

MAHOMET PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING MARCH 14, 2022 6:15PM AT THE LIBRARY

Members Present: Susie Baker, Jeanne Champion, Kevin Kelsey, Chris Moore, Kristen Streeter

Not Present:, Carrie Heimann, Rebekah Rhode **Also present:** John Howard, Kate Smith, Joe Huberty (via Zoom)

Chris Moore opened the meeting by reading the library's mission statement: "Together we create a welcoming community that empowers everyone to learn, connect, create, and grow."

Approval of the Minutes for February 14, 2022

Kristen Streeter moved to approve the minutes from February 14, 2022 as amended. Susie Baker seconded; the motion passed.

Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting on February 21, 2022

Kevin Kelsey moved to approve the minutes from the special meeting on February 21, 2022. Susie Baker seconded; the motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Jeanne Champion moved to approve the financial report for February 2022. Kristen Streeter seconded. Roll call vote; all trustees voted in favor of the motion.

Jeanne Champion moved to approve the check register for February 2022. Kristen Streeter seconded. Roll call vote; all trustees voted in favor of the motion.

There was no discussion.

Director's Report

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

He added that he had a verbal commitment from someone to fill the open Library Clerk position and that he will announce their name when the paperwork is complete. He told the board that it has been a challenge to cover shifts lately with the library not fully staffed and that it was the best thing to have Thomasin Gadel return to cover shifts as a substitute.

He pointed out that his report included a donation from the HMD Academy of Taekwondo in Mahomet, used to purchase a play kitchen set for the children's area. Chris Moore asked for a point of contact so he could send a thank you note on behalf of the board.

Chris Moore asked how staff member Kathy Leathers knew that a patron had reached the \$100,000 savings level and John told him it was on the patron's check out receipt.

Chris Moore also asked why Wi-Fi numbers were down for February and John reminded him that the library had been closed four days in February due to bad weather.

Chris Moore asked if library staff had experienced any unintended consequences with the change in COVID policies. John told the board that generally patrons are glad they don't have to mask and staff members are glad they don't have to remind patrons to mask.

Audience Comments

Chris Moore told the audience that when several people wish to speak, library policy requests that they limit their comments to five minutes each.

Karin Vermillion thanked the board for the efforts the library did to make things easier for patrons and make the last two years more bearable.

Staff member Tammy Caputo told the board she hopes they all take a wander through the children's area to see how inviting it is and that there are lots of things for kids to do. She also thanked the board for the policies that have been in place for COVID-19, adding that it has been a rough couple of years for everyone and that we are hopefully on the downside.

Erica Kennedy told the board that she has four children and it has been hard for them to not use the library for the past two years because they chose not to wear masks. She said that this was the only place she experienced discrimination for not wearing a mask. She told of a time when she and others came to the library without masks and the police were called. She asked that if things flip back that the board consider that some people choose to not mask their kids.

Erica Kennedy next told the board that she had purchased a board book to donate to the library, adding that she is all for freedom of speech, but that the children's books seem to be left-leaning and she would like to see other points of view there.

Erica Kennedy closed by telling the board that she is glad to be back in the library, but she knows that the library is going to do story time outside and she asks that at least one be inside because her neurodivergent children are too distracted outside.

Chris Moore thanked Erica Kennedy for her generosity in presenting the library with a book. He reminded her that if she is ever dissatisfied with a book she can bring it to the director's attention and if she is not satisfied with his response, she can bring it to the

board of trustees. He also reminded her about the SHARE program that includes 521 libraries, explaining that if our library does not have a book she wants, another one may have it and it can be delivered to her at this library.

Samantha Olson told the board she was speaking on behalf of homeschool families and explained that a lot of them map out their assignments over the summer and that she had to skip sections of her curriculum because she couldn't come into the library without a mask. She told the board of a time she came into the library without a mask to print a document and she was asked to leave. She explained that she does not want to search for books online or have them brought out to her in her car, she wants to come in the library.

Samantha Olson also told the board she wants her kids to come into the library and see books that relate to them, not just to one agenda. She closed by saying she was here to tell the board that they must behave better in the fall and winter and let people in without masks, maybe with masked and unmasked hours or something and that they need to be kinder.

Chris Moore thanked Samantha Olson for her comments and told her that they would be considered by the board if masks are considered needed again in the fall or winter. He told both Erica Kennedy and Samantha Olson that he was sorry they felt put upon by the mask policy.

Committee Reports – no reports

No committees met between the February and March board meetings.

Chris Moore apologized to the board for not yet getting a policy committee meeting on the schedule to address a policy for exit interviews for outgoing staff and that they should expect a meeting soon.

John Howard told the board that they could also expect a finance committee meeting soon to discuss the budget.

New Business

A. Discussion of Expansion Plan and Construction Grant Financial Details

John Howard told the board that the state library construction grant uses \$225/sqft when computing grant amounts. He has had multiple conversations with his contact there and they are very aware that this number is too low. He explained that the state library can change this amount, but it won't be done before the grant deadline in April.

He told the board that if the library is approved for a grant and the money is too low, they can choose to withdraw and reapply in future years. He also explained that if the library is awarded a grant and cannot come up with the full matching amount, they can scale back the project, which would mean a smaller grant, but also a smaller required match.

Kevin Kelsey asked if the library would remain in the queue for funding if the grant program is not funded by the state this year and John said that would be the case.

John recommended applying for the most the board can reasonably hope to match. Chris Moore expressed concern that if the grant is in the queue for years, the library may raise enough donations to justify a larger building.

John gave board members hard copies of a spreadsheet he had included in the board packet. He presented different scenarios based on different possible levels of grant funding and assuming the library can use \$500,000 from reserves and could pass a \$2 Million bond without raising the tax rate from the current level.

After some discussion, the board agreed that it would be better to apply for a bigger project and scale back if necessary than to risk not being able to get all the library wants. John said that he would not want to apply for anything less than phases 1 and 2 and would be comfortable going for phases 1, 2, and 3.

Kevin Kelsey moved to direct John Howard to submit a construction grant application that includes phases 1, 2, and 3. Susie Baker seconded. Roll call vote; all trustees voted in favor of the motion.

B. Formation of Board Fundraising Committee

Chris Moore asked Kevin Kelsey to share his thoughts on this topic.

Kevin Kelsey told the board that, in general, it is really obvious that the library is going to need to raise funds and that the board will need a plan for a capital campaign. He said that he was therefore suggesting the formation of a fundraising committee, adding that the committee will do the planning, but the fundraising will involve everyone.

Chris Moore asked the trustees if anyone was interested in serving on the committee. Kristen Streeter said that she had some experience in this area and knew some resources.

Kevin Kelsey added that he recommends a three-year capital campaign, therefore it's time to starting thinking now what that would look like. John Howard told trustees that when the state looks to see if the library has matching funds, they will count pledges.

Chris Moore told the board that he will put this topic on the policy committee agenda and come back to the full board with a plan.

Strategic Plan—no update

Board Advocacy

John Howard told the board that the plan was to have the Run to the Library on the first Saturday in June until the committee found out that the Soda Fest will be downtown on that date, with many of the same activities planned for the library event. Therefore, the committee moved the date to May 28, which is the Saturday of Memorial Day Weekend. He noted that this is not ideal, but it is the best they can do.

He asked board members to be present at the kickoff event at the library in their polo shirts and volunteering. Kristin Streeter asked if board members could purchase more shirts and John said they could. Chris Moore asked John to bring specific event tasks for trustees to the next board meeting.

Trustee Comments

Kevin Kelsey thanked everyone for going into an exciting and scary time and he commended them for their courage for the good of the community. Jeanne Campion agreed, saying that getting to have a children's library is very exciting.

Chris Moore said that he owes the board an apology because he failed to look up what he promised to at the last closed session, so the next closed session will have to wait until the April meeting.

Adjournment

Kristen Streeter moved to adjourn the meeting. Susie Baker seconded; the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 7:15pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Kate Smith, Business Manager