

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

February 20, 2013

6:30 PM

MINUTES

Na'im Tyson, who presided, called the meeting to order at 6:34 pm.

Present were: Millie Burns, and Marcia Dupree

Absent: Winston Maharaj and Julie Mills Worthey

Also present: Charlotte Schachter, President, Ruth Shire and Christine Gibson, Friends of the Mount Vernon Public Library; Gary Newman, CSEA Unit President; Francine Vernon, WLS Community Outreach; Greg Maker, Mount Vernon Daily Voice; Patricia Hansen, Michelle Lopez, Deborah Ramsey, Amerie Rugama, Trinity Rugama and Tamara Stewart, Library Patrons; Maxine Grandison, Scott Griffith, Shawn Lucas Dunnom, Rebecca Newman and Cheryl Thomas, Library Staff; Carolyn Karwoski, Library Director and Mary Harper, Administrative Assistant

MINUTES:

Approval of the minutes of the meeting of December 19, 2012 was tabled until the March 2013 meeting.

PERIOD OF PUBLIC EXPRESSION:

Gary Newman welcomed the new director, Carolyn Karwoski and wished her success and lots of luck.

Mr. Newman said that he had reviewed the minutes of the May 2010 meeting and the vote for the library to become a school district library was unannounced and un-discussed.

Gary Newman said that he was surprised that there was no open discussion at the time the vote was taken, since the union has been opposed to the change for years.

Mr. Newman said that the election was postponed until 2011. Then in 2011 the election was postponed until 2012; and in 2012 the election was postponed until 2013.

He said that all the while the political support for the library was being drained, while the board did nothing.

Gary Newman said that his theory was the inaction wasn't about the money or the referendum. It was about having to hold elections for trustees who were afraid to put themselves up for a vote.

Mr. Newman said now that our esteemed president is on the board for another five years we can go out for the vote.

Gary Newman said that he would like to know who the next trustee is who is up for election.

Tamara Stewart asked what the plan was for dealing with the half million dollar loss of funding the library has sustained.

She asked would the library hold the budget vote in June.

Patricia Hansen asked if the library had gotten a charter extension since it had not had a budget vote. If the library is not eligible for a 501C3, then what is the status of going out for the vote?

Ms. Hansen also inquired about the library's financials. She said that she had not seen a financial statement in over two years.

Rebecca Newman asked what the status of the library's 501C3 was.

Charlotte Schachter said that the Friends had sponsored a show at the library about two weeks ago. It was about a fleeing slave family. After the show the actors set on stage for questions and comments.

The Friends are sponsoring an essay contest during National Library Week, entitled "Why we Need our Public Library". Flyers have been sent to Mount Vernon schools. A committee will pick the winning essays and prizes will be awarded in each grade.

The Friends will hold their semi annual book sale the first weekend in May.

In June the Friends will host a booth at the Fleetwood Fair to make everyone aware of library programs, sell books and have a raffle.

Na'im Tyson asked had Councilman Yuhanna Edwards contacted Ms. Schachter.

Charlotte Schachter said no, but she would like him to. Ms. Schachter also requested a meeting with the library director.

Charlotte Schachter said that the show sponsored by the Friends, for black history month was entertaining, informative and inspirational.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Millie Burns said that the carpenter who created the new artwork panels wants to follow-up on delivery.

Na'im Tyson said that he had signed a memorandum of understanding with Americorps, but he has not heard back from them.

Dr. Tyson said that he received an email from Taconic regarding the HVAC. Nothing was mentioned about an investigation.

Na'im Tyson received an email from the state librarian about the maintenance of effort document.

Na'im Tyson said that he responded to an email from Christian Wade, a reporter for Newsday. He said he answered all of the questions that needed to be answered.

Dr. Tyson also received information about the upcoming WLS Book and Author Luncheon on April 18, 2013.

DIRECTORS REPORT:

Carolyn Karwoski reported that this is only her second day as Mount Vernon Library Director, so her report will be a fairly brief. She thanked the Board of Trustees for the opportunity to serve the Mount Vernon Public Library. Mrs. Karwoski said she looking forward to getting to know all the staff members and patrons, especially those who use the library on a regular basis.

Soon after her arrival at the Library, she spent the morning hours with Trustee Millie Burns exploring the library from top to bottom, including the sub-basement and a few hidden nooks. During this time, she took the opportunity to meet the staff members who were working on Tuesday morning and to begin to learn everyone's name.

After the tour, she also spent some time going over payroll procedures and reviewing timesheets for the part time staff. She and Trustee Burns also looked at some of the pending invoices and the procedure of how each bill is paid. They also had a discussion on the "Bridging Cultures: the Muslim Bookshelf" grant award and the materials that the library has received. She said she was very interested in devising a program for this grant and had written the same grant at her former library. Mrs. Karwoski would like to pursue the programming grant, which is the second component to the Muslim book shelf award. That grant, if awarded, would mean up to \$4500 for specific programming to correspond to the book shelf. There are several themes that can be explored in the programming grant and to win this award would give the library a chance to expand its programming about Islam and to create a valuable dialog for library patrons that promotes understanding.

Director, Karwoski also reached out to Councilman Rich Thomas and to Mayor Davis' office to set up appointments to meet with each one so that she can introduce herself and discuss the community and the importance of a strong public library in the City of Mount Vernon.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

President, Tyson and Trustee Burns met with Mayor Davis in December.

In January Dr. Tyson met with City Council President Yuhanna Edwards. As requested Dr. Tyson submitted the library's Annual Reports to the New York State Division of Library Development for 2010 and 2011 to Councilman Edwards.

Councilman Richard Thomas has been assigned as the liaison to the library. President Tyson had a phone conversation with him and they will schedule a meeting.

Dr. Tyson has spoken to Assistant Corporation Counsel Brian Johnson about the library's roof repair and warranty. He is waiting for Mr. Johnson to coordinate with the city's Department of Public Works for a visit to the library to review the roof damage.

There are no new updates from the City Clerk regarding the process for the library to hold an election.

Four new positions were submitted to civil service. Two were approved (Senior Bookkeeper and Custodian)

Several candidates for the position of library director were interviewed before the final selection.

The additional information needed to complete the library's application to have its 501C3 reinstated is due to the IRS by the end of the month. The revised statements have been submitted to the tax consultant who will provide the cover letter. The 990's must also be printed. The application fee is \$850.00.

The Maintenance of Effort waiver, which is a confirmation of total public funds, was submitted to Barbara Lilley of the New York State Division of Library Development. A four question affidavit must be answered.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Na'im Tyson reported that we are still awaiting the updated numbers for closing the year end financials.

REMARKS OF THE TRUSTEES:

Millie Burns said she would like to speak about the comments made during the period of public expression.

Ms. Burns said that her history with the library goes back to 2009. She said that she would have to look at dates to verify the discussion.

Millie Burns said that she met with Barbara Lilley in 2011. Ms. Lilley made it clear that it was the New York State Board of Regents that makes the determination on how trustees and budgets are determined based on the classification of the library. Because Mount Vernon Public Library is classified by the New York State Board of Regents, the obligation is to submit budget and trustees for vote. Ms. Burns said that she took her at her word.

Millie Burns said that the library has been obliged to go out to vote for many years but because of missing records and poor communication, it has not happened. The library had to submit its budget for a vote and the trustees have to be voted on.

Millie Burns said that Ms. Lilley asked her for a plan and she submitted it.

Ms. Burns said that regardless of how the union membership, patrons or other feel; someone in authority has said this is what has to be done.

Millie Burns said that she does not recall having any secret meetings or slipping anything past anyone. The board has been open and straightforward with the public.

Millie Burns said that her recollection about the Friends' program was that there were fifty chairs in the room, but there were more than fifty attendees.

Ms. Burns said that she recalls a sign saying that the room capacity was for forty-nine people. She said that she could not find the sign and has been told three different stories about it.

Millie Burns said that when the film "Every Mother's Son" was screened, she said that the library was open to teaching supporting and illuminating a diversity of people, thought and expression.

After asking for clarification on Ms. Schachter's characterization of the performance on First Saturday, Singin' Wid A Sword in Ma Han, Ms. Burns said that she shared the announcement for the Friends black history program with many people. People came and some were concerned about the very narrow focus of the library's overall programming for Black History Month. Black history experiences are more than just the Friends event. Ms. Burns said that we need to broaden the focus of programs. She said she hoped that the Muslim Journey's programming is much more comprehensive.

The board welcomed the new Library Director, Carolyn Karwoski.

Marcia Dupree said that she came on the board in 2011 and cannot speak to any of the issues that occurred in 2009 and 2010.

Na'im Tyson said that he would like to extend his gratitude to Maintenance Foreman Jesse Van Lew and to Robert Copeland for handling the water leakage situation.

Dr. Tyson said that he is working on the library vote. He said that the goal is to make sure that the referendum happens. He said that he is making sure that all questions are answered so we can get the referendum soon.

OLD BUSINESS:

Francine Vernon gave an overview of the Learning Ambassador's program which is a library system initiative.

She said that the program is a workforce development program for high school students that only takes place in the summer.

Mount Vernon Public Library has partnered with the program in previous years.

The program has gone through revisions. Training for the program will take place during the school year and the participants will be expected to come to the library during that time.

Because the program has been enhanced, it is not being offered to all of the member libraries. A library would have to be invited to participate.

There will also be enhancement for the library worker who is a mentor to the ambassador; the department that the ambassadors are assigned to will be asked to mentor two teens.

Ms. Vernon said in order to enhance the ability for the library to have summer reading additional funding will be added.

Training for the professional staff should begin in March.

Marcia Dupree asked how the teens were selected.

Francine Vernon said that the teens must apply competitively. They must come to the library for an application. They must submit an essay and be interviewed. Since it is a workforce program an applicant must understand that because they are interviewed they may not be selected.

The teens selected will be paid for training and by summer they must have come to the library to complete it.

Millie Burns asked about the libraries that had been invited.

Francine Vernon said that they had tried to look at libraries where the need was greatest. They chose communities where they felt there was large amount of under served or economically disadvantaged. There may be ten or less libraries that have been invited.

Millie Burns asked how the success of the program would be assessed.

Ms. Vernon said that the program is funded through WLS dollars. State funds are received for summer reading. Libraries selected will get the lion's share.

She said that she will be working with the state for feedback and also feedback from the participants and parents.

Millie Burns asked if the participants had to be residents of Mount Vernon. Francine Vernon said yes. She said that this year the program is selecting 9th and 10th graders. You can only serve as a learning ambassador for two years.

Ms. Vernon said if the program were successful the pilot libraries would be invited back and new libraries may be invited to participate.

Millie Burns asked if it were possible not to be invited back. Ms. Vernon said yes. She said the program may not work out for either side.

Na'im Tyson said that Trustee, Julie Mills Worthey had been speaking with the school board attorney. She thinks that the library must have the budget vote in conjunction with the Board of Regents and without the school board.

Millie Burns said that the case has been that the school board has the right to deny the library's ability to combine our vote with their vote. They have opted to do this. They want their vote as far away as possible.

Ms. Burns said if she understands Mrs. Worthey correctly no one else is obligated to support the library's vote. The money must come out of the library budget.

Na'im. Tyson said that he does not understand who the point person is.

Millie Burns said that she believes that we just go to the Board of Elections. There is one type of machine, but we must pay for the transportation back and forth.

Dr. Tyson said he was told that the city clerk is the conduit for this process.

Ms. Burns said that we need clarification from Julie Mills Worthey. She said that she does not think we have to start at square one.

Dr. Tyson said that he would have to get councilman Thomas involved.

Millie Burns said that she had drafted a proposal response to ArtsWestchester in December.

She said that ArtsWestchester has asserted their partnership with us, but there is no documentation to support this.

ArtsWestchester wants to put an art piece on the Second Avenue side of the library.

Ms. Burns said that ArtsWestchester was sent a request for a memorandum of understanding.

The executive director sent a letter to the library in December that did not answer the questions.

Na'im Tyson said that he has spoken to Janet Langsam and alluded to the statement. He said it does not seem clear if Ms. Langsam understands the need for a memorandum of agreement for each event held at the library.

Millie Burns has proposed the following response:

At this time, Mount Vernon Public Library is not prepared to enter into a partnership agreement with ArtsWestchester. For the library to commit to a partnership, the board would be obliged to retain legal counsel to draft and review documents that explicitly detail the relationship between the library and ArtsWestchester and each party's individual obligations and contributions to the proposed partnership. Elements to consider would include the duration of a partnership, clear-cut goals, financial information, partners' contributions and financial benefits, management authority - operational responsibilities, level of autonomy. We would also need to be clear on the circumstances under which new partners might be admitted into a partnership and activities that will be allowed for partners as well as dispute resolution and the circumstances under which the agreement could be amended. The library's liability insurance provider would also need to be consulted to make sure that this is feasible from a liability perspective. The library entering into a partnership is not a casual undertaking and were it to occur, it requires careful consideration, research, consultation, and planning on the library's part.

The board stands by its willingness to consider future Mount Vernon Public Library/ArtsWestchester collaborative events and to craft a Memorandum of Understanding that truly serves both institutions and allows for a mutually satisfying and beneficial undertaking, executed at the highest professional standards

Installing the public art project in front of the library's Second Avenue entrance requires a great deal of consideration, research, consultation, and planning on the library's part and requires the advice of legal counsel and input from our insurance provider. From the board's perspective, the proposed April installation date is now unachievable; if, however, you would provide responses to fundamental issues that must come from you and you alone, with that information, the library can make additional queries to see if this project is at all feasible.

Millie Burns said that it is our property and the responsibility needs to be spelled out. She said it has been almost two months since the response was drafted and it needs to be revised.

Marcia Dupree said in a case like this you have to have something legal.

Millie Burns said that she had spoken with Carolyn Karwoski about renovations to the staff kitchen and dining area. Since the library is open for First Saturdays we may be able to reach out to Habitat for Humanity.

Perhaps we can utilize part-time staff, some of who have construction experience to help with the renovations

Ms. Burns said maybe Mrs. Karwoski can figure out the kind of work that has to be done to renovate several rooms in the library.

Millie Burns said that Mike of Final Touch Furniture had neglected to include the cost of plywood-one of the primary construction support materials. In addition, he had to hire help for delivery as the walls were heavier than he calculated. The board must decide if they will pay any additional compensation.

Na'im Tyson said that he thought it had been agreed that maintenance would help.

Ms. Burns said that Mike thought he could bring the walls to the library whenever they were ready and they would be accepted by maintenance. Ms Burns said that the library's maintenance staff did not assist with the delivery.

Millie Burns said that Mike gave a figure of \$1,000 for the additional compensation and she has a problem with the figure.

NEW BUSINESS:

Na'im Tyson said that he got an email from Christian Wade asking for very detailed financial information. Dr. Tyson said that he did not have the numbers on him.

He said that we should consider moving the information to the web.

Millie Burns asked what format would be easiest for the webmaster to come up with without making a mistake when posting certain financial information to the website. She said that it depends on how much information we want to provide. Ms. Burns said that we are posting some things as a courtesy.

Dr. Tyson said that one format of the financial information goes to the board; another format is for the public.

Millie Burns said if people want more information, then they have to come to the board meetings. She said we cannot be all things to all people.

Na'im Tyson said that he thinks for the sake of transparency the financial report should be compressed and put on the library website.

Dr. Tyson said that he thinks the director should become familiar with the format and make a recommendation.

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Millie Burns said that she had been approached by an artist in December who wanted to exhibit her work in the library. The artist was interested in the rotunda and also the 1st Avenue display windows.

The artist indicated that she had no experience with exhibitions.

Millie Burns said that we do not have the resources here to do this. She said that we may want to have a certain standard and she does not know if this work meets that standard

Ms. Burns said that the windows are usually for book displays and she does not want to get in the way of whoever is doing them.

Millie Burns said that she hopes that Carolyn Karwoski can be the point person so the artist can be given a response.

Carolyn Karwoski said that a policy is needed for exhibitions in the library.

Millie Burns said that artists used to come to the library to display their work, but were referred to ArtsWestchester. She said she does not know how well that serves the community. Ms Burns said she does not know if we can serve them any better.

Millie Burns said that now the Mount Vernon Arts Council has been established and their work is displayed at city hall.

Carolyn Karwoski suggested that there may be a way to approach the Mount Vernon Arts Council so they would be interested in displaying their work at the library in the community room.

Millie Burns said that she would give Mrs. Karwoski the contact information.

Gary Newman called the meeting a disgrace and a farce. He said there was no discussion about the budget; only a diatribe about the financials and art exhibits. He said who the hell cares. This is a library not an art gallery. People are worried if they will have jobs.

ADJOURNMENT:

Upon a motion by Millie Burns, seconded by Marcia Dupree, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm to discuss personnel matters.

Respectfully

Carolyn Karwoski
Secretary