Nashville Public Library Board of Trustees
Minutes
December 10, 2024
Main Library
615 Church Street
Nashville, TN 37219
12:00 PM

Members Present: Joyce Searcy, Keith Simmons, Kate Ezell, Dr. Nadine de la Rosa, Katy Varney, Charvis Rand

Library Staff: Terri Luke, Jena Schmid, Angela Fanta, Susan Drye, Andrea Fanta, Sherry Adams, Kyle Barber, Cameron McCasland, Larry Jirik, Kyle Cook, Forrest Eagle, and Maria West

Others: Macy Amos and Tessa Ortiz-March, Metropolitan Attorneys at Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

a. Ms. Searcy called the meeting to order at 12:10PM.

II. Metro Ordinance required to be announced at all Board Meetings – *Chair, Joyce Searcy*

a. "Pursuant to the provisions of § 2.68.030 of the Metropolitan Code of Laws, please take notice that decisions of the Nashville Public Library Board may be appealed to the Chancery Court of Davidson County for review under a common law writ of certiorari. Any appeal must be filed within sixty days after entry of a final decision by the Board. Any person or other entity considering an appeal should consult with an attorney to ensure that time and procedural requirements are met."

III. Public Comments

a. "Pursuant to T. C. A. § 8-44-12, time is reserved at the beginning of Library Board meetings for which there is an actionable item on the agenda for public comment germane to items on the agenda. Up to five people will be allowed up to three minutes each to speak. Speakers must register within one half hour prior to the beginning of the meeting by signing their name on a physical sign-up sheet available at the entrance, and identifying any agenda item on which they intend to comment."

IV. Board Chair Comments, *Joyce Searcy*

a. Ms. Searcy stated, "I wanted to thank everyone that came out to the Begin Bright reception at Geodis Park, we had a good turnout for the board in which we got to meet donors and potential donors. The Mayor will be committing one million dollars to Begin Bright as well."

V. Approval of Minutes: October 15, 2024; Library Board Retreat, November 14, 2024

a. Ms. Katy Varney made a motion to approve the October 15th board meeting minutes. Ms. Kate Ezell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Ms. Kate Ezell made a motion to approve the November 14th board retreat minutes. Dr. Nadine de la Rosa seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Interim Library Director Report, *Terri Luke*

a. Ms. Luke stated, "Larry Jirik has been overseeing NECAT since Lee Boulie resigned. He is doing incredible work and wanted to thank him. Cameron is also here. He is the NECAT manager. In your Board Report, Larry and Cameron submitted a proposal in September about changing the hours of NECAT. Changing the hours of NECAT will align NECAT with the hours that match other NPL locations. These new hours will start January 1st."
b. Mr. McCasland stated, "Thank you for giving us this opportunity and the Board for giving us the time today."
c. Ms. Luke stated, "Since Larry has come on board, they (Larry Jirik and Cameron McCasland) have come up with a one-year plan for more programming."
d. Ms. Varney asked, "What's the traffic like in the evenings at NECAT?"
e. Mr. McCasland answered, "It depends on the shows NECAT does. When we do live broadcasts with a live studio audience, we have around fifty people. A normal day to day, it's around two to six people that record their shows."
f. Ms. Searcy asked, "How many people do you have in the studio?"
g. Mr. McCasland answered, "There is always at least one studio technician and the people that come and take the NECAT classes. They also produce their shows as well. Between two to twelve."
h. Ms. Luke stated, "The second thing I wanted to update you on is the Continuous Improvement Plan. Over two hundred staff members took the survey and within the last two weeks the Managers participated in meaningful conversations on how to improve customer service in 2025. We had nine priority areas in the survey which is now down to three. These are Internal Communications, Staffing, and Identifying and Prioritizing NPL key programs and services."
i. Ms. Luke stated, "In listening to the Managers, one of the things that was important is to identify and prioritize our key programs and services, but we need to hear from the public first. We selected staffing and internal communications to move forward in 2025, and in 2025 we are already planning to send out a customer service survey."
j. Ms. Luke stated, "The Admin Team will review the suggested action items and then we will create a one-year plan which will then go out to the staff, which will go out later in the new year."
k. Dr, De La Rosa stated, "I would just say that I look forward to the continuous communication and how we redefine the terms that you just mentioned, and to still receive updates to see where we are, and you can pivot as you see fit and to create space for things that are not planned."

l. Ms. Luke stated, “I sent an e-mail to staff to say how much I appreciated the number of people that participated but also their thoroughness. We said please just don't use one word and so not only did they identify things that they wanted us to think about, but they also gave us action items too. We’re in a good place to be able to put together this plan. Going forward identifying the action items and then as part of this process, we will review these items quarterly.”
m. Ms. Luke stated, “The Admin team have been talking and we are preparing for our operating budget for next year. We will identify and have been identifying what we will move forward to request in the mayor's operating budget. Some items are carried over from last year because of the flat budget year for Metro as a whole. We still don't know what the FY26 budget year is going to look like moving forward with the new administration at the national level starting in January. We must be thinking about that, but we're in a good place for getting Susan the information that she needs to complete all the budget paperwork.”
n. Ms. Luke stated, “Mayor O’Connell’s latest Capital Spending Plan recommendation included $3,460,000M for major maintenance and repair projects. Susan already sent back to the Mayor's office what those projects will be because they wanted an itemized list. Many of the maintenance and repairs are here at Main. We received another 5,000,000M to complete the design development phase of the Hadley Park Branch. Susan is also working with the Green Hills library staff, Jena Schmid, and the Green Hills Manager. The Green Hills Branch will be our first major renovation that is part of the capital spending plan from last year.”
o. Ms., Luke stated, “In terms of 4% funds, I am thrilled to say that just yesterday we received notice that we did receive $2,000,000M for the library collection in this 4% fund allocation. My hope is that by the end of fiscal year, we receive another 2 million.”
p. Ms. Luke stated, “The other thing I wanted to bring you up to date on is Main parking. In October, I was informed that the free shuttle service from Nissan stadium to the Main library for 74 employees would end on October 28th. This is due to the construction at Nissan Stadium. In working with Kristin from the mayor's office and Diana Alarcon from NDOT, the money allocated for the shuttle service from Nissan Stadium to Main allows us to be able to have these staff members park on the 5th floor or above in the parking garage at no cost to them. The shuttle money is covering for Main staff to be able to park in the garage until the end of this fiscal year on June 30th.”
q. Ms. Luke stated, “We're looking to combine the $144,000 used for the shuttle service and the $50,000 for main staff parking on the weekend. What we will do is create a parking plan for FY26 for all Main staff. The parking will not be free, but we will offer a tiered payment option based on the staff positions.
r. Ms. Drye stated, “The only free option for staff is the Metro public bus system.”
s. Mr. Simmons asked, “So once this comes into plan the only option is for staff is to park in the garage?”
t. Ms. Luke stated, “Yes, staff would have the option to park in the garage.”
u. Ms. Searcy asked, “How does this compare to the other departments in the city, what do they offer their employees?”

v. Ms. Luke answered, “There is not any department downtown that offers free parking for employees.”
w. Ms. Ezell asked, “What is the impact of these additional people using the garage on library patrons?”
x. Ms. Drye answered, “Staff would have to park on the fifth floor or above.”
y. Ms. Ezell, stated, “It would still have some impact on patron parking.”
z. Mr. Rand asked, “What about security, and how does that affect them?”
aa. Ms. Drye answered, “The library garage is not owned by the library, security is in place hired by the Downtown Partnership.”
bb. Dr. De La Rosa asked, “Where does the thirty-five dollars come from?”
cc. Ms. Drye answered, “That number is not set in stone. But with the classification and tiered systems it could be around there.”
dd. Ms. Ezell asked, “So we could be as low as thirty-five but could be higher?”
ee. Ms. Drye answered, “It depends on if the money comes through from the shuttle service.”
ff. Ms. Luke stated, “The last thing I wanted to say was congratulations to Suzanne Robinson. She is the Library Manager at the Inglewood Branch. The Inglewood Neighborhood Association awarded Suzanne with their annual Paul Blankenship Award. This award is given to an individual each year who has made significant contributions to the Inglewood/east Nashville community.”

VII. Foundation Report, *Shawn Bakker*

a. Ms. Bakker stated, “We had our 20th Gala and so we put together a book. This book includes the twenty authors and the twenty different impacts that the Library has achieved over that time and particular programs that the Foundation funds. We (NPLF) were able to net over $600,000 which means we met our goal. That is wonderful because that's unrestricted support that we're able to have for the library.
b. Ms. Bakker stated, “Joyce also mentioned the Begin Bright Leadership Event, so I just wanted to also add my appreciation for all of you who were able to come out and be a part of that. It was wonderful to have you there. Since then, there's been several press releases that have gone out announcing the Dolly gift of four and a half million dollars. The second one announcing that we are at 85% to our initial goal. The second one includes a five-million-dollar gift from the Frist Foundation.
c. Ms. Bakker stated, “NPLF is working towards a bigger endowment than thirteen million and we see a path. We are currently at 17.2 million and so it's been great big kudos to Katie Varney who's leading the fundraising effort. We also have a great team as well of people who are volunteers helping us called our Steering Committee.”
d. Ms. Bakker stated, “If you have your calendars out, please save the date for our “Picnic with the Library” which will be April 27th from 4pm-7pm. We have some exciting co-chairs this year: Haley and Barton Simmons, Libba and Niel Alden, Lillian Blackshear Peay and Clifton Peay.”
e. Ms. Bakker stated, “NPLF will have their Black Women in Leadership tour and over fifty people have signed up. Next week NPLF has their library 101 tour with thirty-six people signed up.”

VIII. Staff Reports

a. Anti-Bullying Policy, *Jena Schmid*

b. Resolution 2024-05

i. Ms. Schmid stated, "the Mayor's office asked us as an educational facility serving youth if we had an anti-bullying policy in place and while we have it covered in our code of conduct which you can see on page 87, we did not have anything that really defined what bullying and harassment was, so we created this policy with advice from our legal team. Included are the definitions of harassment and bullying so that we can provide further clarity. This policy is directed at people coming into the library who may harass other customers, volunteers, or staff. This is not directed at staff. If there are any incidents of staff bullying or harassing that is covered under our civil service rules. We wanted also wanted to make sure that the staff and volunteers were covered by this policy. This policy points back to our code of conduct and how we address bullying, and it is the responsibility of the Manager or person in charge to investigate situations as they arise and then to address it."
ii. Ms. Ezell asked, "How often are there incidents that are considered bullying?"
iii. Ms. Schmid answered, "We do not have statistics, but we do keep reports of violations. Staff do feel that there is a rise of harassment and bullying."
iv. Ms. Varney asked, "How do we connect the punishment since it is not outlined?"
v. Ms. Drye answered, "Our Patron Rules of Conduct are posted in every branch."
vi. Mr. Simmons stated, "Pages 85 and 87 are saying the same thing twice."
vii. Ms. Schmid stated, "I think it's just defining it better because right now our conduct code of conduct says intentionally engaging in harassing or threatening behavior towards patrons is not allowed."
viii. Mr. Simmons asked, "So this is in the Code of Conduct?"
ix. Ms. Schmid answered, "But the code of conduct does not define what harassment and bullying is, so this policy defines that."
x. Ms. Searcy asked, "So how do we let employees know that this will be established?"
xi. Ms. Luke answered, "Tomorrow I have an email ready to go out to staff to let them know."
xii. Dr. De La Rosa asked, "I just wanted to confirm that you clarify the relationship between volunteers, patrons, and staff, but really the relationship is across the three and not staff to staff, is there any clarity on that?"
xiii. Ms. Schmid answered, "From staff to staff is defined in the Metro Civil Service Rules."
xiv. Dr. De La Rosa stated, "On page 87 it doesn't clarify that and in the first sentence which just says users, volunteers, and staff which you can assume staff is universal to all staff. It's just not clear it's not staff on staff."
xv. Ms. Simmons stated, "I would take 17 out and instead refer to bullying, harassment, and retaliation as defined so there is no confusion."
xvi. Ms. Schmid stated, "Because that is policy, we would have to bring that to the Board to be voted on."
xvii. Mr. Simmons stated, "Because you have legal counsel working on this I will not oppose."

xviii. Ms. Ortiz-Marsh stated, “I worked on the policy. I did not analyze it in conjunction with the Code of Conduct, so if the Board wishes, I can go back and make applicable changes to the Code of Conduct. Whatever the Board wants for clarity, I'm more than willing to support.”

xix. Mr. Simmons stated, “Would you look at it and make recommendations to what you want to do?”

xx. Ms. Ezell asked, “Where will we find the revised version, will it be in the minutes?”

xxi. Ms. Ortiz-Marsh answered, “The revised version I will have to put back together.”

xxii. Ms. Katy Varney motioned to approve the Anti-Bullying Policy. Ms. Kate Ezell seconded. The motion unanimously passed.

IX. New Business

a. Library Retreat Follow Up and Priorities

i. Ms. Searcy went over the SWOT analysis strengths from the Board Retreat.

1. Convening – Events with music are healing, fun and reflective of our culture.
2. Programming – One of a kind, award winning. “Library of the Year.”
3. Foundation – Seed funding for pilot programs.
4. Advocacy – Led by the foundation to develop strong relationships with Metro government.
5. Reputation – We have received much praise for innovation and large reach across the entire community.
6. Afterschool Programs – Family and student centric.
7. Board – Commitment to doing the right thing, focused on library mission.
8. Branch Managers – Innovative leaders, focused on unique cultural aspects of the communities they serve.
9. Leadership – Listening and engagement has transformed the culture.
10. Healthy city – Nashville’s growth energy is Nashville Public Library’s growth engine.
11. Community – Gala exemplified the strong sense of community reflected in libraries.
12. Relationships – MNPS, daycare centers, government, funders, patrons, and community partners.

ii. Ms. Searcy went over the key takeaways from the Board Retreat.

1. Equitable Access – The library is recognized as one of the few truly equitable public spaces where resources and programs are available to all, regardless of socioeconomic status.
2. Community Trust – The library enjoys strong public trust, positioning it as a vital institution for education, culture, and civic engagement.

3. Staffing challenges – Resource constraints and increasing demand highlight the need for more staff, better training, and stronger retention strategies.
4. Facility Capacity – As Nashville grows, several library branches are reaching capacity, limiting the ability to serve the community effectively.
5. Digital Equity and Literacy – The library can bridge the digital divide through expanded access to technology and programs that build digital skills.

iii. Ms. Searcy went over the SWOT analysis weaknesses.

1. Funding variability – 4% funding for purchasing materials and major maintenance is certain but the amount distributed varies based on available funds.
2. Trust – Search process created the perception of uncertainty among some stakeholders.
3. Deferred Maintenance – Funding needed to stabilize/standardize facilities.
4. Collections – variable funding, shelves not full. E-books are much more expensive.
5. Physical Infrastructure – Older buildings require investment.
6. Physical Security – Physical safety concerns due to community trends (homelessness, guns).
7. Cybersecurity – Everyone is at risk, training and investments needed.

iv. The Board Members filled out their top priorities for "Strengths" from the SWOT analysis and were given to Terri Luke.

v. Dr. De La Rosa stated, "I would like to have the conversation about what we directly have access to that poses the greatest threat, and there have been a few things we do not have access too. For example, we do not have access to what future funding looks like so we must prioritize that but there are greater threats such as the uncertainty of the Library Director role."

vi. Dr. De La Rosa stated, "Is it customary to have an interim from six months to two years. Should we have questions of inquiries and research of what this looks like in any way, shape, or form?"

vii. Mr. Rand agreed with Dr. De La Rosa.

viii. Dr. De La Rosa stated, "This issue came up multiple times and I would like to inquire and push to ask some technical questions based on research."

ix. Ms. Varney stated, "The one issue that came up as often is remove uncertainty around the Director role. The question is what is the appropriate way is to move forward to remove that uncertainty?"

x. Ms. Ezell asked, "Is that what we need to research on? What are the appropriate steps?"

xi. Dr De La Rosa answered, "What is the standard, what is customary, if the Board is to appoint a new Director?"

xii. Ms. Amos stated, “I have read the minutes from the last Director search and spoke to Metro HR as well as the Library Board Chair. There is a way to move forward, and I can speak further on it once it’s on an agenda.”
xiii. Ms. Searcy asked, “Can we get what’s happening within Metro?”
xiv. Ms. Amos answered, “Yes, I will talk to the Director and will share with the Board members before the next meeting.”

X. Adjournment
   a. The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 PM

<u>Next Scheduled Board of Trustees Meeting</u>
January 21, 2025
Main Library
615 Church Street
Nashville, TN 37219
12:00 PM

Respectfully submitted by Maria West.