

# MAHOMET PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MARCH 8, 2021 6:15PM VIA ZOOM

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**Members Present:** Jeanne Campion, Carrie Heimann, Kevin Kelsey, Chris Moore, Brian Paragi (arrived during the approval of minutes), Kristen Streeter **Not Present:** Rebekah Rhode **Also present:** John Howard, Kate Smith, Maura Stutzman

Chris Moore opened the meeting with the following statement:

“For the record, the Mahomet Public Library District is able to conduct this electronic meeting because of Governor Pritzker’s Executive Orders #2020-07 (March 16th, 2020) and #2020-08 (April 1st, 2020). These orders suspend the Open Meetings Act provision relating to in-person attendance by members of a public body. Specifically, they suspend the requirement that members of a public body must be physically present and they also suspend the limitations on when remote participation is allowed.

- An in-person meeting is not prudent due to the COVID 19 disaster.
- All members and guests must be able to hear all discussion to satisfy the Open Meeting portions.
- One member is physically present at the library (Mr. John Howard).
- All votes will be roll call.
- This meeting will be recorded.
- A quorum is still required.
- Trustees will refrain from using the chat feature in order to comply fully with the Open Meetings Act.”

### Approval of the Minutes for February 8, 2021

Chris Moore pointed out a typo in the minutes. Brian Paragi told the board he had not been able to review the meeting documents this week. Carrie Heimann moved to approve the minutes from February 8, 2021 as amended. Jeanne Campion seconded. Roll call vote; Brian Paragi abstained and all other trustees voted in favor of the motion.

### Treasurer's Report

Jeanne Campion moved to approve the financial report for February 2021. Kristen Streeter seconded. Roll call vote; Brian Paragi abstained and all other trustees voted in favor of the motion.

Jeanne Campion moved to approve the check register for February 2021. Kevin Kelsey seconded. Roll call vote; Brian Paragi abstained and all other trustees voted in favor of the motion.

Carrie Heimann noted that the Ameren bill was high and asked if it was the highest it’s ever been. John Howard noted that, in general, Ameren bills have been higher this year, in part because the ovens are running and they also have to maintain the meeting room at 78 degrees to keep the ovens efficient.

### Director’s Report

John Howard submitted the director’s report before the meeting.

He noted that overall circulation was significantly down over the previous year, though he doesn’t know why. He added that there were highlights, however, including 53 checkouts for games, which is great for a new program, and significantly higher notarization, due in large part to a local HOA requiring notarized signatures from all of its members.

He pointed out the request to put a micro pantry on library grounds, adding that his inclination was to agree, but he would like to hear from the board. Chris Moore verified with John that this pantry would be outside of the library building and maintained and supplied by someone else. John confirmed that this was so. Jeanne Campion observed that if people come to use the pantry, they may also come into the library and it’s a good way to show that the library is a place of inclusion. Brian Paragi asked if those managing it would want it placed where a camera could keep an eye on it. John replied that he didn’t know where it would be placed. Jeanne Campion and Kevin Kelsey asked if there was concern about liability and Kevin suggested that John should check with the insurance agent to see if the library is already covered under its existing policy. Carrie Heimann said that she is fully supportive and thinks it’s a creative idea. John said that he felt he was hearing full support for the idea and that he would proceed.

John reported that the shelving installation is complete at the offsite storage facility, four boxes of books are ready to move, and Circulation Manager Tammy Caputo and John have devised a system to pull books and move them. He expected the first books to be moved that same week.

John reported that the Board of Education candidate forum hosted by the library the previous day was the least technically challenged program he’s ever had and that they had as many as 70 attendees at one point, plus another 19 on the Facebook stream.

John told the board that he is still planning some fundraising during National Library Week, but he has had to focus on the normal library tasks and has had no time to plan anything particularly creative.

John told the board that he would like to make the creation of an outdoor programming space, but before he puts in the time and

effort to look into it, he would like a sense from the board whether they are interested. His goal would be to create and plan the space, then go out and fundraise for its construction. It would not be ready for this summer, but hopefully for summer 2022. The trustees asked for more information about what he envisions and John described it as a covered space with power, probably on the west end of the property, depending on drainage issues, but far enough away from the building to not interfere with any future building expansion. Carrie Heimann said that she thinks it's a good idea and she's comfortable pursuing it, as long as whatever the library does fits with the long term expansion plans. Chris Moore said that he thought a space like that would offer great potential. Brian Paragi said he liked the idea and that it would be good to have a space with more room.

Chris Moore said that the news about Rachel Stewart [who took a new job as head librarian at the Arcola Public Library] was super and that he intended to send her a letter on behalf of the board, thanking her for her service and wishing her well. Chris also congratulated John for being chosen as the Mahomet Rotary's president-elect.

## **Audience Comments – no comments**

### **Committee Reports – Policy Committee**

Chris Moore reported that the Policy Committee met on March 4 and was submitting three policies to the full board for approval:

**Library Materials.** Chris stated that the only change was the additional paragraph codifying the library's practice of offering withdrawn books in good condition to smaller libraries with lower budgets. Roll call vote; all trustees voted in favor of the changes.

**Library Use.** Chris pointed out the addition of "gender" to the list of reasons patrons will not be denied access to the library. Roll call vote; all trustees voted in favor of the changes.

**Computer and Internet Use Policy.** Chris pointed out the addition of the statement regarding personal responsibility for logging out of online accounts, the removal of the annual review (because it doesn't need to be reviewed more often than the every 3 years review for all policies), and the removal of redundant statements regarding obscene materials (because it's already covered under "Inappropriate Use"). Roll call vote; all trustees voted in favor of the changes.

Carrie Heimann said she noticed the general shift in language from "will" to "may" and she appreciated that the policies give the director more latitude in handling situations.

## **New Business**

### **A. Consideration of Fine Free Report from EDI Committee**

Chris Moore thanked John Howard and the library's EDI Committee for putting together an excellent report.

John Howard told the board that when he talks to people in the community, he's surprised by how often someone tells him that they used to use the library, but it costs too much for them to continue. He reminded the board that the strategic plan calls for addressing barriers to access and that, in his opinion, one of the biggest barriers to access is fines, which affects lower income families disproportionately.

Jeanne Campion said that she appreciated the Ted talk references in the report and said that it answered most of her questions. Jeanne asked John to verify that the library is doing this now, and John said that, because of the pandemic, the library has not been charging fines since last April. Jeanne pointed out to the board that fine income is a very low percentage of the budget (less than 1%).

Carrie Heimann said that she is fully supportive of going fine free and that she really appreciates the thoughtful report and data. She asked if the library will reach out to those whose cards have expired to let them know we've removed fines and that they can use the library again. John answered that this will be part of the PR effort, as the library did when DVD fines were lowered.

Kevin Kelsey stated that he absolutely supports this.

Brian Paragi said that he is against the change, but it is not a hill he will die on.

Kristen Streeter said that she supports the change and that the Ted talk answered all questions she had.

Chris Moore stated that he is in support of the change, commenting that he does not have an opinion about fines or no fines, but that his only concern is consequences for bad actors. He added that, as he reviewed the policy, he saw that John and his staff still have tools to deal with those people.

Chris asked if the board needed to vote on this matter. John replied that, since he was hearing a general consensus to proceed, he will have the policy committee meet and return to the board in April with the new policy for approval.

### **B. Discussion of use of Unique Management Collection Agency**

John Howard reminded the board that he presented a report on the use of the Unique Management Collection Agency in February and that the board decided to consider discontinuing this service this month, at the same time as the fine-free discussion.

He told the board he would rather lose a book here or there than lose a patron, adding that the collection agency doesn't really have teeth anyway, so it doesn't work against truly bad actors. He reported that the library has received materials back through this service,

but a close review shows that the library probably would have gotten them back anyway.

Chris Moore asked how much the library pays for this service. John told him the library pays \$8.95 per person submitted to the agency.

Carrie Heiman said that she supports the decision to cease using the service.

Brian Paragi observed that if someone has really large [number of unreturned items], the library may not want them to return. John explained if a patron loses a book and doesn't pay for it, they can't use the library until they do.

John also told the board that he is comfortable calling people and feels a call from the library director is just as effective as a call from a collection agency.

Kevin Kelsey asked if the library could keep the relationship and use as needed. Kate Smith explained that the service needs to be either on or off, because the reporting is done automatically through Polaris.

Chris asked how to move forward on this. John said that he would bring and updated policy to the policy committee.

### **C. Correction of Recommendation Regarding Closed Minutes**

Chris Moore told the board that when he gave the list of closed minutes he recommended opening at the February meeting, he made one mistake, identifying one as November 8, 2014 when it was actually August 11, 2014.

Kevin Kelsey moved to rescind approval to open nonexistent November 8, 2014 minutes and to open the August 11, 2014 minutes.

Brian Paragi seconded. Roll call vote; all trustees voted in favor of the motion.

### **D. Considerations Regarding Creation of a Library Foundation for Fundraising**

John Howard told the board he had intended to have written material for their consideration, but he was too busy during the past week.

He explained that he and Kevin Kelsey would like to create a 501c3 Library Foundation for fundraising on behalf of the library, recruiting people from the community to serve on the board. The foundation board would take the lead on any major fundraising, including an annual fund and future building projects. He said that a library foundation would have two benefits:

1. There would be a 501c3 organization to receive donations. Individuals can donate to the library as is, but many corporate donors must only give to a 501c3.
2. This would provide a way to create a group of people focused on improving the library through financial gifts.

Kevin Kelsey said that the biggest downside is that it would be an independent board and the library board of trustees would have no control. The foundation board would make its own decisions, but Kevin is not uncomfortable with that.

Kevin told the board that he and John were bringing this to the board now to see if board members want John and Kevin to continue to pursue this.

Carrie Heimann asked if they could provide an example of what they mean by independent decision making. Kevin explained that usually, a foundation affiliated with an organization (like the schools) are so in line with the mission of the organization that there are no problems. However, if there is a problem, the foundation board could say that they wouldn't give to the library anymore, but Kevin did not think that was likely to happen.

Carrie said that she is interested in a more complete proposal, and that she has reservations about making sure that representation on the board is diverse. Kevin agreed, saying the library would want people who are influential in the community, but influence comes in a variety of forms and diversity is a good idea.

Jeanne Campion said that she was on the school district's foundation board many years ago and it is an excellent organization. She said she thinks a library foundation board would probably be a good thing.

Kevin said that he would recommend ex-officio members of the board of trustees and the foundation board serve on each other's boards to keep communication open.

Brian Paragi said that Mahomet has a lot of money in the community to support the library, but people don't know of the library's needs and this would be good. Kristen Streeter agreed.

The board agreed that it was a good idea, but they would like more specific information about what is involved and what steps they would need to take.

## **Strategic Plan Update – no update**

## **Board Advocacy – no discussion**

## **Trustee Comments**

Brian Paragi said that he likes the idea of changing the circulation policy to have new items on Local Holds Only for 3 months [as

reported in the Director's Report].

Carrie Heimann said that she finally let her kids come back to the library for longer than a quick pick up of an item and they were so excited to be back. She thought that, while February circulation numbers were down, it was a cold month and she thinks the library is on the cusp of getting people to make it part of their regular routine again.

## **Adjournment**

Kevin Kelsey moved to adjourn the meeting. Kristen Streeter seconded; the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 7:29pm.

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Respectfully Submitted by Kate Smith, Business Manager