

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

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES MEETING
SEPTEMBER 27, 2023, 7:30 P.M.**

BOARD TRUSTEES:

Swapna Gigani	President
Dave Humphreys	Trustee
Barnali Khuntia	Trustee
Bill Nienburg	Trustee
Marti Sladek	Trustee

GUESTS:

Jen Ryjewski	Assistant Library Director
Katelyn Vabalaitis	Business Office Manager
Allyson Renell	Children's Services Manager

REGRETS:

Carissa Dougherty	Trustee
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Minutes prepared 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

President 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 Khuntia, seconded by Sladek, it was resolved that the minutes of the Board of Library Trustees meeting held on August 23, 2023, be approved as presented. Motion carried by voice vote with an abstention from Nienburg.

4. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

a. Financial Statements for the Period Ending August 31, 2023:

As of August 31, 2023, the library is 66% through the year and has collected 62% of its revenue. The Board received a revised July 2023 revenue report and the August 2023 revenue report at the start of the meeting. The library has spent 63% of its Operating Fund as of the end of August. Special legal continues to be over budget at 500% due to a third-party investigation, which has

concluded. The Cleaning Services line will continue to increase and exceed the budgeted amount as a result of hiring a new cleaning company earlier in the year. Trustee Nienburg asked about when the Board will receive a financial report that tracks against a monthly budget rather than reporting percentages of time elapsed versus dollars spent. Assistant Director Ryjewski will bring this question to Library Director Milavec when she returns.

b. Invoices for September 2023:

On a motion made by Humphreys, seconded by Khuntia, it was resolved THAT the payment of September 2023 Capital Replacement Fund invoices totaling \$16,900.00, the payment of September 2023 Operating Fund invoices totaling \$153,024.38, the acceptance of September 2023 Operating Fund credit memos totaling \$520.03, and the ratification of August 2023 payrolls totaling \$273,312.39 be approved. Roll call: Ayes: Humphreys, Khuntia, Nienburg, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ilene Briner stated that she was in attendance to address the misinformation in the Land Acknowledgement. The revisions approved by the Board at last month's meeting still suggest that the Catholic Church was a predominant player in the school program. The library author of the revision conveniently deleted Volume 38 Number 2 of the legal review by the Native American Rights Fund, which shows that 7% of the students were at Catholic schools. A new document was added that shows 14 denominations took part in the schools. This latest document has been updated in August 2023 and states that there were 523 total boarding schools in the United States from 1801 to present. She has documentation by the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition that 87 of these schools were Catholic – that's less than 17% of the schools. This is a complicated history and is oversimplified and biased to an extreme in the Land Acknowledgement statement. She asked that the sentence in dispute be changed to, "The federal government and Christian churches created boarding schools to carry out the assimilation policies of the United States."

James Wool organized the window painting in May 2023 to honor Memorial Day. At the May and June Board meetings, he addressed the Board concerning the unprofessional behavior of Julie Milavec and Jen Ryjewski. Specifically, they lied about the existence of a Board policy regarding the painting of the library windows. He was told by Julie and Jen and that the Board policy required all groups to submit an email requesting permission to paint the windows and explain what they would paint. His group complied with this Board policy. Through FOIA requests, he learned that the Pride organization never submitted emails asking permission to paint the windows. This double standard should not have come as a surprise since Julie is an unapologetic political advocate for LGBTQ and they receive preferential treatment. But if you want to paint the windows to honor the men and women who died fighting for our freedoms, Julie will try to stop you with a policy that doesn't even exist. Before the July Board meeting, he submitted an email requesting to paint the library windows in July 2024 to celebrate the 4th of July. In response to his request, Julie and Jen explained that there was a new policy for painting the windows and the library will allow window painting only as a part of a community-wide event organized by a community partner. When he questioned why the Board never voted on this policy in a meeting, he was handed off to the Board President, who told him the Board is now working on drawing up a policy regarding the painting of the windows. He has been lied to repeatedly. He would like a straightforward answer and for there to be a recognition of wrongdoing. This Board refuses to hold Julie and Jen accountable and he requests that the Board President and the other members of

this Library Board censure the Director and Assistant Director for their unprofessional and unethical behavior.

Marsha Prichason is a resident of Downers Grove and thanked the Board for providing content that reflects the entire community, including materials that reflect the LGBTQ+ community. Last month at this meeting, a book that is on the library shelves was presented as allegedly promoting being gay. She wondered what magic power this book had that would turn someone gay so she decided to review it to determine for herself the validity of that assertion. While she found the characters to be relatable, the plot was formulaic and followed the typical storyline of a teen romance. She found no sexually explicit language or profanity; no more than any other teen romance novel. She could not find anything that targeted heterosexuals to read it and turn gay. It was also alleged that this book was being marketed by the library. She was curious about how LGBTQ content was being displayed at the library and she found that LGBTQ books were located in the Teen Reads section, nowhere near *Pat the Bunny*. They were mixed in with a vast array of other genres. She estimates about 5% of the books on display were LGBTQ+ related and that number barely reflects the general population of queer people in this country. She could find no documentation from any credible source that reading a book or being exposed to or learning about different identities would turn someone gay. She believes the push to eliminate LGBTQ+ materials at the library is an effort to eliminate the very presence of queer people. That is not going to happen, regardless of the language used to demonize LGBTQ+ people. She thanked Trustees and staff for continuing to make the Downers Grove Public Library a safe and welcoming space for everyone.

Noel Manley is a resident of Darien and was saddened and troubled by an action the Board took last month. The Board chose to approve unanimously, with the exception of Trustee Nienburg who was not in attendance, to add a biased and misleading anti-Catholic and anti-Christian statement to the library's questionable native Land Acknowledgement. He is at the meeting to challenge the taxpayer-funded anti-Catholic statement, which follows in a long and sad tradition of anti-Catholic tropes that predate the founding of our nation. The statement speaks broadly and deceptively of unnamed and unidentified Catholic officials who conspired with the federal government to perpetuate cultural genocide against Native people. This could not be further from the truth and to challenge this nonsense, he brought with him *The Dictionary of the Ojibwe Language*, which was written by an immigrant, priest, and Catholic official by the name of Father Frederic Baraga. How does the Board reconcile the charge that Catholic officials participated in cultural genocide of Native people while at the same time authorizing a series of books designed to preserve and protect the Ojibwe language. He noted that his grandmother and her four sisters attended schools that were listed in the library's sources and they went in speaking Ojibwe and continued to speak Ojibwe when they left. He showed a picture of his aunt that shows young women wearing the Native outfits as well. He asked the Board how they reconcile the charge that Catholic officials participated in cultural genocide when there is a school identified by the library's very source that did not beat or restrict the Ojibwe language out of his ancestors. The library is politically motivated who is pushing an anti-Catholic narrative to advance a far-left taxpayer-funded agenda. The statement is intellectually dishonest and follows an established Marxist pattern. He requests that the statement either be removed from the acknowledgement or the acknowledgement provide clear and unambiguous examples.

Mary O'Dell is a resident of Darien and while she usually obtains materials from Indian Prairie Public Library, she has in the past borrowed items from Downers Grove Public Library that were not available at her local library. She says in the past because she no longer feels comfortable, welcome, or included at DGPL. She is a proud Catholic. She is a proud Christian. She does not feel comfortable being around an organization that only last month added a hateful, hurtful, anti-

Catholic statement to its Native Land Acknowledgement. This outrageous, unsupported smear statement was unanimously approved by all members present and she does not recall any discussion. She does not understand why a taxpayer-funded public entity would take such hateful action against Catholics and other Christians whose religion is based on faith, hope, and love. She is going to pray that each of the Board members do the right thing.

Laura Hois is a Downers Grove resident. This past summer, the Board approved amended bylaws to provide that they will follow the dictates of the American Library Association. She had pleaded with the Board to not do that and to have allegiance to all members of the community. Members of the community have been disappointed by the discrimination by the equity practices and by the alliance with the ALA and what it represents. The ALA is a far-left, anti-parent force that aggressively targets children with sexually explicit LGBTQ materials and drag queen story hours in libraries across the country. The members of the community against ALA are not anti-gay but are against having children in the community, in public libraries, and in school libraries being indoctrinated and sexualized and gender influenced. This month, Citrus County, Florida was the first library district in Florida to publicly vote to leave the ALA. They had so much opposition from members of the community that they voted to defund ALA membership. Campbell County, Wyoming Library District became the first in America to cut ties with the ALA. The library system in Citrus County recognized gay pride month and had LGBTQ propaganda displays everywhere in the library such as what you see here. Parents and pro-family voices objected to that and in the next couple of years there were no such events. The residents were outraged when they found out their tax dollars were being used to pay ALA memberships. ALA supporters called parents radical extremists who are trying to limit freedoms but nothing could be further from the truth. Parents don't want their children to be exposed to pornographic materials and that includes teenagers. She asks that the Board undo what they've done and to follow the path of Florida and have allegiance to this community; all colors of this community. Stop discriminating against certain people, stop giving preference to certain people, serve everyone, and say goodbye to the American Library Association.

Dave Sosnow is a 20-year resident of Downers Grove. He shares Laura's sense of importance of taking care of our kids and he shared a few facts from the Trevor Project, a nationally recognized nonprofit. 41% of LGBTQ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year. 56% of LGBTQ young people who wanted mental healthcare in the past year were not able to get it. Transgender and non-binary young people who reported that all of the people they live with respect their pronouns reported lower rates of attempting suicide. Roughly half of transgender and non-binary young people found their school to be gender affirming and those who did reported lower rates of attempting suicide. He thanked the Library Board for having the courage to provide material that make his kid feel like they're a member of the community and that they don't need to be ashamed and shuddered and closeted. He thanked the Board for having the courage to do that.

An unnamed attendee commented that this is his first time attending one of these meetings and it's very interesting sitting in the audience. He thinks there is a little bit of a lack of institutional control going on and called out some of what he heard so far this evening. People here say they don't feel comfortable. Whose job is it to make them feel comfortable? The Board. People are saying that the Board's doing something wrong with the relationship it has with the ALA, which is a control issue that goes back to the Board. During the financials, only Bill asked a question and no other members of the Board did. Staff said the library is doing great on financials while being 66% through the year but only 63% of revenue has been received. According to his definition, that is not considered doing great. Bill pointed out that there doesn't seem to be much tracking, which seems again like a lack of institutional control by the people running the Board. It was peculiar to

him that it was called out by staff that a transcription service is being used but they are only summarizing the minutes; it's not a shock to him that expenses are at 66% and revenues are at 63% because we are not even transcribing the words down right and are wasting money. All of these lack of institutional controls are astounding to him and he asked where the accountability is. The Board might disagree with some of the comments being made but the folks in attendance are clearly upset and it's the Board's job to make them feel comfortable. He hopes that the Board puts the onus on someone.

It was moved by Sladek and seconded by Nienburg THAT Public Comment time be extended. Motion carried.

Werner Kiuntke is a resident of Downers Grove and has been attending these meetings for about the past year. During these meetings, there have been comments made regarding races of people, books on the shelves, LGBTQ, Native Americans, etc. Having been involved with civil rights since the 1960s, he can attest that there have been many evils committed in our culture against various groups and religions. He doesn't think that can be denied. We need to acknowledge it and we need to work to end this. On the broader level, all of the faiths have done a lot of stuff that this country is not very proud of. On July 28, 2022, Pope Francis apologized for the evil of the church personnel who worked in the schools with Native Americans. He thanked the library for giving the community access to the literature that keeps our history alive so that we don't repeat the patterns of the past.

Janet Winningham is a Downers Grove resident and thanked the Board for their time, attention, patience, and courage in the comment sections. The tenor and tone of statements made are uncivil attacks and are not acceptable. She thinks the comment about the apology from Pope Francis has already been made. Evil things have been done to people throughout history in the name of one organization or another and if we can't face that history, we can't improve the future. She thanked the Board for its discernment in book selection. At the suggestion of a friend, she read **Irreversible Damage** and it was not a particularly helpful book. It is a political book and it's available. It's not being censored and the fact that DGPL doesn't buy it doesn't mean it's not available, and that's the wonderful thing about sharing collections among libraries. She has often had to get books from other libraries and she appreciates that the library is using its resources and tax dollars wisely. It also occurred to her that it's not a constitutional right to paint windows, although everybody should be fair. She thanked the Board for their time and dedication.

An unnamed attendee commented that at the beginning of the meeting it was stated that the library is using a transcription service and she agrees with the other speaker that a transcription service should transcribe word for word what people say. She doesn't know if this is a recording that people in the community can go back and listen to, which would be good. A summary might be good if somebody wants to briefly look at just the speakers and their topics but when you jump to a summary there can be no other way to summarize than the person's biased view of what they are reading. You do your best to summarize fairly but there's always going to be a bias and she agrees that that's a little frightening.

Terry Pavesich is a Downers Grove resident. She spoke about how consistency is an important part of all of our jobs. It's the mark of an excellent management team. She questioned why there are different rules for different departments within DGPL. Circulation is the backbone of this library yet they are held under different rules. They are not allowed to swap their time and they are not able to trade unless they've used all their vacation and personal time. Is that really the way to manage people? It is harsher than any other department in the library and is just wrong. This was brought to the Board's attention in May and the Director said only a few staff had a problem with

that. Did she even ask the other people in the department? Staff are afraid to come forward because of their jobs. This is wrong on many levels and the Board has the ability to reinstate their ability to switch and make the department whole again.

6. TRUSTEE COMMENTS

Trustee Sladek commented that she has been on a steep learning curve the last several months since she's been on the Board and she's just been reappointed to a full term. She's looking forward to working with everybody and she wants to thank the community. She doesn't always agree with everything everybody says but she's learning and she's willing to listen. She's so impressed at the turnout that the Board gets and she thanked the community for their passion in caring about the library. Even when we have disagreements, she thinks this is a strong, healthy community and she hopes everyone can work together better in the future.

President Gigani echoed Trustee Sladek's comments. She appreciates everyone coming out to the meetings and it's especially nice to see our younger generation being involved. She would have loved to communicate to the younger gentleman before he left that the library's revenue is based on tax collection. Tax collection occurs twice a year and the library's tax revenue reported this month does not include the September 1 tax payments that are forthcoming. Regarding window painting, the beauty of the FOIA process is that all of this information is public, including emails to and from patrons from library administration and from the Board. If you request it you can see that there are always two sides to every story. If this is something people feel strongly about, she encourages them to seek out that information and not just listen to one party. She is glad Children's Services Manager Allyson Renell is at the meeting. The Kids Department has been seeing some wonderful renovations to make it very friendly and very user-friendly. It empowers our youngest readers to really feel like this is their experience and she applauds the interdepartmental effort between Building Operations, Access Services, and everyone else to really revamp the Kids Department. She thanked the Downers Grove Public Library Foundation for their upcoming fundraiser. They support our social work interns, our artwork, and so much more.

Trustee Khuntia thanked the Foundation for their work and support. She was looking at the final numbers for summer reading and was happy to see that all of the numbers increased this year. It was amazing to see the number of people who were using our library. She tried to hang out at the library a lot more this month and it was wonderful to see the number of people coming and going. She also gave a shout out to Cindy Khatri and Lucas McKeever for becoming members of the RAILS EDI Board.

Trustee Nienburg is very frustrated. He could not attend the last meeting and respectfully asked that the discussion on the strategic plan be postponed, because it thought it was important that all Board members participate. His request was denied and the Board moved forward with the discussion and vote. Matters at the last meeting were voted on in haste. He commits to the community that have concerns that he is not going to let them go unaddressed. Some of our constituents take issue with the mention of the Catholic Church's involvement in coercing Native American children to attend boarding schools in the Land Acknowledgement. While he shares this concern, he is more concerned with the word "genocide" that is used in the opening of the Land Acknowledgement. Listening to the meeting from a couple years ago when the statement was adopted, other members of the Board shared his same discomfort with the use of that word. It is divisive and feeds the culture of victimhood that has overtaken our society. He also noted that the Native Americans who consulted with the library on this statement have been absent from Library Board meetings. The public may also notice that the library has not done any significant Native

American programming, which comes across as virtue-signaling. At the last meeting, there was an opportunity to course correct and to take a direction with the Land Acknowledgement that would be more unifying, healing, and historically accurate. But the updates that were made were a slap in the face to everyone who has expressed concern over the one-sided account of the conflict between Native Americans and the settlers. He commits that this will not be his last word on the matter.

He next wants to address the tax levy. Since joining the Board, fiscal responsibility has been one of the things that's of the highest importance to him. During the budget discussion at the July meeting, he thought the Board was all on the same page regarding a feasible and workable alternative budget that featured no increase to the tax rate. Keeping the tax rate flat would have been a gesture and a nod to the struggle that most families are facing today with higher prices everywhere. The Board, which does not do oversight well, went straight to the full amount as presented by library staff and passed it unanimously. Regardless of the spin that is put on this by staff, this means taking more money from the taxpayers of Downers Grove. The expenditures were the same in both versions of the budget. The library's version of budget alternatives is to only adjust the revenue and contribution to the capital fund. That's not how he does budgeting. When he's faced with lower revenue, he cuts spending. In this case, the library is writing itself a check and leaving it to the Village to figure out where to make trade-offs to avoid passing it straight through to the taxpayers, which the Village routinely does to their credit. The budget includes \$54,000 so the library staff can travel to conferences while some taxpayer households are probably skipping summer vacations or cutting back on holiday spending. There's \$100,000 for professional services, including funding consultants who create reports that insult the taxpayer and divide the community. There's a 25% increase in special legal, which should probably be more given the overspend this year for FOIA responses to outraged community members and personnel investigations about mistreated employees. There's nothing in the budget that is going to improve safety and security in the library. The net effect of this budget is going to be a burden to the Village, which is already struggling to maintain burgeoning pension costs, and at the end of the day it's going to come out of roads, sidewalks, policing, and taxpayer summer vacations. He apologizes to the community. At the July meeting, the Board talked about being more fiscally conservative and careful stewards of the taxpayer money. But he got duped after the vote in August.

Regarding the Strategic Plan, he's going to save most comments for next month. The 2023 strategic planning process was an in-depth effort including the community and a consulting firm. Five days before the July meeting, the Board receives a note from the director that the Management Team had taken it upon themselves to edit the Strategic Plan, which the Board had not seen yet. At the same time, a member of the Equity Advisory Team merged the Strategic Plan with the Equity Strategic Plan, which was created before he was on the board. He, along with other Board members, voiced concern that the plan should not have been modified without the Board's alignment. Last month, the Board met with RTL, merged the equity plan, and without any thought of letting the public view the draft first, passed the five-year Strategic Plan. Whether it's virtue-signaling, picking and choosing causes they deem worthy of window painting, getting rid of employees who don't conform, manipulating material selection policies to exclude materials they don't like, or pushing agenda-driven programming and displays, this library thinks it can do whatever it wants. And unfortunately, it enjoys a majority of a Board. Look at the number of dissenting votes on any substantive matter in the years before he was appointed. He stopped looking after three years. He's frustrated and the only thing he can do is to continue to work on these matters and to bring this library into alignment with where he thinks the majority of the community wants them to go.

7. LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

On behalf of Director Julie Milavec, Assistant Library Director Jen Ryjewski presented the report. She acknowledged that Trustee Marti Sladek has been reappointed to the Board of Library Trustees for a six-year term.

The security camera software upgrade and new device installation was completed on September 13. The library currently has 25 cameras in and around the building. With this upgrade, four 360 degree cameras were installed throughout the library, which gives staff a larger viewing area. No matter what you are looking at on the screen, the camera continues to record a 360 degree view. This is something the old cameras could not do. Retention time for video recordings has also been increased to 45 days as opposed to 48-72 hours that was originally set.

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.

The Strategic Plan was passed last month, which has permitted staff to take the next step and work on a 2024 Work Plan. The draft of the work plan should be presented at the next meeting in October.

The Illinois Library Association Conference Trustee Day is October 26, 2023. Three trustees have registered so far, and there is still time to register. Library Director Julie Milavec will be presenting as well as Children's Outreach Coordinator Erin Linsenmeyer and Librarian Mary Sustar. Children's Services Manager Allyson Renell will be presenting with a couple of colleagues on interviewing and job skills.

The Board of Library Trustees will be holding its very first Coffee with our Trustees on Saturday, October 21 from 9:30-10:30 a.m. in the library's café. Community members are invited to visit, get to know the Board, and ask questions over coffee and pastries.

On the evening of October 21, the Downers Grove Public Library will be honored at the Youth Outlook Business Partner of the Year Award Gala. The Youth Outlook's mission is to celebrate, empower, advocate for, and provide services to meet the ever-evolving needs of the LGBTQ+ youth and their families, friends, and communities. The library has been partners with them since 2020.

There were 24 incidents reports in August, with 11 of them involving disruptive teens. There was a power outage and one call to emergency services for an intoxicated person in the garden area. There were a couple of patron complaints and an abusive chat interaction. PITS is used to record every incident that occurs in the library. Staff do not take any incident lightly and records information in the event we need to revisit it or have documentation for something occurring on the premises. The library is making slow progress with the transition to Incident Tracker, which is a new reporting software that the library is migrating to. Part of the transition has to be done manually, so it's taking a little longer than initially expected.

The library had a Comcast internet outage that lasted four days. Some of the library's equipment was upgraded a few years ago and when Comcast repurposed the equipment elsewhere, they neglected to do a factory reset. Because of this, the device still had the library's network

information stored on it. The information that was stored on it did not allow access to the library's network or any confidential information. It just allowed connection to the internet. The issue is now resolved.

8. NEW BUSINESS

a. Reschedule October 25 Board Meeting:

On a motion made by Khuntia, seconded by Sladek, it was resolved to move the October 25 Board Meeting to October 18. Motion carried.

b. Feedback on Statistical Reports:

Over the summer, the Board was provided with several examples of different library board packets which included graphs and charts. Trustees gave feedback and the overall consensus was that they wanted graphs to be clear, simple, easy to read, and represent trends over time. Trustees agreed that the infographic style is clear and conducive to keeping the public fully informed. They would like to have year-to-year comparison data included as well as financial data. Jen Ryjewski will bring this consensus back to the director and library staff to investigate.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

10. NEXT MEETING

The next Board of Library Trustees meeting is scheduled for October 18, 2023.

11. ADJOURNMENT

President Gigani adjourned the meeting at 9:02 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.