

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

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES MEETING
MAY 22, 2024, 7:00 P.M.**

BOARD TRUSTEES:

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

GUESTS:

Julie Milavec	Library Director
Jen Ryjewski	Assistant Library Director
Katelyn Vabalaitis	Business Office Manager
Ed Bromiel	Media Lab Coordinator
Allyson Renell	Children's Services Manager
Van McGary	Adult & Teen Services Manager
Dawn Davis	Downers Grove Public Library Social Work Intern
Andi Voinovich	Downers Grove Public Library Social Work Intern

ABSENT:

Barnali Khuntia	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 7:00 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. ROLL CALL

The Board proceeded with a roll call of attendance.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion made by Humphreys and seconded by Sladek, it was resolved to approve the minutes of the Board of Library Trustees meeting held on April 24, 2024, as amended. Motion carried by voice vote. Trustee Dougherty abstained.

President Gigani noted a grammatical error in section 5.1 that will be corrected in the final version of the minutes.

5. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

5.1 April 2024 Financial Report

Julie Milavec noted that the revenues are at 1.3% received, as expected, due to the property tax collection cycle. She also called out a new expenditure report in the packet of materials that shows year-to-date data for this year and the previous two years. Expenditures are at 28.4% spent. The budget lines that are over include the Conferences, Seminars, and Meetings line due to staff attendance at the Public Library Association Conference, Special Legal which is primarily due to the work done on the Intergovernmental Agreement with District 58, and Insurance – Other because the library's annual premiums are paid at the beginning of each year.

5.2 May 2024 Invoices

On a motion made by Dougherty and seconded by Humphreys, it was resolved to approve the payment of May 2024 Operating Fund invoices totaling \$122,920.16, the acceptance of May 2024 Credit Memos totaling \$33.93, and the ratification of April 2024 payrolls totaling \$290,400.17 as presented. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None. Motion carried.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Ilene Briner, a resident of Downers Grove, stated that the Library Board and the website for the library espouse diversity yet in practice she sees quite the opposite. Singularity of opinion is expressed quite often, which is contrary to what a library should be. A library should be a resource of information and all viewpoints and not the promoter of a single ideology. With June ahead, she hopes the library will promote many viewpoints and not just LGBTQ+ because free speech means allowing speech you may not agree with or like. In fairness to all viewpoints, she hopes that books that promote the opposite of what is traditionally seen during Pride Month will also be promoted by the library. She will likely be called a hater, a bigot, or a homophobe for these comments, but she asks anyone using names like these to please cite what was offensive because without substantiation, name calling is just bullying. Briner asked President Gigani to call a point of order when someone uses a name like "hater" and ask for substantiation of the comment, who said it, what was said, and when and in what context it was said. It's time to end the random name calling.

Steve Wilmus, a resident of Downers Grove, discussed an inconsistency he sees in the library's Framework for Releasing Anti-Hate Statements. He questions the library's reasons for releasing anti-hate statements, how the library chooses what situations to comment on, and who the audience is for the statements. Wilmus commented that there are 36 colleges, including Northwestern, which are experiencing anti-Jewish or anti-Israel protests. He cited specific incidents that occurred at a college in New York and in California. He believes the conditions from the library's website have been met for publishing an anti-hate statement on anti-Semitism but he has not seen any statements from the library. These types of non-statements are a statement on their own. The library should at least follow its own rules and put out a statement.

Robin Tryloff, resident of Downers Grove for more than 30 years, acknowledged that the day of the meeting was Harvey Milk Day, a day that marks his birthday representing the struggle for LGBTQ+ rights and the ongoing fight for equality, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. She stands alongside others who eagerly anticipate the upcoming Pride Month, providing a chance to celebrate the rich and diverse spectrum of gender and sexuality that exists within our shared humanity. Pride Month offers an opportunity for the LGBTQ+ community to be visible, heard, and understood, which are basic human emotions that resonate with everyone. Tryloff extended her heartfelt gratitude to the Library Board and staff for showing support for Pride Month and having thoughtful programming.

Jeffrey Mack, a lifelong resident of Downers Grove, finds it offensive that many fellow residents accuse him and others who have similar views of being haters of the library. Nothing could be further from the truth. He and others love the library and if they didn't love it, they wouldn't be wasting their time at the meetings. He takes issue with the current administration and board using the library as a personal platform for social activism. This is an abuse of staff and board positions and the taxpayers that fund the use of the library. Some of the issues Mack and others find most offensive are bringing pornographic materials into the library and making them available to children, attempting to bring a drag queen in to entertain children, spending taxpayer money on a radical EDI consultant, and crafting a land acknowledgement statement that denigrates Christians and the people who built this country. Disagreement is not hate, nor is it an attack or a threat, and labeling it as such is a tactic by those who are unable to defend their position and who are intellectually lazy. It is time for the Board to stop dividing this community and take the opinions of all constituents seriously.

Gloria Walsh-Rock, a resident of Downers Grove, commented that she loves this community and this library. She loves it because what the library is about is making sure the community knows and learns about how much wider the world is than just their little space. She thinks it's wonderful that each month, people come to the meetings because they are really invested in the library and their community, and she thinks the library does an excellent job of bringing the world here to Downers Grove.

Noel Manley, a resident of Darien and an interloping Native, commented that when you are Bill Nienburg and you reference yourself on social media as a Library Trustee but do not reference the library, it will be used as a means to remove you from the Board. But when you are Trustee Sladek, who referenced herself as a Downers Grove Library Trustee who is fighting white Christian nationalists, the Board looks the other way. There is also a rule that the library's cardholder data is confidential, however when a trustee's cardholder status is discussed, the rule doesn't apply, nor does it apply when a list is released through a FOIA request. The Illinois Attorney General weighed in on this and stated that a library cardholder's name meets the definition of registration records and any records that may exist containing those names fall within the scope of the confidentiality act. It appears that the Library Board and administration have violated the law, but the rules don't apply to them like they did to Bill Nienburg.

Bill Cook, a resident of Downers Grove, has been a patron of the library for 12 years. He has never had a bad experience and he and his family come often. Staff have always been friendly and helpful. He loves this library and cheers what it wants to become. He is a member of PFLAG and is in attendance with other members to show support and appreciation for the library. He has a gay son and a transgender daughter and while growing up, they found comfort in the schools and libraries. They found local librarians who saw them and accepted them as they needed to be seen and accepted. However, at that time they found few, if any, characters in stories that they could relate to. He is pleased to know that if his children could have grown up now in Downers

Grove, not only would they find similar library staff, they would also find stories, characters, and positive role models that they could relate to. He thanked the Board for having the courage to let its staff honor and provide safe spaces to children like his children.

Ed Briner, a resident of Downers Grove, is going to speak about a cover-up. He has been speaking to the trustees for two plus years about the unsafe library environment for children, young teens, and moms. He has pointed out dozens of incidents that have required the police to come to the library and with summer approaching, the library remains unsafe and the library is welcoming in more people with social and drug issues. Briner referenced the February 28, 2024 Board Meeting where he was basically called a liar for pointing out an incident of a drunk person who wandered through the children's section. It was said that it never happened. He has the incident report that shows it did happen. It has been three months since he called out this incident and he has heard nothing back. In his opinion, the Library Director should be fired. It is now more than obvious that the trustees will do nothing to consider the safety of our children. One might think that with a six million dollar budget, the library would be ready to handle the safety issues, but that is not the case.

Mike Ryan, a resident of Downers Grove, was looking at last month's Board Packet for April 24th and wanted to point out that in the packet there was a Director's Report item titled, "Apology to Ed Briner." The apology explains that Director Milavec was wrong in her belief that the incident never happened and shows humility in admitting her error with using the new incident tracking software. Ryan thinks it is important to provide some grace when discussing these things and it is important to point out that there isn't a cover-up.

Janet Wittingham, a resident of Downers Grove, appreciates that there was an apology from Director Milavec regarding the incident report and acknowledged that it was a misunderstanding. There has been a refusal to understand that the library is a public place and the public may enter such a place. There is always a possibility of a disruption on occasion, but the library is safe. She has not seen anyone dangerous in the library and if anything does happen, the library staff deal with it. Wittingham thanked the Board for their patience and the Director for her elegance in her apology and explanation. She notes that she has heard the story at least four times now in these meetings, and that should be enough.

7. **TRUSTEE COMMENTS**

Marti Sladek commented that in talking to trustees from other libraries they are astonished that more than one or two people show up to our Board meetings. She thanked everyone in attendance and acknowledged that regardless of viewpoints, everyone is in attendance because they care about the library and she is grateful for everyone that turns out for the meetings. Sladek noted that over the next few months, the Board is going to be doing work on the library's collection development policy and the Board's bylaws. The trustees are trying to listen to the public's concerns and appreciate everyone being present.

Carissa Dougherty commented that she continues to appreciate the thorough department reports included in the monthly board packets. She is looking forward to the summer reading program and encouraged everyone to check out the impressive displays and decorations in the library. She shared her trustee goals for the year, which include attending three trustee training sessions as well as learning more about how other library boards operate and attending three other library board meetings. She has created a spreadsheet with details about other libraries across the suburban region detailing governance, budgets, number of trustees, trustee terms, and so on. She would love to share her findings at a future meeting. Dougherty also commented that

she continues to marvel at how different people can take the same information and interpret it in completely different ways. She noted that we all need to remember that different perspectives among community members can and do exist simultaneously in our diverse community. Public resources like the library, the police department, or the storm water commission don't exist for one group or another. They must exist for everyone. It reinforces the idea that the library is not here to provide everything for everyone, but rather something for everyone. She is very grateful for the wide range of collections, programs, and services offered by DGPL and she thinks it would be nearly impossible to browse all the things the library has available without finding at least one thing that piques your interest. It is equally impossible that each of the things one encounters is exactly what you want or what you agree with. She is glad that tonight's meeting had several public speakers acknowledge their love of the library and their desire to improve our community.

Dougherty asked two questions in hopes of getting future responses. She wanted to know if the unexpected switch to a new book recycling vendor was going to impact the budget. She also asked if based on the number of FOIAs being received and the intensity of the requests, should the Board consider having another staff member trained to be a FOIA officer to assist Director Milavec.

Dave Humphreys echoed the previous trustee comments and thanked the audience for being in attendance. He acknowledged that so many public commenters said they love the library and he thinks almost everybody in the room loves the library and that's the reason why they are at the meeting. He also thanked the audience for adhering to the public comment rules. Humphreys commented that FOIA is a wonderful law. It can be abused but it's a good safety valve in our democracy. The Board may have to consider adding a staff member to process all of the FOIA requests because it is extremely time consuming. That doesn't mean it's a bad thing; there are a lot of things that are time consuming that we do because they are the right thing to do. He shared his trustee goals for the year, which include organizing a workshop session for the Board on the general topics of listening skills and conflict resolution. He thinks the board already does a pretty good job with these but there are always ways to do better and to learn how to disagree and still govern well. He is also planning to attend two training sessions on library governance and he would like to choose one department of the library to try and learn a lot more about what they do and how they contribute to our five-star library.

Swapna Gigani commented that it's Summer Reading Club time which is her favorite thing about the library. She had an opportunity to be at the first night of teen volunteer signups and it was a madhouse of kids scrambling for the timeslots. It was really great to see so many middle and high school teens who are looking forward to spending their time in the library over the summer. A staff member mentioned to her that there were 50 volunteers signed up in the first 45 minutes, which was amazing. Gigani acknowledged the continued work being done with the District 58 student library card program, the continued successes of the programs DGPL hosts in conjunction with People's Resource Center, and the over 10,000 items donated by the community to The Cupboard so far this year. She thanked Trustee Dougherty for spearheading the idea of having a more formal trustee goal program and they will be working together to figure out a more formal way to present that information. Her trustee goals for the year are to visit one or two more libraries and attend a board meeting from a neighboring library. She wants to attend a minimum of four trainings as well. Gigani encouraged everyone to look at the monthly board packets. While they are sometimes long, they have so much information in them.

8. LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Julie Milavec noted that circulation and visits are up and encouraged all to take a look in the board packet for those statistics. Incident reports are down and there are less than half of what there was last April. She is handing the rest of her report time over to Children's Services Manger Allyson Renell.

8.1 Summer Reading Club and Children's Services Department Presentation

Children's Services Manager Allyson Renell outlined this year's Summer Reading Club structure for kids, teens, and adults. This year's theme is Read, Renew, Repeat and there are clubs for young children, elementary age children, teens, adults, and DGPL staff. She highlighted the outreach efforts that Kids Room and Teen Services staff made in visiting all of the schools in Downers Grove to promote the program and thanked local sponsors. Allyson also announced the completion of a 2024 Strategic Plan work plan goal of translating the Summer Reading Club logs into six different languages for all levels. She shared that another goal, bringing Summer Reading Club prize pick up to schools in south Downers Grove is also planned, with three schools currently scheduled. President Gigani asked about possible prize pick up at the Farmers Market and Allyson said they did not have plans for this summer, but hope to add more locations next summer. Trustee Humphreys shared how impressed he was with the library's relationship with District 58, including the Student Library Card program. Allyson shared an update on the program, noting that 3,800 students from the district signed up for the program. Allyson has been working with the SWAN consortium on the project and expects students to be receiving their cards early in the new school year.

Next, Allyson presented on what the Kids Room has been working on over the last year. She started by summarizing the major physical changes the Kids Room has experienced including changes to the baby area, tween area, and play areas. She spoke about changes to the collections including an expansion of the holiday book section, readers, biographies, and new collections. She gave an overview of the large uptick in programs and program attendance the Kids Room has been enjoying, noting that over 15,000 more children attended programs in 2023 than in 2022. Allyson explained the various outreach efforts the department has made over the last year including their work with schools, daycares, and organizations. Some of the plans Allyson shared about upcoming projects include an increased focus on making in the STEM room and a new early childhood collaboration within Downers Grove. She finished her presentation by acknowledging and praising Kids Room staff and how dedicated they are to the community and library. Trustee Sladek commented that after visiting other area libraries she noticed that other children's areas are quieter than and not as exciting as DGPL's.

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1 Social Work Intern Presentation

Adult & Teen Services Manager Van McGary, Social Work Intern Dawn Davis, and Social Work Intern Andi Voinovich presented on the current social work intern program at the library and how it has grown since 2020. The first interns to be hosted at the library started in spring 2020 and it was a slow start as the pandemic was at its peak. In September 2021, library staff requested funding from the Downers Grove Public Library Foundation to pay a stipend of \$15.00 per hour for up to two interns for each semester. The Foundation approved this funding and they have been funding the program since that time. In September 2023, library staff requested funding from the Foundation for a Licensed Clinical Social Worker Supervisor, which was approved. This allows

the social work interns to offer counseling services and act as case managers, which has greatly expanded their ability to serve the community. After discussing the statistics on how quickly the number of interactions the social work interns have had has increased, the team requested that the Board consider adding a full-time social worker position to the library staff in 2025.

The Board asked Director Milavec to provide two versions of the preliminary budget for next month's meeting, one with a social worker on staff and one without. Assistant Library Director Jen Ryjewski will also be looking into what grants may be available to help get this off the ground.

9.2 Trustee Term of Office Change from 6 Years to 4 Years

Trustees discussed the idea of reducing terms of office to four years instead of six years, with the idea that a shorter term would open up the pool of candidates. Under Illinois state law, a Library Board is permitted to shorten terms through a resolution. This only applies to terms of office, not the number of trustees on the Board. It would put a little more work on the Village Council, as they would have to appoint more trustees as turnover would occur more often, but the Council did suggest the Library Board discuss this idea. The Board agreed that the idea is worth putting thorough thought into and getting legal advice and community input as well.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Swapna Gigani stated that there were no items that needed to be included 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.