

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

February 21, 2007

7:00 pm

### MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: Chris Hansen who presided called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm.

Present was: Mary Ellen Forte, Arlene Roberts-Grant, and Danna Wood-Webb Trustees.

Also present were: Commissioner, David Chong, City of Mount Vernon Police Commissioner; Captain Robert Kelly, City of Mount Vernon Police Task Force; Donna Jackson, Creative Director, Triple Hill Music Festival; Gary Newman, CSEA Unit President; Sharon Cohen, Shirley Garrett, Scott Griffith, Iva Horowitz, Debra Ramsey and Nishan Stepak, Mount Vernon Public Library Staff; Susan Ockene, David Ockene, Valerie Footes, Library Patrons; Rodney Lee, Director; Willie Lou Gayles, Chief Account Clerk and Mary Harper, Administrative Assistant.

#### LIBRARY SECURITY

City of Mount Vernon Police Commissioner, David Chong presented ideas and solutions to enhance library security in the wake of recent incidents in the library.

The police department will respond to the requests of the library; while being mindful and respectful of the citizens of Mount Vernon including over 10,000 youth enrolled in the city's school system.

Suggestions were put forth regarding dealing with problem youth in the library. Commissioner Chong also outlined the need to ensure that school age children are in school when they are scheduled and guidelines to determine authorized and unauthorized students in the library.

Advice was also given on how to enforce the library's code of conduct.

Valerie Footes expressed concern that the police department would treat students in the City of Mount Vernon differently. The commissioner reiterated the department's policy for respect of all the citizens of Mount Vernon.

#### TRIPLE HILL MUSIC FESTIVAL

Creative Executive Director, Donna Jackson, in conjunction with the Westchester Arts Council applied for a grant to bring the Triple Hill Music Festival to the City of Mount Vernon.

Key elements of the festival will be in school and after school music programs as well as hands on music experience for children.

The Mount Vernon Public Library will host the exhibit entitled "Rock My Soul".

The Board expressed concern about the cost (\$15,000) of the library's contribution to the exhibit, given its limited program budget. There were also concerns regarding the library's responsibility for certain things outlined in the contract.

A detailed outline of the exhibit budget costs for the library was requested by the board before final approval is given.

Director, Rodney Lee, Donna Jackson, and Janet Langsam, Westchester Arts Council Director will meet to resolve the outstanding concerns regarding the library's part in hosting the exhibit.

#### MINUTES:

The minutes of the meeting of January 17, 2007 were approved without exception.

#### PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

The meetings scheduled with the Mayor, the City Council, staff and the public have been postponed.

The board has held two Executive meetings since the last board meeting.

The board has decided that it should have representation at the New York State Association of Library Boards Trustee Institute scheduled for May 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 2007.

#### WLS TRUSTEE REPORT:

Jo Ann C. Jenkins has been appointed Chief Operating Officer of the Library of Congress. She is the first African-American Woman to serve in this position.

Mayme A. Clayton a UCLA librarian who amassed one of the largest privately owned collections of African American artifacts died in October, 2006. The collection which includes 20,000 rare and out-of-print books, 75,000 photographs; 9,500 sound recordings; 1700 title 16mm films and other historical documents and letters will be catalogued and displayed to the public.

The following officers were elected by the WLS Board of Trustees for the year 2007:

Dave Donelson – President  
Patricia Fontanella – Vice President  
Sue Neale - Secretary  
Hope Furth - Treasurer

The WLS Employee Handbook was reviewed and approved by the WLS Board of Trustees.

WLS will host its Sixteenth Annual Book and Author Luncheon of Thursday, April 19, 2007 at Trump National Golf Club in Briarcliff Manor.

WLS Coordinator of the Library Youth Connections Program, Francine Vernon met with Mary Ellen Forte regarding the progress of the Americorps Program. Volunteers in the program must commit to work a 20 hour work week. In exchange for their services they can earn an education award of up to \$5,000 that to be used to pay for college or to pay for qualified student loans.

While there are adequate volunteers for the youth program, more volunteers are needed to keep group activities for pre-k children at a small number.

The Americorps program is anticipating the opening of the Gates lab for teens and young adults. There are two WLS computers available for the learning disabled.

#### FINANCIAL REPORT:

Discussion surrounded the CLDA budget and how it should be incorporated into the overall Mount Vernon budget if the money has not yet been received.

Willie Lou Gayles said that the money for CLDA comes out of the Mount Vernon Public Library funds and when the CLDA money is received in the fall the library is reimbursed.

There was also discussion regarding a difference in the Technical Services audiovisual report and what was reported on the January financial report.

The board requested that beginning in March they receive the financial reports the Friday, before the board meeting.

The January 2007 Bills and Payrolls totaling \$434,152.58 properly certified by the Director and reviewed by Danna Wood-Webb, and Arlene Roberts-Grant were approved by the Board of Trustees and requested paid.

The checks are numbered #017965-018005 (payrolls), # 54753-54774 (payrolls, petty cash), and (# 28497-28565 (bills). Check # 28577 for Microsoft vista Software was not approved.

#### DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

The director reported the following:

There has been an increase in the number of security incidents in the library involving young people. These incidents have increased from what they had been over the past few years.

The library administration has agreed to allow tutors in the library to tutor underperforming or "homebound" students from the Mount Vernon high school.

The library administration has contacted the police department to see if a policeman could be stationed in the library during the afternoon. The police commissioner indicated that this is not possible due to limited police resources.

Although the number of incidents seemed to have increase with the initiation of the tutoring program; it is the library administration's recommendation that the program should be diligently supported with the assistance of the police authority as well as other community agencies.

The Mount Vernon City Council requested that the library meet with the city's insurers to see if the library insurance could be underwritten at a lower rate under the city's plan.

The library director and maintenance foreman will visit the Ossining Public Library to inspect used furniture that will not be moved to the new Ossining library to see if any can be used at the Mount Vernon Public Library.

The Friends of the Mount Vernon Public Library have scheduled their next Book and Bake sale for Friday and Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 2007.

The library began Sunday Service on February 4, 2007 from 1:00 to 5:00 pm.

On January 29, 2007 the library administration met with union representatives, Gary Newman and Sharon Cohen to discuss a proposed resolution for adding information to employee personnel files. A revised resolution was agreed upon by the administration and the union.

AARP Tax Preparation services began on Monday, February 6, 2007 from the hours of 10:00 am to 3:00 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Ms. Cathy Webb is now supervising four Americorp Program participants.

The director has attended several departmental meetings. Security and operational issues were a common thread at every meeting.

Most of the library has been repainted with the exception of the main floor ceiling and the administrative and business offices.

A snow day was observed on Wednesday, February 14, 2007 with a delayed opening on Thursday, February 15, 2007 because of the amount of ice.

The library is forming a partnership/collaboration with the nonprofit affiliates WLS, United Jewish Appeal and the Mount Vernon Public Library to apply for a grant that involves aspects of family literacy.

#### PERIOD OF PUBLIC EXPRESSION:

Sharon Cohen stated that she has worked in the library for over 20 years and has never felt as unsafe as she currently does. The library's code of conduct must be enforced.

Ms. Cohen said she feels that she is working in a hostile environment where there is fighting and children misbehaving. Children are unsupervised and the culprits are not banned from the library. There are issues of security and the need for good security guards. The staff is being verbally abused by some patrons.

Cathy Webb stated that she agreed with Mrs. Cohen. There are homebound students who come to the library and are inviting their friends. There is a group of young people who have nowhere to go. The city must provide a place. The staff is abused; particularly in the cyber corner. Some of the kids see library staff in the street and are threatening.

Diptimoy Roy stated that he is concerned about security in the reference and young adult reading room with young adults and men making the reading room and young adult area a lounge. The staff is cursed and abused and security seems inadequate. The tutors are also making phone calls and creating problems. The library is being used as a place to hang out. The security incidents are taking a bad turn. He stated that the code of conduct states that people should be banned.

Doris Hackett reiterated the same concerns as the other staff members. She stated that sometimes there are unauthorized people in the stacks and though there is security in place, she does not feel safe. She also expressed concerns regarding security when staff members go to their cars.

Gary Newman said that the union feels that the rules and regulation are applied arbitrarily and capriciously. The security issues are the result of the library's own actions and inactions.

Mr. Newman stated the student who had used a knife in the library was given permission to come back to the library by the director, was then abusive to Leroy Lea who works in the cyber corner and was allowed to return to the library again and attend a program. This same person was disruptive and the program had to be terminated. He felt that the library is undermining its own staff.

Mr. Newman expressed displeasure with the library's handling of the Cheryl Thomas grievance. He questioned the validity of the library's harassment policy and said that the union no longer wished to pursue this grievance.

Valerie Footes suggested that the board consider the liability of children and adults coming into the library and being disrespected. She said that the administration may think that these children are throwaways.

Mrs. Footes also stated that the library needs to come to an immediate solution regarding the security problems with unruly people in the library.

The board indicated that they are hearing about this situation for the first time and there should not be any suggestion that the library is not doing anything.

Iva Horowitz stated that the library's security problems are not new, but have gotten considerably worse over the years.

Gary Newman said that the staff and trustees should be clear about what the rules are.

#### OLD BUSINESS:

The director will meet with WLS Director, Siobhan Reardon regarding the Local History Room. It was suggested that an archivist was needed but the library does not have the means to pay the salary. The library has money collected from the A.B. Davis fund for the Local History Room. Mrs. Reardon felt that this money could contribute to stopping the deterioration of the materials.

The Local History Room materials were examined two years ago by the Westchester County archivist.

The board is awaiting the requested reports from the director regarding computer equipment and software.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

The board is seeking a replacement for Trustee, Mary Ellen Forte whose term will expire on March 31, 2007. The school board and the Mayor will be notified.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION:

The board entered Executive Session at 9:50 pm. The board returned to Public Session, no decisions were recorded.

#### ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 p.m. was approved without objection.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary