

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

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES MEETING
MARCH 20, 2024, 7:00 P.M.**

BOARD TRUSTEES:

Swapna Gigani	President
Carissa Dougherty	Trustee
Dave Humphreys	Trustee
Barnali Khuntia	Trustee
Marti Sladek	Trustee (remote attendance via phone)

GUESTS:

Julie Milavec	Library Director
Jen Ryjewski	Administration
Katelyn Vabalaitis	Business Office Manager
Ed Bromiel	Media Lab Coordinator

ABSENT:

Bill Nienburg	Trustee
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Minutes prepared by Jenny Beaudin 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 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the Downers Grove Village Council Chambers.

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. ROLL CALL

The Board proceeded with a roll call of attendance

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion made by Barnali Khuntia and seconded by Dave Humphreys, it was resolved to approve the minutes of the Board of Library Trustees meeting held on February 28, 2024, as presented. Motion carried.

5. **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

a. **February 2024 Financial Report:**

On a motion made by Carissa Dougherty and seconded by Barnali Khuntia, it was resolved to accept the financial statements for the period ending February 29, 2024, as well as the invoices for March, 2024, as presented. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

Julie Milavec noted that the revenues are at 0.5%, as expected, due to the property tax collection cycle, which accounts for 96% of the entire revenue. Expenditures are at 13.2%.

- b. **March 2024 Invoices:** The Bibliotheca annual maintenance contract that was approved for payment by the Board in January was inadvertently left out of the original check run; the agreement is now included in the updated check run.

6. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

President Swapna Gigani outlined the rules for public comment before opening the floor for comments.

Mary Vercellino, a resident of Downers Grove, noted how privileged she felt to live in Downers Grove, which has an award-winning library and mentioned the beautiful quilts and textiles that were displayed. She thanked the book club coordinator. Mary also noted that she does not understand the negative comments derived from a small group of people, seemingly holding a vendetta against the establishment.

Brian Sewell, a resident of Downers Grove, acknowledged the previous speaker, Mary Vercellino, and concurred with her concern over the conflict and aggressive behavior being exhibited. He also addressed the topic of freedom of speech limitations and expressed his disapproval of the 30 minutes time limit imposed on public comment within the bounds of the meeting. He urged the Board to be more inclusive of people and diversity of opinion.

Jim Wool referred to the last Board meeting's conflict and disapproved of the censorship of freedom of speech which he felt was exhibited. The Board called the police to do their dirty work. They are in need of remedial education on free speech. Jim also noted that the Board went through \$1.3 million dollars in a period of four years and stated that they should be removed from the Board of Library Trustees for fiscal incompetence.

Molly, a Downers Grove resident, noted different topics she considered addressing, including the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court has determined that there are permissible restrictions to the first amendment during public forums; that any speech that can be perceived as a form of violence may be a crime; that democracy is defined by the acts of good citizens, which includes behaving in honesty, compassion and respect; and that public libraries have become a pillar of their community by providing vital resources such as internet, youth and senior programs, and access to social workers. Molly also stated the importance and value of the Downers Grove Public Library and reiterated that it continues to remain a safe and welcoming space for all.

Kylie Spahn, a Downers Grove resident, acknowledged a social media post on a local parent's group, about a Downers Grove Public Library post. The post asked what someone can do or rent from their local public library that may surprise the community, which resulted in over 40 people

leaving comments, with examples of what is currently offered at Downers Grove Public Library. The items and services available at the library are having an impact on the community. Kylie thanked the Board for providing a safe, welcoming, and inclusive public library for the community.

David Deal, a resident of Downers Grove, expressed his support for Library Director Julie Milavec and stated that she is an American patriot who promotes freedom of speech and diversity. David also noted that Trustee Bill Nienburg retweeted an article mocking a transgender woman. He stated that he does not want the Downers Grove community to be represented by a transphobic board member.

Steve Wilmus a Downers Grove resident, noted his and other residents' concern over the direction the library is taking, and the attempt made to remove Trustee Bill Nienburg. He states that the Board is exhibiting political bias. He said the library does not fulfill all materials requests and the library is biased against conservative materials. He wished the Board had more trustees and whistleblowers like Bill Nienburg.

Noel Manley, a resident of Darien, noted that the policies of confidentiality were obstructed in the library's previous meeting by Trustee Carissa Dougherty. He stated that trustees are obligated to act when a Board member is in clear violation of state laws and the library's code of conduct and have them removed from the Board of Trustees. Noel also stated that Board President Swapna Gigani was out of order when she shouted at an attendee and told him to 'shut up' during the previous Board of Library Trustees meeting. He noted that this was another clear violation of the library's code of conduct and Board members should also have her removed or have her resign from the Board of Trustees. Noel Manley also expressed concern over the attempt to remove Bill Nienburg from the Board.

Katie Johnson, a Downers Grove resident and Downers Grove Public Library Foundation Director, expressed her support for the library and the social work internship program and its positive impact on the community. She stated that the library submitted a funding proposal in recognition of the demand for social workers. She encouraged the public to offer their donations to dgplfoundation.org in support of the Downers Grove Public Library being able to provide continued social services to the community.

On a motion made by Carissa Dougherty and seconded by Barnali Khuntia, it was resolved to extend the public comment period to accommodate the attendees in line to speak. Motion carried.

Scott Melrose, a Downers Grove resident, noted that Board members and library staff are becoming hostile toward opinions and concerns of a large segment of the community. Scott also expressed concern over the attempt to remove Bill Nienburg from the Board.

Melody Danley, who was the Graphics and Display Coordinator for Downers Grove Public Library from 1984 to 2019, stated that she worked under four different library directors during that period. During her years of service, she noted that what she observed from Board members and staff is that the library served everyone, and in doing so, it changed lives. She feels honored to have been a part of it.

Kristen, a Downers Grove resident, expressed her appreciation to the Board and the library staff, for providing a safe place to gather, read, learn, play, peruse, and 'be' as a community.

Ed Briner, a Downers Grove resident, expressed his concern over the library being unsafe for the community's children and states that the Board and library staff are responsible for this toxic environment. He quoted an incident report that describes a drunk person in the Children's Room. He said the library lied about the report and lied about why Drag Queen Bingo was cancelled. He said the Board should consider firing Library Director Milavec and censure the other trustees.

Ilene Briner, a Downers Grove resident, expressed concern over the attempt to remove Bill Nienburg from the Board, comparing it to a witch hunt. She stated that the Board's alleged claims cannot be considered as serious offences. She also stated that if Bill Nienburg is removed from the Board, Library Director Julie Milavec should be fired and Trustee Carissa Dougherty should also be removed. She said Bill Nienburg represents a diverse viewpoint.

Robin Tryloff, a Downers Grove resident, applauds the Board of Library Trustees for their continued focus on protecting the integrity of the strategic plan in the face of agitators wanting to promote their own agendas.

Jill Bartelmey, a Downers Grove resident, thanked the Board and staff for all that they do and apologized for all that they have been through in the past year or so. She expressed that no one around her has ever felt unsafe on library grounds. Jill also noted that the Downers Grove Public Library is very transparent and shares all information with the community on their website.

Laura Kamedulski, a Downers Grove resident, stated that she supports the library and most of the Board of Trustees. She expressed disappointment in Bill Nienburg, who does not seem to have the mission of serving everyone in the community as a priority.

Ed Pawlak, a Downers Grove resident, commended the library's financial stewardship and noted how impressive it was that last year, over one million items were circulated, which comes out to 34 items per library cardholder. He stated that he would like to see the number of cardholders go up within the community. He also thanked the Board for their dedicated work.

A Downers Grove resident expressed concern over the safety of the public library's grounds, based on a personal experience with his granddaughter. He suggested adding a security guard for the safety of the community.

7. TRUSTEE COMMENTS

Swapna Gigani asked Board Trustee, **Marti Sladek**, who was on the phone, if she had any comments. She noted that she wanted to wait and see what the other Board members had to say but did not have any comments for the moment.

Barnali Khuntia expressed her appreciation for the public's attendance to the meeting and acknowledged the two mothers who commented, as well as the social media post that was brought up earlier. Barnali stated that it is an honor and a privilege to be given the responsibility to serve the community and to do it by working together with respect for one another. She thanked Trustee Carissa Dougherty for leading the charge on trustee goals for 2024.

Dave Humphreys also thanked the public for their presence and stated that he appreciates the information shared and the civility that was shown during the evening. Dave brought attention to Discoveries, the library's newsletter, and the great work they did with providing information to the community. He noted that the library offered 1,600 programs in 2023.

Carissa Dougherty thanked the Village for allowing the meeting to take place in the Council Chambers and acknowledged the great work provided by the library's social worker interns. Carissa stated the importance of keeping our awareness on emotions and how they are communicated, and not use them as a way to distract or point fingers. She encouraged the public to find out more information on the issues in order to avoid misinformation. Carissa addressed the cardholder information that was publicly shared and that, based on legal information obtained through the library's lawyer, Mallory A. Milluzzi, no laws were obstructed. She also addressed the cash reserve and reported that the numbers in the village budget documents are simple linear projections and noted that past reports are consistently under reporting the balance of the library fund. She noted that based on her observation of other public libraries, Downers Grove was by far the most transparent in providing information to the public.

Carissa Dougherty asked Library Director Julie Milavec if she received any advice from the Village or police department on what to do when confronted by harassment.

Julie Milavec stated that the advice the library received was that if anyone is harassed, they should file a police report. Carissa confirmed that this also includes online harassment.

Swapna Gigani thanked the public for their presence and acknowledged the great work done by the library and the social work interns. The library funds and donations are providing essential resources for the community. She congratulated EQuality Downers Grove (EQDG), for their 'One Book, One Town' program. She also wanted to highlight the Discoveries publication and let the public know that it is also available online. Swapna shared a reminder with the community to be respectful of library staff members.

8. LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Julie Milavec noted that all the library's capital reserve fund information can be found online at dglibrary.org/transparency, by clicking on the 'Financial Management Plan 2018' link and the 'Capital Needs Assessment Report 2024 Update' link. She stated that public comment and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests have no expectation of privacy. Names will be included in the meeting minutes and on the FOIA request tracker if there are any requests about that information. The Library Records Confidentiality Act does not cover whether you have a library card or not, only your registration information, like the date of birth, an email address, etc. Julie Milavec also stated that library staff have first amendment rights while performing their jobs, which includes making incident reports about behavior in the library and during public meetings.

Julie Milavec highlighted the updated tween area of the library, which has been well used and has received positive feedback. A 12% increase in foot traffic was noted in February, compared to the same month in the previous year. Storytime attendance exceeded 90 people on Monday and over 300 people attended the Trinity Irish Dancers program.

Julie Milavec noted that the 2024 strategic plan is going well and that the library has great program initiatives to look forward to. There will be a human library event in the fall. A team of library staff submitted and won a grant for the library to host a traveling Holocaust exhibit in 2026.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Swapna Gigani stated that there was no new business to report.

10. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- a. **Board of Library Trustees Goals for 2024:** Carissa Dougherty asked the Board of Library Trustees to each choose two goals for 2024.

11. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Swapna Gigani stated that there were no items that needed to be discussed in an executive session.

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 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.