too conservative and will mitigate major adjustments in the budgeting.

b. 2023 to 2028 High-Level Strategic Plan:

On a motion made by Khuntia, seconded by Dougherty, it was resolved to approve the 2023-2028 high-level strategic plan as amended. Motion carried.

Julie Milavec reviewed the amendments to the high-level strategic plan, including the addition of "Create lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with other entities that share our same values", which is lifted directly from the Guidelines for Partnerships that the library uses, and based on the Board's focus and emphasis on the importance of partnerships. The Board requested that the word "same" be removed from the proposed addition.

Julie Milavec reviewed the addendum, which includes suggested initiatives and more specific outcomes. It was noted that most of the suggested initiatives are from the strategic retreat.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board recessed to an executive session at 8:43 p.m. and reconvened to an open session at 9:20 p.m.

On a motion made by Dougherty, seconded by Sladek, it was resolved that the Board received and reviewed the thorough investigation by third-party law firm Ancel Glink, and to close the investigation into a pending personnel matter and to direct Board President Swapna Gigani to write a letter to said individual conveying the results of the investigation. Motion carried.

11. NEXT MEETING

The next Board of Library Trustees meeting is scheduled for September 27, 2023.

12. ADJOURNMENT

President Gigani adjourned the meeting at 9:22 p.m.

DISCLAIMER

The above minutes should be used as a summary of the motions passed and issues discussed at the meeting. This document shall not be considered a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.