

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

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES MEETING
OCTOBER 18, 2023, 7:30 P.M.**

BOARD TRUSTEES:

Swapna Gigani	President
Carissa Dougherty	Trustee
Dave Humphreys	Trustee (arrived at 7:57 p.m.)
Barnali Khuntia	Trustee
Bill Nienburg	Trustee (remote attendance)
Marti Sladek	Trustee

GUESTS:

Julie Milavec	Library Director
Jen Ryjewski	Assistant Library Director
Katelyn Vabalaitis	Business Office Manager

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 Khuntia, seconded by Sladek, it was resolved that the minutes of the Board of Library Trustees meeting held on September 27, 2023 be approved as presented. Trustee Dougherty abstained. Trustee Humphreys was not present for the vote. Motion carried.

4. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

- a. Financial Statements for the Period Ending September 30, 2023:** The fund balance and revenue reports for September 2023 were not available at the time of the meeting.

Trustee Nienburg requested better tracking of to-date expenditures compared to the budget. Business Office Manager Katelyn Vabalaitis reported progress in meeting with the Village of Downers Grove Finance Department to review the financial reports available in Munis. Katelyn Vabalaitis also contacted the Finance Director at Naperville Public Library, who also uses Munis,

to determine what kind of reports they utilize. It was noted that revenue and expenditure record keeping has minor balance inaccuracies as the library is restricted to working within the limitations of the finance software.

b. October 2023 Invoices:

On a motion made by Khuntia, seconded by Dougherty, it was resolved THAT the payment of October 2023 Operating Fund invoices totaling \$119,583.53, the acceptance of October 2023 Operating Fund credit memos totaling \$35.87, and the ratification of September 2023 payrolls totaling \$264,887.24 be approved. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Khuntia, Nienburg, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

The Nicor Gas invoice amount reflected in the September 2023 financial statements is inaccurate; however, the correct amount was circulated to the Board just prior to the meeting.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Marsha Prichason, a Downers Grove resident, expressed gratitude to the Board and staff for maintaining LGBTQ+ resources in the library's collection. She believes that the resources help queer youth identify themselves in the characters and encourage heterosexual youth to understand other identities and develop empathy and compassion. She emphasized that the freedom to read is an essential component of maintaining democracy. Marsha raised issue with the manner in which some members of the Downers Grove community have presented their concerns, and noted concerns about children in attendance at the last meeting being influenced by what she deemed as inappropriate behavior of community members at the meetings. She reiterated that she has no issue with lodging complaints and voicing concerns. She expressed concern with the implication that supporting queer people is anti-Christian and the false narrative that queer people are deviants. Marsha referred to a recent Washington Post study that stated that more than 90% of pedophiles are heterosexual and target vulnerable youth, and that LGBTQ+ youth experience four times the amount of homelessness that their heterosexual counterparts do. She implored the Board and library staff to maintain the LGBTQ+ resources within the library to provide representation and learning opportunities.

Ed Pawlak of Downers Grove reported that he has been attending the Board meetings for several years because of the library's value to the community. He expressed concern with what he felt was inappropriate and unprofessional behavior of one of the trustees at the last Board meeting. Ed emphasized that the trustees should represent all of the residents of Downers Grove and not their own political beliefs. He reviewed the obligations and responsibilities of a Board member and expressed concern that the trustee in question missed three meetings and then raised issue with the Board proceeding to fulfill their responsibilities during meetings that the trustee missed.

Katie Johnson, a Downers Grove resident, stated that she is a long-time patron of the Downers Grove Public Library (DPGL) and a representative of the DGPL Foundation Board. She reported that the Foundation funds extraordinary gifts for the library beyond taxpayer support. She expressed her gratitude to the Board and staff for ensuring the library is balanced in its representation of races, genders, religions, and outlooks. She noted that the commitment of the Board and staff has contributed to the library's recognition as a five-star library. Katie reported that the Foundation held a fundraiser during Banned Books Week and achieved its fundraising goal of \$25,000, with over 200 people attending in person, even more engaging virtually, and approximately 40 local businesses donating their time, services, and goods. She emphasized that the event sent a clear message that the community loves the library.

Marge Mark, a Downers Grove resident, stated that the library is one of the reasons why she decided to make Downers Grove her family's home. She reported that her family has taken advantage of the various resources and programs offered by the library and looks forward to the seasonal reading programs, craft programs, historical interpreters, and community presentations. She reiterated that the materials and programs offered at DPGL are great examples of the library being welcoming to all.

Robin Tryloff, a Downers Grove resident, addressed concerns from the Catholic community regarding the Catholic Church being mentioned in the Land Acknowledgement. She stated that according to Kathleen Holscher, an Associate Professor and Endowed Chair in Roman Catholic Studies at the University of New Mexico, the Catholic Church was a key player in the colonization of the Americas, operating more Indian and boarding schools in the United States than any other religious group, and more than all other religious groups combined. She noted that this was determined from a list created by the Catholic Church and Healing Initiatives and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition. Robin addressed the dispute about the use of the "genocide" term in the library's Land Acknowledgement, and referred to a statement from the Catholic Truth and Healing website, which states, "The impact of the boarding school policy has been recognized by tribal nations, scholars and many others, including Pope Francis, as one of cultural genocide and a source of intergenerational trauma with continuing effects today." Robin recognized the library's effort to collaborate with Dr. John Low, a citizen of the Potawatomi Indians and a scholar of American Indian Studies, and Joseph Standing Bear Schranz, an Elder and President of the Midwest SOARRING Foundation, to establish the library's ongoing Native American programming and crafting the Land Acknowledgement statement. She encouraged residents to take action by attending the library's Native American programming or to join, volunteer, donate, and attend programming by Native organizations.

Mike Ryan, a Downers Grove resident, addressed concerns that have been raised about the library not taking more action to address the youth who are struggling academically and noted the failure to acknowledge the library's services, programming, and staff efforts dedicated to improving the academic posture of the next generation, including resources to help children with homework and finding a tutor. Mike stated that the May 2023 Board meeting reported that the Kids Room outreach program engaged with 11,000 children in school classrooms and daycares, both public and private, during the 2022/2023 school year, and the September 2023 Board meeting included data on the summer reading program with 1,912 participating children. He agreed that a decline in academic scores amongst the children is a valid concern but expressed that the library is likely doing the best that it can with the tools that they have.

Frank Cote reported that he was from EQuality Downers Grove, which was formed to make Downers Grove a more welcoming village to all with an initial focus on the LGBTQ community. He reported that their first meeting was held at the library. He expressed gratitude that the library serves to bring people together through the variety of programs and services offered, and provides a meeting place for teenagers, all for free.

6. **TRUSTEE COMMENTS**

Trustee Sladek reported that, while she appreciates the level of community engagement, she highlighted the following for residents who have expressed concern about issues:

- Personal attacks or inappropriate comments to the Board or library staff are not effective or conducive to resolving issues.
- Provide suggestions for potential solutions instead of only reporting complaints.
- Rudeness, threats, and bigotry are not effective means of protest.

- The role of the Board is limited by statute and the Board is not involved in every practice, procedure, and personnel matter.
- The Board does not, and should not, control every aspect of selections and programs.
- The Library Director is the Board's only employee and the only employee whose performance is reviewed by the Board.
- Discussions regarding personnel are held in executive session as a matter of law and will not be made public, as with any employee in any sector.
- The Board is a secular institution and has no ulterior motives or hidden agendas.

Trustee Sladek recognized the success of the fundraising event by the DPGL Foundation.

Trustee Khuntia referred to comments made at the last Board meeting and noted that the meeting packet is sent to the Board in advance of the meeting to review and ask questions, which allows Julie Milavec, the Library Director, to provide clarification on the questions at the time of the meeting. Trustee Khuntia addressed concerns about a lack of Indigenous programming and noted that the Downers Grove Public Library hosted 18 programs that featured Native voices and experiences since the inception of the Land Acknowledgement. There have been nine book lists created as well as Indigenous book bundle giveaways. She reiterated that the library has offered Indigenous programming and learning opportunities.

Trustee Khuntia addressed the issue of using the term "genocide" in the Land Acknowledgement and noted that the library has trained staff and specialists in their field who spend countless hours researching an exhaustive list of resources, which can be found on the library's website. She emphasized that entire cultures, languages, and peoples have been wiped out and that it is a reality of the history of the United States.

Trustee Khuntia emphasized the role of the Trustees within the library and with patrons. She reviewed the over 1,000 survey responses and reported that 95% strongly agreed or agreed that the library was an important part of the community, 93% saw the library staff as helpful or knowledgeable, 95% considered the library to be well-maintained, and 89% felt the library was a welcoming and safe place.

Trustee Khuntia stated that claims that the library is mismanaged are not true as reflected in these responses and the funding generated by the DGPL Foundation. She noted that she is looking forward to the implementation of the Strategic Plan initiatives to ensure that the goals set forth by the community are reached.

Trustee Dougherty stated that she was not in attendance at the last Board meeting but watched a recording of the meeting and expressed disappointment in the behavior and rhetoric shared by a fellow Board member. She appreciated the comments made by the public and fellow Board members at the meeting on October 18, 2023.

Trustee Humphreys addressed his late arrival at the meeting but committed to reading the public comments in the meeting minutes and watching the recording of the meeting. He echoed comments made by his fellow Board members and also expressed disappointment with comments made by the public and by a fellow Board member. He reiterated the importance of civility as it pertains to the Board's code of conduct, and noted that the Board has maintained civility in almost all cases in his tenure on the Board.

Trustee Humphreys reported that he was one of the Board members who initially opposed the

use of the word “genocide” at previous Board meetings; however, he felt the word was appropriate and reflects the true nature of historical events upon researching the definition and confirming the research conducted by the Midwest SOARRING Foundation and library staff for the Land Acknowledgement.

Trustee Nienburg stated that he stands by his previous comments regarding the use of “genocide”, the singling out of the Catholic faith, and that other aspects of the Land Acknowledgement are needlessly divisive. He remained opposed to the current language in the Land Acknowledgement and noted that one of the resources used in establishing the library’s and acknowledgment statement does not make use of the word “genocide”. He expressed that he is looking forward to continued communication and improvements to the Land Acknowledgement. He noted that while there is a place for a land acknowledgment statement, he is not supportive of the divisive nature of the current statement.

President Gigani emphasized the importance of Board members working collaboratively. She addressed what she felt were discouraging comments made by Trustee Nienburg at the last meeting as follows:

- The President of the Board works to ensure meetings are run efficiently while maintaining decorum. It is her role to proceed with scheduled meetings if there is a quorum.
- The insinuation that the Board did not honor Trustee Nienburg’s request to delay a meeting because the request was his, is offensive given that the meeting had been scheduled since last year when the calendar was approved.
- Trustee Nienburg was provided with options to ensure his feedback was included in the discussion but chose not to make use of those options.
- A session was held where the authors of the Land Acknowledgement provided additional details on the inception process and vocabulary choices, to address some Board member concerns regarding the use of the term “genocide”.
- Concerns about the Recognition, Programs, and Seminars line in the budget were not voiced by Trustee Nienburg in person or in writing during the budget discussions held in June 2023, July 2023, or August 2023. She noted that it is not uncommon for employers to encourage and mandate continued education, and conferences and seminars ensure the continued success of the library. Some of the line items were allocated to participation in the library safety summit to address concerns regarding patron safety. It was noted that one of the suggested initiatives in the Strategic Plan is to increase staff investment.
- The Board bylaws state that the Trustees are to act in the best interest of the library. She expressed concern that Trustee Nienburg’s comments do not do so.

President Gigani reported that the library holds a five-star rating with the Library Journal and attested that the library staff is part of the reason the library is held in high regard.

7. LIBRARY DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Library Director Julie Milavec reiterated that the library is a five-star library, which is one of the highest distinctions for public libraries nationally. The library’s Kids Room was named the number one library in the western suburbs for kids, and two of the library staff were named Library Journal Movers and Shakers in 2022, one of the highest honors for library staff.

The staff write articles for national and statewide professional journals and present at national, statewide, and regional conferences and continuing education events. She noted that the strategic

planning process confirmed that the majority of residents are satisfied with the library and checkouts remain strong.

Julie Milavec reported that misinformation at the last meeting is addressed in her report through the provision of links to meeting recordings, meeting packets, and other materials available on the library's website. She addressed some of the misinformation as follows:

- The Land Acknowledgement was updated in August 2023 to include other Christian churches.
- Dr. John Low and Joseph Standing Bear Schranz both continue to work with the library on Native American programming and remain active partners.
- A policy for window painting will be established for requests eight months or longer into the future.
- Minutes Solutions provides a summary of the meetings and is not a transcription service.
- The library is consistent in its overall work rules and procedures, which are detailed in the Employee Handbook, but allows departments to set up their own procedures within those parameters.
- The library tries to highlight Native American experiences, including Indigenous Peoples' Day for the new children's program Community Celebrates, Native American art and trivia for teens, the Illinois Library Presents Chills and Thrills with Stephen Graham Jones, an award-winning Native American author, and Heather Hathaway Miranda whose gallery work features Native Americans and other Native peoples prominently.
- An \$86,000 payment to RGW Consulting was for work over the span of three budget years, including focus group sessions, staff and trustee training, and the development of the Equity Strategic Plan.
- A third-party comprehensive investigation determined that no laws, policies, or procedures were violated in regard to allegations made by a former employee.
- Nothing was removed from the High-Level Strategic Plan by library staff, and Trustees were involved in the entire process. Everything is captured in the Strategic Plan or the Addendum, both of which are available on the library's website.

Julie Milavec noted that the Village of Downers Grove requires the library to submit its tax levy by August 31 of each year and that 99% of the budget for 2024 is comprised of personnel expenses, cleaning services, and electronic resources, which were discussed in detail in previous meetings.

Julie Milavec reported that 95% of the library's revenue is from property taxes, which is how Illinois public libraries are funded. Short-term cash flow needs are covered through an intergovernmental agreement with the Village of Downers Grove due to changes in the property tax collection cycle. The library's tax levy is separate from the Village's tax levy and are completely separate lines on resident tax bills. The library's levy does not directly impact the Village's levy. She emphasized that the library's tax rate has decreased every single year since she has served as Library Director.

8. NEW BUSINESS

a. 2024 Library and Holiday Closings:

On a motion made by Dougherty, seconded by Sladek, it was resolved to approve the 2024 Library and Holiday Closings as presented. Motion carried.

Julie Milavec reported that the 2024 library schedule remains unchanged from prior years; however, adjustments may be made to the closing of the library around the dates of the Rotary GroveFest after assessing the impact on parking and access to the library.

Trustee Khuntia requested that the Board consider including Juneteenth in the list of library and holiday closings starting in 2025.

b. 2024 Board Meeting Dates:

On a motion made by Khuntia, seconded by Dougherty, it was resolved to approve the 2024 Board Meeting Dates as amended. Motion carried.

The meeting scheduled for March 27, 2024, falls during spring break for several schools within the library's district. The Board agreed to reschedule the meeting on March 27, 2024, to March 20, 2024.

c. Resolution 2023-1 Recognizing Milestone Anniversaries:

On a motion made by Humphreys, seconded by Khuntia, it was resolved to approve Resolution 2023-1 Recognizing Milestone Anniversaries. Motion carried.

Julie Milavec recognized the work and contribution of staff members who have served the library for five years, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, and 30 years, as per Resolution 2023-1.

d. FY2024 Work Plan: Julie Milavec noted that all initiatives come from the Addendum to the High-Level Strategic Plan, with a target date and a point person designated for each initiative. Feedback from the Board on metrics to determine measurables was encouraged.

Julie Milavec provided clarification on the initiative to translate the summer reading packets and welcome packets to another language, noting that the target for Q2 of 2024 is to translate the summer reading packets to Spanish, and then work with District 58 on translating to other languages in the future.

Julie Milavec noted that the strategic planning process, as well as the consultant used for salary benchmarking, were included in the Professional Services line item for FY2023. The same budget line was held in 2024 with the understanding that an area of focus from the Strategic Retreat was looking for space within the library, which would entail the services of a consultant. She confirmed that several of the initiatives are cross-department, and there is a designated staff member at the management level to spearhead each initiative. Staff are working collaboratively to ensure no department is disproportionately impacted and that what is being asked of each department is within their capacity.

It was suggested to have an additional column to quantify the initiatives into measurables and to categorize the initiatives by target timeline to better monitor and track the initiatives by quarter.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

10. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

On a motion made by Khuntia, seconded by Sladek, it was resolved that the Board recess to an Executive Session. Motion carried.

The Board recessed to Executive Session at 9:03 p.m. and reconvened to open session at 9:33 p.m.

11. **NEXT MEETING**

The next Board of Library Trustees meeting will be held on November 15, 2023, at 7:30 p.m.

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 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.

Director

Director

Date

Date