

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

May 18, 2011

6:30 PM

MINUTES

Millie Burns who presided called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Millie Burns stated that one trustee would have to leave the meeting early. With only two board members present the director began questioning the legitimacy of the meeting. M. Burns stated "she was told she had a quorum with three people with a board of five persons therefore we will have a meeting" She was reminded that this was a board of seven members. The third board member arrived at 7pm and left at 7:30pm.

Present were: Winston Maharaj and Na'im Tyson, Trustees.

Absent: Trustees, Julie Mills Worthey and Rodney Reynolds

Also present: Gary Newman, CSEA Unit President; Ruth Shire and Clara Grant, Friends of the Mount Vernon Public Library; Sabine Ginsberg and Sheryl Ginsberg, Girl Scout Troop, 2522, Larchmont; Larry Martin, Robert Mc Donald, Deborah Ramsey, Rebecca Steere and Tamara Stewart, library patrons; Cheryl Berent, Debra Bracey-Harris, Maxine Grandison, Scott Griffith, Cheryl Thomas, Cathy Webb and Christopher Williams, library staff; Opal Brown Lindsay, Director; Patricia Hansen, Interim Business Manager and Mary Harper, Administrative Assistant.

PERIOD OF PUBLIC EXPRESSION:

Ruth Shire inquired about the library being open on Saturday in June for the Friends Book and Bake sale. She asked if a decision had been reached.

Millie Burns informed her that a decision had been reached and all parties should have been notified in writing.

Mrs. Shire inquired if the event would be publicized. Mrs. Lindsay said yes.

Mrs. Shire said that a sign had been posted that the Friends were accepting donations for the Book Sale. The sign was taken down after a few days and replaced with another sign saying that the library would not be accepting donations.

Mrs. Shire inquired how the mix-up occurred and whether the sign was an official sign from administration.

Ms. Burns said that maybe the administration could explain. She said that she does not know who put up the sign, but knows it was on the outside of the 1st avenue entrance.

Ms. Burns said that there should be a schedule to layout what the signage should be and how long it will be posted. There should be an agreement in advance when the signage will go up and who will maintain it.

Mrs. Shire said that she had not discussed the situation with the director, rather with the custodian.

It may be beneficial to put up a sign regarding the times that books will be excepted and what times they will not.

Millie Burns asked Mrs. Shire to come up with an alternate date for the November Book Sale, since the planned date of November 11 is a holiday.

Ms. Burns recommended the week before. She said that the sooner Mrs. Shire makes the decision, the earlier we can see if it were possible. When people come to the June book sale they will already know when the November sale is.

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Robert McDonald said that he is a member of the Friends of the Library. He said that he uses the library on Saturdays and it is hard for him to get here during the week.

Mr. McDonald said that he lives right across the street and should be able to have access to the library on Saturday and possibly Sundays without having to take time off from his job.

Robert McDonald said that the library is shutting out the community it is supposed to be serving. He said that he is sure he is not the only one who does not have access on the weekends.

Mr. McDonald said that he is a regular person who comes to meetings and at one time he was disenchanted with the leadership not reaching out to the community. When a ship is sinking, it is not always the staff, sometimes it is the captain.

Robert McDonald said that he came in to find out about the survey, but the information is not on the website.

He said that it is all about the people you are serving. The library can be so much more if you would reach out to the community.

Gary Newman said that he would like to respond to the statement made by Chris Hansen at last month's Board meeting.

Mr. Newman said that he wished his statement to be incorporated into the minutes.

Statement to the Mount Vernon Public Library Board of Trustees, May 18, 2011

I would like to respond to some of the things that the former Board President, Chris Hansen, told the Board of Trustees at its meeting last month. Many of us were hurt and angered by his remarks. Chris smeared the entire Library staff, using tactics that I would not have associated with him.

Chris said that during the time he has served as a WLS trustee, people have approached him at WLS to ask him about the Library's problems. He made the specific point that these people understood the problems to have been caused by the Library staff, not its Board or Director.

Chris did not say who had talked to him. Chris did not say how many of these people had talked to him. Chris did not say that he agreed with them.

What Chris did say was that he did not know how these nameless people knew that the Library had problems. The answer hit me on my way home that night, and it was so obvious that I was angry at myself for not seeing it earlier.

Opal told them, or she told Westchester library directors, and the WLS staff, who told them.

This staff has been aware of Opal trash talking us literally from her first week as interim director. By the end of her first month we were hearing from various places how Opal was saying she wanted a complete turnover over of the staff.

How do you think this made us feel, and made us feel about Opal? Once a director starts down that particular road, it very difficult to come back, and Opal has never stopped trashing us. I do not believe that Opal is capable of stopping. We know that she is still, four years later, trash talking us to WLS, to PLDA, to the City, to the schools, to the Friends, and surely to the Board. We have all heard it, over and over, ad nauseam. *The staff is unused to and fights supervision. The staff does*

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not like and fights change. We have come such a long way [thanks entirely to my leadership and in spite of the staff]. But we still have such a long way to go [to bury them all].

Last week a staff member expressed to me with some emotion the belief that Opal has so poisoned the reputation of this staff, that it had become impossible for any of us to get a job at another library in Westchester County. That is probably true. But what Opal does not seem to understand is that when she discredits her own staff, she also discredits the Library, and she discredits and disgraces herself.

Last November, Opal sent out her offensive and now notorious 'Thankful' message, which the Union Executive Board answered in our last newsletter. Since we all know what Opal is thankful for, I'd like to mention a few things for which I am thankful. I am thankful to have been able to work for the past twenty-nine years for this great library. I am thankful to be able to work with this wonderful staff, who help, support and protect each other, and whom I think of as my friends. And I am thankful for the Civil Service Employees Association, which for the past four years has kept us all alive, and because of which this staff, and this Library, still has cause for hope.

Gary Newman, President

Civil Service Employees Association, Mount Vernon Public Library Unit

Tamara Stewart said that she hoped the Board was in receipt of her letter dated May 11, 2011. This missive addresses a separate issue that she first inquired about at a previous board meeting.

Ms. Stewart read a letter regarding an inquiry she made at the March 16, 2011 Board Meeting regarding holds placed on items showing in the library catalog as on order by Mount Vernon, as well as an inquiry regarding material ordering through other libraries in the system and the response from the Director to this inquiry.

Ms. Stewart indicated that as a librarian and patron she was disturbed by the lack of knowledge regarding the holds process and the apparent apathy with respect to patrons receiving timely notice about requested materials when there were known problems regarding them. She indicated that she was disappointed by the unwillingness of Mrs. Lindsay to collaborate with her colleagues in pursuit of serving the citizens of Westchester County.

FINANCIALS:

Winston Maharaj asked Patricia Hansen to talk about her meeting with the comptroller.

Patricia Hansen said that the comptroller's office was pleased. They said there was enough money for salaries and asked where were they going to cut \$530,000.

Ms. Hansen said that the amount of accruals carried over was \$350,000 and the retirement payment accrued was \$280,000.

Mr. Maharaj asked about the amount of one million dollars.

Millie Burns said that that number is the expected deficit by 2012.

Ms. Burns said the budget amount allocated for electricity may not be enough to get through the year.

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She said that there were conversations about different software and a different way of doing payroll.

Ms. Burns said that Tom Rajala says that the library has to come up with ½ million dollars. We can do what we are doing and only pay payroll or we can asked for more.

The Mayor has already said that he will not give the library any more money.

Millie Burns said that she does not want to go into 2012 with a carryover.

Winston Maharaj said that it is the same institution. Whether we have money that carries over from one year to the next it doesn't matter when it is accrued. At some point the shortfall needs to be made up.

To say we have to make it up in the current year's budget that has already been cut, may be unreasonable.

Millie Burns said that she thinks we need to be fiscally sound.

She said that she thinks the library needs general operating support. She said that she hears Mr. Maharaj and agrees.

Ms. Burns said that she thinks if we want voter support and go to them for additional support, we need to show that we are fiscally responsible.

Mr. Maharaj asked if the expectation was to get there in one fiscal period.

It is understood that we need a level of introspection. We need to demonstrate we have gone where we need to get to and there is no other recourse.

Winston Maharaj asked how accurate the amount for the retirement payment was. He asked if this was as good a number as we are going to get.

Patricia Hansen said that the official estimate from the New York State Retirement website is a 15.8% increase.

Mrs. Hansen said that if you look at the additional budget, taking out salaries and benefits, only \$600,000 remains.

Mr. Maharaj asked how that compared to the budget.

Patricia Hansen said that she thinks the shortfall will be about \$350,000 again.

Millie Burns asked if the salaries included overtime.

Patricia Hansen said that the line item for salaries to date is almost at about 29%. It should be 30.5%

She said there is some overtime for maintenance and the administrative staff.

Winston Maharaj asked if any provisions were made for Saturdays.

Mrs. Hansen said she needed a firm answer on Saturdays before going in and changing the lines.

Mr. Maharaj said that it is not a material amount for Saturdays, but we need to take everything into account.

Millie Burns said at next month's meeting with the finance department we need to have a deficit reduction plan.

Winston Maharaj said we need to have an expectation of the cuts and paint a realistic picture of what they would be. Millie Burns said realistic, but doable cuts.

Millie Burns said that the library will be open on Saturday, June 11, 2011.

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Ms. Burns said that the only additional costs would be utilities and security. She said that she would not like to see additional paid staff requirements. She is going to focus on utilities.

Ms. Burns said that she would focus on asking Mount Vernon Police officers to volunteer.

Millie Burns said that she met with Billie Riccaldo of CSEA. When she mentioned the utilities and security issues, he said that maybe he could get someone to underwrite. He suggested that Ms. Burns talk to the new Mount Vernon police commissioner. Maybe he could assign someone.

Ms. Burns said if we could be proactive and creative, maybe we may not have to pay for security.

Millie Burns said that she met with the Mayor who talked about community policing. She said that she thinks there may be a way of reducing security costs or eliminating them.

She said that Mr. Riccaldo also offered to do lobbying on the part of the library. Ms. Burns said she was thinking about turning over the contacts with Senator Kirsten Gilibrand to him. She said that she thinks there can be some support for the library if you request it.

Millie Burns said that Tom Rajala made it clear that he is happy where the library is.

Ms. Burns said that she would forward Winston Maharaj's email exchanges to Tom Rajala so they can speak.

Robert McDonald said that Millie Burns took on the responsibility of doing these things. He asked if it were delegated to her. Ms. Burns said that she took on the responsibility because she sits on the board and that is what she does.

Winston Maharaj asked Patricia Hansen for an explanation of what happened with the checks.

Patricia Hansen said that the group of checks had to be voided because they had a May 1st date on them and you cannot backdate checks. The original check register had to be voided.

New checks had to be ordered to go with the system. Three checks were run to make sure the printing was set-up properly. She said that the numbers did not match and the checks had to be voided.

Mr. Maharaj asked how long had the printer been in use. He asked did she have to void 26 checks because of an incorrect date.

Winston Maharaj asked if there were any expenses or issues that Mrs. Hansen wished to bring up. Patricia Hansen said that she had an appointment with the comptroller's office to witness her voiding the checks.

Mr. Maharaj said that he needed to schedule time with Patricia Hansen to go through the expenses and understand what they are in an effort to pull together a multi-year budget, talk about how we get out of this rolling budget and talk about deficit reductions.

Millie Burns said that the next finance meeting was on June 23rd. The paperwork for the budget must be to the comptroller's office by June 15, 2011.

Ms. Burns read a memorandum of understanding among the Mount Vernon City School District, the Mount Vernon Public Library Board of Trustees and the City of Mount Vernon.

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Winston Maharaj asked how involved was the library in discussions with the Mayor when putting together the MOU. Millie Burns said that there was nothing in it that is not already known, except the pinning down of dates.

Opal Lindsay asked was the MOU voted on by the Board.

Millie Burns said that the library had no choice. This is mandated by New York State. It is in the purview of school board and the Mayor's office to do this.

The April 2011 Bills and Payrolls totaling \$ 236,194.80 properly certified by the Director and reviewed by Millie Burns and Winston Maharaj were approved by the Board of Trustees and requested paid.

The checks are numbered #20642-20671 (payrolls), #056650-056680 (payrolls, petty cash), and #031343-031378 (bills).

PERIOD OF PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Larry Martin, an artist and local Mount Vernon resident stated that he had an exhibit displayed at the library last month and was not pleased.

Mr. Martin said that he is used to seeing exhibits in the rotunda, but his was put in the community room. He said that people were coming in from out of town and could not see his work because the room was occupied with other events.

He said he felt discriminated against. All the years he was in Mount Vernon he was used to exhibits in the rotunda. He was told that this was something new and exhibits would be in the community room from now on.

Mr. Martin said that he had been confronted by a lot of people who felt it was uncalled for to have his exhibit in the community room. People said they wanted to see it but could not.

Mr. Martin said that he had been trying to contact Millie Burns since 2009.

Millie Burns said that she had been given Mr. Martin's information in the past, but had not touched base with him. She said that she would put him in contact with the Rich Thomas, the coordinator at ArtsWestchester who is responsible for the rotunda exhibits at the library.

Opal Lindsay said that Mr. Martin had been invited to a ArtsWestcher meeting at the library. Mr. Martin said that he came and no one else showed up. Mrs. Lindsay said that she was not sure if Rich Thomas was still the person at ArtsWestchester. Ms. Burns said that she had spent time with Janet Langsam and she did not mention anything.

Chris Williams said that the public wants the library to open on Saturdays. If that is the case, then we need to have a schedule where people can be served the right way. Just to have a skelton staff does not serve the community.

Millie Burns said that she agrees and there is a way of moving people around. Officially the library does not have any money, but we need to open to serve the public. There is a gun to our head.

Chris Williams said that the staff also is getting things pointed at their heads just to be open. He said that he does not want to come here on a Saturday with bad staffing and someone calls in and you are stressed.

Millie Burns said if it is known realistically what the cost is we could ask someone to underwrite. She said that we must have a realistic number.

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The first approach would be, can we get it for nothing. In her mind, things can be moved around.

Mr. Williams said that a schedule has to be made to deal with Mondays through Saturdays. He said that you should not put anything out there just to be open on Saturdays.

Millie Burns said, present it to her and she will go to bat, but she must have the whole picture. There has to be a big window of time.

Gary Newman said that Opal Brown Lindsay had presented a schedule at the labor management meeting. After studying it, he does not think it is tenable. He said it is difficult. The people are not there

Millie Burns said it is not unlike the library going to the city for \$250,000, then we needed \$180,000 more. She said that we cannot do that anymore.

Mr. Newman said that he would suggest at the next labor management meeting a board member be present. Ms. Burns said if her schedule permits she would be there. Other board members schedules are not as flexible.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Millie Burns said that the board has received many communications and must deal with the best way to respond to them. The letters received have to be credible. Anything that is annonymus she will not give credit to.

Millie Burns said that she has been in touch with Barbara Lilley of the New York State Library. According to her conversation, the budget must go out to vote next year between April 1, 2012 and June 30, 2012.

Tamara Stewart asked if the memorandum of understanding made reference to the vote being after the school board vote.

Ms. Burns said that the library would be going for the end of the cycle. We do not want to go out to vote when the school board does.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

Millie Burns said that she had meetings with the comptroller. She also met with Billy Riccaldo of CSEA.

Ms. Burns has been in touch with Ruth Shire and had lunch with Gary Newman.

Millie Burns had a conversation with the mayor during a chat at someone's home. Mayor Young indicated that he would be running for re-election. During this conversation, he also indicated that the library building was in bad condition.

Ms. Burns said that she will talk to Jesse Van Lew. There were enough people at the chat to believe that the library was falling apart. If this is not true, it needs to be corrected.

The Mayor asked Ms. Burns to speak about the library.

Millie Burns said that she spoke about the Junior Trustee group that she and trustee, Tyson are planning to establish.

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Mrs. Burns said that she is hoping to get young people to engage in the library. She is hoping to get the school district interested and get their support.

Millie Burns said that she would be asking staff members if they were interested in getting their children to use flip cameras to document events on the day of the book sale. The videos would be turned over to the Junior Trustees for editing.

Ms. Burns said that she had also thought about asking Mr. Riccaldo for t-shirts for the staff, the junior trustees and the friends on book sale day.

Millie Burns attended a town hall on education and a school board forum.

Millie Burns asked about the email she received regarding museum passes.

Opal Lindsay said that she was waiting for information from Gary Newman. Mr. Newman said that he had given Mrs. Lindsay the information.

Ms. Burns said that she had investigated to see what other libraries had. She said she was told that some museum family passes were purchased by a library board member. She said that she thought she may be able to sponsor one.

Ms. Burns said that she thought about the Whitney Museum, because of their exhibits, but they do not participate in the museum passes. Her next thought would be the Historical Society.

Opal Lindsay said that she had gotten a listing of museums and the costs run from approximately \$200 to \$350. She said she believes the library can pick up two or three passes.

She said that the library should be able to take the money out of program funding.

Mrs. Lindsay said at this point we are looking at the least expensive ones.

Millie Burns asked how would Opal Lindsay publicize them and what would be the policy for circulating them. Mrs. Lindsay said the same publicity as other items; media and the website.

She said that she would have to review other policies around the system.

GIRL SCOUT PRESENTATION:

Sabine Ginsburg of Girl Scout Troop 2522 of Larchmont said she is working on her Gold Award.

She said that she chose as her project redoing the library's children's room because it benefits kids. She said that she wants to redo the carpeting and get new toys, comfy chairs, a television, indoor plants and art supplies.

Ms. Ginsburg said that her team would consist of her father who has a lot of contacts, and her aunt who is a teacher in the city.

She said that she would solicit donations from Target, Home Depot, Best Buy and have bake sales to complete the project.

Sabine Ginsburg said that she would need approval from the board by the end of the month. She would also need a wish list from the children's room

Na'im Tyson said that the board cannot meet the deadline because the board cannot vote before the May 31st deadline.

Ms. Ginsburg said that the deadline for the Gold Award is not for two years, but she wants to get alot done.

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Millie Burns said that the board did not have a quorum because one trustee had to leave early. They would not meet again until next month. She said that this is not to say that they will not contact their colleagues to let them know about her presentation. They will tell them what the deadline is and see if they can come up with something.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Opal Lindsay said that she met with Steve Lawrence, the grant's writer for the city. He did a walk through with Mrs. Lindsay. She said that a list of companies will be prepared that will cover Westchester and the upper Bronx.

The library has also applied for grants for Family/Adult literacy, Lincoln Constitution and the Civil war and a Humanities grant for Together Book Talk for Kids and Parents.

Mrs. Lindsay said that she has sent a sample schedule of the June layout and is waiting to have a labor management meeting.

The Friends will have its book sale on the date planned.

The trustee orientation covers the agenda of how the team operates.

New York State Library Development Specialist, Barbara Lilley wants to visit Mount Vernon on July 25, 2011.

Opal Lindsay discussed with Better World Books ways of discarding materials.

Chief Account Clerk, Willie Lou Gayles will resign from her part-time position at the library on June 15, 2011.

Opal Brown Lindsay said that she met with a salesperson about the cost of a new microfiche reader at the WLA conference. She said she asked if there were anyway to have a payment plan.

The phone box on 2nd avenue has been removed. The fire box at that entrance also needs to be removed. It is felt that there may be some value for it.

Na'im Tyson asked could the board write a letter of intent regarding voting on the girl scout project at the next meeting. Millie Burns said that she would feel more comfortable if we heard from the other trustees.

Millie Burns said if memory serves her correctly about the microfiche readers, they were to be disposed of because of poor condition. She asked did it make any sense to replace them. Mrs. Lindsay said there is still a need for them

Ms. Burns asked if Mrs. Lindsay was aware of digitizing which made microfiche almost obsolete. She said technology moves along at a rapid pace and things change over.

Patricia Hansen said that it is not that the technology is going to change, its the materials we already own. We already own materials on microfiche.

Millie Burns asked did it make since to think about this technology. Opal Lindsay said that it's the mone

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Millie Burns said that there are people who will fund this.

Opal Lindsay said that this was part of her discussion with Mr. Lawrence.

Patricia Hansen said that the library had copies of the New York Times on microfiche going back to the 1800's.

Millie Burns said that you would be surprised who is out there willing to give support or materials.

Patricia Hansen said that you are not going to be able to access the the information without the readers.

Millie Burns said she does not think that any institution can afford to stick with old technology just because it is there.

Maxine Grandison said that two of the readers are close to 30 years old, one is 8 years old and another 10 years. She said that she had received video of the new technology, but has not had a chance to investigate.

Na'im Tyson asked about the theme of the Blue Door Gallery exhibit. Mrs. Lindsay said that she did not yet know what it was.

Mr. Tyson also inquired about material ordering and what medium they were in. Mrs. Lindsay said all mediums.

Mr. Tyson inquired about administrative recordings. Mrs. Lindsay said that it was a question that came up at the labor management meeting.

Na'im Tyson asked Opal Lindsay if she had a guarantee in writing that the central library charges would come out of CLDA funds. Opal Lindsay said no, that she was working on it. The final CLDA budget has to be presented to the board for approval.

TRUSTEE REMARKS:

Millie Burns said that there was a mandate to close the budget gap. She told Billy Riccaldo if there is no money, then we cannot open the doors.

Millie Burns asked Mrs. Lindsay what is being done about general operating funds.

Mrs. Lindsay said that tomorrow she is going out to the Lion's club.

She said that it is up to the Board and the Director to sit down together to plan.

Ms. Burns said that it would be helpful if Mrs. Lindsay could express her initial ideas. She said that the board is not allowed to fund raise.

Mrs. Lindsay said that money comes from the foundation and the friends.

Ms. Burns asked what was Mrs. Lindsay doing with them in terms of fund raising.

Opal Brown Lindsay said that the foundation said they are planning fundraising.

Millie Burns said that the foundation is fund raising off of wish lists. What is being done about general operating support.

Mrs. Lindsay said that comes about through gifts and endowments. She said that she is not going to say anything off the top of her head. She said that she needs to sit down with the trustees.

Millie Burns said we need to have some concrete ideas about general operating fund raising.

Na'im Tyson said that in one year Patricia Hansen cited a surplus. He asked if anyone had asked the comptroller.

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Patricia Hansen said that it was taken from two years of the comptroller's accrued statement. There was a deficit before that two years and the surplus was taken in full. Rather than reserve the surplus funds to pay bills they took all of the money.

Tamara Stewart suggested it may be worth asking other libraries about the microfiche reader. She said if there is no local demand; the library may want to consider turning the materials over to another library to make them more accessible.

Ms. Stewart said that Gwen Hunter a person in charge of archives and manuscripts is offering classes. It may be worthwhile to speak with her. She may be able to offer her area of expertise if asked.

Robert McDonald said that it seems to make more sense to move forward instead of being stuck in the past. It may be an investment rather than a waste. Especially if you are interested in remaining the central library

Cheryl Thomas said if you do not have the right captain, you cannot move forward. The ship is anchored. We are not only workers, but voters.

Millie Burns asked the staff to share the announcement about involving staff children in the video and photo documentary.

Gary Newman said regarding Saturday, June 11th' the director leaves the problems to the individual departments. Mr. Newman asked that the problems of staffing the desks on June 11, 2011 be done from the administrative office.

He said that one department has a dearth of people while another has a plethora. One department cannot ask another, but administration can ask.

When you compartmentalize, it makes everything difficult.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 pm.

DRAFT

Respectfully submitted

Secretary