

Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Omaha Public Library

Present: Carol Wang, Vice President
Caitlin Davis, Secretary
Adrian Suarez-Delgado
Lenora Isom
Anna Hernandez-Valencia

Absent: Mike Meyer, President
Beverly Thompson
Kyle Hutchings
Mike Kennedy

The meeting of the Board of Trustees of Omaha Public Library was held on Saturday, January 23, 2016 at the Milton R. Abrahams Branch Library, 5111 N. 90th Street, Omaha, Nebraska. The Library certifies publication notice of the meeting in the Daily Record, the official newspaper of the City of Omaha, on January 15, 2016.

Wang called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. Roll was taken.

Informational Presentations

Branch Services. Sarah VanRaden, Bess Johnson Elkhorn Branch Manager, presented about library services. She outlined how library serves as a community space, a community educator, and a community connector.

Isom asked what percentage of programs were proactive versus reactive to community needs. VanRaden stated the actual percentage isn't known, but overall it goes both ways.

Hernandez-Valencia asked about changing demographics in the community, using the example of ESL classes. VanRaden stated that ESL classes were started at South Branch as the greatest need was in that community; another set of classes has started at Millard Branch as the need is growing in that community. As demographics change more classes may be required at other branches. Isom asked if it library staff were teaching ESL classes, VanRaden confirmed that Literacy Center of the Midlands employees teach ELS classes, not library staff. However, library staff does present to classes about resources provided by the library.

Wang asked about the autonomy of the branches compared to administrative control. VanRaden stated that the branches are very autonomous from administration. Library Collection Development purchase material for the entire system, but each branch can give recommendations for materials that they feel would add to their collection. Programming is very branch specific, there are system wide monthly programming themes, but branches are allowed to put together what they feel their community needs.

Hernandez-Valencia asked how far in advance rooms need to be reserved. VanRaden stated that it depends on the branch and the day, most need several months in advance, but occasionally a room can be used the same day. Isom asked if room calendars can be accessed between branches. Marlane clarified that with the current

Google and Dot.Comm system does not allow that. Branches have to call one another to find meeting room space. It is possible a new website might elevate this issue.

Strategic Plan. Theresa Jehlik, Strategy and Business Intelligence Manager, presented the libraries strategic plan. Marlane passed out a two year snapshot of the plan. She stated the library isn't moving away from the 20 year strategic plan, but staff have worked to create this smaller snapshot outlining things that can be accomplished in the next two years.

Hernandez-Valencia asked about the proposed reciprocal borrowing program between the library and Omaha Public Schools. Marlane stated that this was only in the very early stages of discussion. Laura Pietsch of OPS is planning a stakeholder meeting to begin looking deeper into this. Several other systems have similar partnerships, so this wouldn't be a test case. This program would be helpful for busy parents who can't get to a library but can get to their child's school to pick up materials. It would also allow teachers to teach students how to use our databases. Many colleges are seeing students arrive with no knowledge of how to search a database, especially complicated business databases. This will help better prepare Omaha's youth for college. It may even be possible to expand this in the future to other area school districts.

Isom asked if this snapshot was new, or if everything was pulled directly from the current plan. Marlane clarified that everything was pulled directly from the plan. Marlane stated that the overall strategic plan is very relevant and is a great framework for the future, but this two year snapshot is more digestible and outlines what can be done in the short term. Isom suggested monthly in depth discussions with the board about each aspect of the plan.

Learning Organization. Jehlik also presented that the library strives to be a learning organization, an organization made up of employees who are skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge. This helps the library quickly adapt to change, realize shared visions, develop leaders at all levels and creates major sustainable competitive advantages. The most successful organizations consider themselves learning organizations, such as Google, Hilton, USAA Insurance and Samsung.

To create this learning organization, the library has revamped its new employee orientation focusing on core values and big picture ideas. The day-to-day operations are then taught at the branch level. Full-time Librarian I, II & III as well as Library Specialists are required to hold a Nebraska Public Librarian Certification; this certification requires continuing education for all staff. These advantages in staff knowledge directly translate to better public service.

Suarez-Delgado asked if the library has noticed a change in morale among staff. Marlane stated that staff morale is very high. When Marlane arrived she was very impressed with staff's level of talent and interest to work together as a collective team. It was clear to her that staff had worked long and hard to create this collective vision. Staff development works to improve staff regardless of what they actually do. This makes staff at all levels feel invested in and appreciated by the organization.

Citywide Services. Amy Mather, Adult Services Manager, presented about citywide services. Mather told the story of Mr. Shawn Hopwood who after spending time in prison used the library to educate himself; he is now a successful attorney who has argued cases in front of the Supreme Court. He credits the library for his success. Mather went on to explain, the library works closely with the Douglas County Youth Services to educate that population, hopefully to see more success stories like Hopwood's.

Mather went on to explain the library is working hard to build relationships with organization throughout Omaha. She used the example of ODECA, Omaha Directors of Education, Culture and Arts. This organization opens channels of communication so organizations can better partner and share resources and ideas without duplication of work. One result is next year's joint Summer Reading program between OPL and OPS.

Another partnership is with Neighborhood Associations, and their Graffiti Kit program. These are kits paid for and put together by Neighborhood Associations, but housed and checked out at the library. These kits give residents the tools, for free, to clean up graffiti in their neighborhood without relying on the City.

Some of the key topics the library focuses on is Lifelong Learning, as the library touches people at all stages of life, Entrepreneurship, helping individuals grow the economy by starting their own business, Self-Improvement and job skills, stretching from the basic to advanced, Healthy Aging, as over 25% of our population will be elders in the next few years.

Friends of the Omaha Public Library. Karen Hosier, Friends Board President, presented about her organization. Friends is a volunteer operated organization with a 13 member board. The board is broken into nine different committees, book sales, internet sales, advocacy, community outreach, public relations, membership, adopt-a-branch, Virginia Frank writing contest and annual meeting.

The Friends biggest event is the book sales, most books are sold at W. Clarke Swanson Branch and are sold for around \$1.50. More valuable books are sold online, but are still usually only \$10 each. In 2015 the Friends sold 81,000 items for a total of \$97,000. The friends only have space for about 40,000 books at one time, with over 60,000 in back rooms waiting to be placed on shelves, their space at Swanson Branch is very limited.

Wang asked if the Friends had a strategic plan. Hosier stated that, at the moment they do not but she hopes to begin that discussion. The Friends want to do more than just sell books; she recalled a successful letter writing advocacy campaign done several years ago. She feels that the threat of Swanson Branch closing will be a catalyst for her board to begin strategic discussions. They have looked at options for books sales outside the library, but that would increase overhead and reduce amount donated back to the library.

Isom asked if the goal of the Friends was to have a permanent space for book sales, Hosier stated it was, especially a location on a bus route. Wang asked if they wanted that space inside a library. Houser stated that would be ideal as it connects the Friends to the library in the minds of those purchasing books. She went on to say that if they could have the entire lower level of Swanson branch they could double their sales.

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Davis asked what percentage of sales come from the internet. Hosier explained that last year around \$40,000 came from online sales. Davis asked if having more space for shipping would increase that number. Hosier wasn't sure, as she isn't involved in shipping, but could find out.

Omaha Public Library Foundation. Rochelle Mullen, Foundation Board President, presented about her origination. The Foundation was started in 1985 to raise money to digitize the card catalog. They have funded specific programs like Summer Reading Program, Baby Reads, and the Omaha World-Herald digital archives. They also advocate on behalf of the library. The Foundation has two full time employs, a 13 member board and a 21 member advisory council including past trustees. They also have a membership organization for the 20-40 age group called 1877 Society made up of up 75 members.

The Foundation works primarily with grants and requests from foundations and corporations, but sometimes gifts come in unsolicited. Although the foundation prefers unrestricted funds that can be used for anything the Foundation sees fit, however, most gifts come with specific restrictions as to what and where the money can be used for.

The Foundation board wants to have better communication with the Trustees about what needs the library has. However, many of their donors need to see plan for the library's future before they will give. The Foundation's goal this year is to raise \$700,000 and grow awareness of the library and their resources.

Isom asked if Trustees can also attend Foundation meetings. Mullen stated that yes; the meetings are open to anyone to attend. Wang asked if it was possible for the Foundation to fundraise for a capital campaign, such as purchasing land, before any new construction or land purchase is made public. Mullen stated that yes, they can, however, they need a plan from the trustees in order to do so.

Future Vision

Facilitated Group Conversation. Micki Dietrich, Librarian I at W. Dale Clark Library, lead a discussion about what the Trustees would categorize as important for the library to be one of the best in the country. Responses included flexible spaces, Community Engagement and Community Buy-in, Up-to-date technology, availability of materials and a high standard of customer service.

Dietrich then asked how Omaha would benefit if the library were the best in the country. Responses included, it would be a catalyst for economic growth, a selling point for new businesses and lead to a more educated workforce.

Facilities Master Plan

Presentation. Mary Griffin, former Facilities Manager, presented the Library's facilities plan and the work that has already been accomplished. The plan went out to bid in 2009 and was awarded to Himmell & Wilson Library Consultants at a cost of \$100,000 from the Capital Improvement Program from the City of Omaha.

The major recommendations include replacing the W. Dale Clark Downtown Library, construction of a new central library to replace W. Clarke Swanson Branch, constructing a new branch in southwest Omaha and replacing Willa Cather Branch.

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Isom posed the idea of closing Willa Cather branch moving administration there from W. Dale Clark. Marlane stated that administration is already removed from day-to-day operations, so having them located in a working library is important to keep them connected. Griffin suggested moving Friends or collection processing to Willa Cather as the facility has a working garage for deliveries. Isom stated that Willa Cather is a architecturally significant building that should be saved somehow, even if it isn't a library facility.

Wang suggested a joint use faculty with nearby Norris Middle School utilizing their vacant lot. Marlane stated that the library would then not be visible from Center Street, leading to a similar problem that Saddlebrook faces.

Isom asked about interior designs, and if libraries still need a traditional service desk. Marlane stated that San Jose constructed a self-service library but it hasn't gone over well. Many people still want that personalized service and having a visible place to go for help. If OPL can move to the RFID technology, it will make self-checkout much smoother and faster, so more people will use it, but some form of reference desk is needed, but it could be smaller.

Suarez-Delgado pointed out that there are several vacant storefronts in a strip mall at 114th and Dodge, and many more being built out west. Many times those developments can donate space for improved tax benefits.

Wang asked if a plan that is five years old is still worth pursuing or if new consultants should be hired to do a new plan. Davis stated that, though a new plan might identify new projects, the overall major issues of W. Dale Clark, Willa Cather and W. Clarke Swanson remain.

Hernandez-Valencia stated that they also need to make sure any facility is on a mass transit route and that former Mayor Hal Daub is researching a light rail system for the City. She suggested working with Metro Area Transit to identify locations for their future service routs to plan facilities around that.

Wang asked if W. Clarke Swanson was architecturally significant like Willa Cather. Isom stated that it was designed to fit in with the community, so it would also be important to save if possible. It was asked if the Swanson family put any stipulations on the use of that land when it was donated. Marlane will look into this along with the ownership and stipulations for all current library facilities.

Facilitated Group Conversation. Dietrich led a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of creating a new facilities master plan. It was concluded that a new facilities master plan would not be cost effective. It was decided that the current plan can be followed with consideration of hiring a consultant to re-evaluate the needs and demographics of the City of Omaha to update the plan.

Dietrich continued the discussion as to what action steps should be taken and a timeline was generated.

It was concluded that the Facility and Finance Committee would gather information from the City of Omaha, Omaha Public Schools, other area school districts, Heritage Services and Internal Stakeholders. The Community Engagement Committee should

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gather information from Metro Community College, Metro Area Transit, Omaha Library Foundation, Friends of Omaha Public Library, the Nebraska Foundation and from public input.

The following tentative timeline was established:

February 2016: Dietrich would recap today's discussion at the regular board meeting.

April 2015: The Trustees would vote for or against hiring a consultant to update the plan.

May 2016: If the vote is positive a draft RFP would be reviewed and approved by the Trustees

June 2016: The RFP would be sent out for bid. If the Foundation covers the consultant cost the library does not need to go through the City of Omaha's lengthy bidding process.

July 2016: Bids would be received and discussed in executive session by the Trustees.

August 2016: The Trustees would vote on hiring a consultant

December 2016: The consultants would deliver their updated facilities master plan to the Trustees.

MOTION by Isom, seconded by Hernandez-Valencia, to adjourn the meeting of the Board of Trustees of Omaha Public Library at 3:13 p.m. Yeas: Davis, Hernandez-Valencia, Isom, Suarez-Delgado, Wang, Nays: None. Motion carried 5-0.

Kyle Porter, Recording Secretary

Caitlin Davis, Secretary