

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

March 17, 2010

6:30 pm

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: Danna Wood Webb, who presided, called the meeting to order at 6:45 pm.

Present were: Susan Capeci, Chris Hansen, and Arlene Roberts Grant, Trustees.

Also present were: Gary Newman, CSEA Unit President, Cheryl Berent, Debra Bracey-Harris, Scott Griffith, Tashawna Isaac, Leroy Lea, Rebecca Newman, Deborah Ramsey, Kevin Robinson, Christopher Williams, library staff Opal Brown Lindsay, Director; Patricia Hansen, Interim Business Manager; and Mary Harper, Administrative Assistant.

MINUTES:

The minutes of the meeting of February 17, 2010 were adopted.

PERIOD OF PUBLIC EXPRESSION:

Gary Newman discussed the workplace violence prevention act. He said that the city had worked with a number of unions and the library was the only union in the city that did not have the opportunity to participate in a site evaluation. Mr. Newman said he suggested that the site evaluation for the library be repeated. He asked the city for a copy of the library's site evaluation to build on, but has not yet received it.

Mr. Newman invited the board and the director to participate in the union workplace violence training on April 19, 2010.

Gary Newman stated that if the library does the plan the wrong way, then he will take it to CSEA to decide if they are going to litigate.

Gary Newman spoke about the governance issue and what he feels would be the consequences if the board decided the library would become a small city school district library. The city has said it will not lower taxes to offset costs if taxes were to go up due to a library budget vote. He said that the division of library development specialist threatened to shut the library down. Mr. Newman feels that this will be a political donnybrook.

Gary Newman spoke about the memo the staff received from the library administration regarding the budget problems. He said that the memo hints at a lot.

He requested a meeting with the library to discuss layoffs and impact negotiations. Mr. Newman requested a series of documents under the freedom of information act.

Chris Williams said that when the library contract was concluded at the end of 2009, he thought that the financial situation of 2010 was known. He said it seems that the contract is being thrown back in the staff's faces.

He said it seemed that the library could have saved money in a lot of areas and was not fiscally prepared. Mr. Williams asked what good was settling the contract if jobs are at stake.

In previous times the staff has been made aware of financial problems, but not this time.

Chris Williams said that changes have been made and the department heads had no say so and were not told why.

Mr. Williams said that it is disappointing when you feel your own management is going against you.

He asked how strapped the budget was, what the library was facing and what could be done short of laying people off.

Gary Newman said that there is a widespread belief among the staff that the financial crisis is being artificially created for the purpose of justifying layoffs.

Chris Hansen stated that the financial crisis was real and had been discussed in open session at the last three board meetings. He denied that it was vindictive. He said that the staff had a chance to respond and he welcomed any suggestions.

Mr. Newman said that at one board meeting it was stated that \$200,000 needed to be covered, that should have been done by now.

Danna Wood-Webb said that she was upset that anyone would think that the financial crisis was manufactured.

Gary Newman said that the people in the CSEA research department would analyze the budget numbers.

Mr. Newman said that the Assistant Director was gone and one maintenance person had passed away. This amounts to \$120,000 plus benefits.

Mr. Newman said that it was unfortunate that the extraordinary well of suspicion runs deep.

Gary Newman said that he considered former Assistant Director Karen Preuss' departure a tragedy for the library and staff. He stated that the entire mood and atmosphere had changed.

Shawn Lucas-Dunnom asked if staff layoffs were eminent. She said that the children's room had lost two part time librarians and they were put on an on-call basis.

Chris Hansen said that he felt that the library director was doing an incredible job and supported her leadership.

Chris Williams said that it would be great if everyone felt that way. He said that the staff did not feel that their particular needs were being listened to.

Cheryl Berent said that she had been a librarian since 1970 and had never been in an organization so badly run. She said that the library has a charter and responsibility to the city. A lot of things can be done without, but people cannot be.

She said that she has seen changes in library governance and what it took to effect change.

Gary Newman stated that if the library budget was put out to vote and not approved, there would be limited support from the city. He questioned if the library could run a credible campaign at this time for a public vote on the budget.

Danna Wood Webb said that this is the time for all of us to put our best thoughts and ideas together to see what the library can do to survive. She said that the board is working in the best interest of the library. Mistakes will be made, but they are not deliberate.

Chris Hansen said that budget discussions have been transparent and publically detailed. He said that the board has been trying hard to come up with the money from the city.

Opal Lindsay said that she has held staff meetings and informed the staff of the budget crisis. She said that the administration is planning to meet with CSEA. Gary Newman asked if the meeting was for the purpose of discussing layoffs. He said that he wanted to meet with the director prior to discuss the impact of layoffs.

Arlene Roberts Grant said that she takes offense with the suggestion that this is something that is made up. This is happening everywhere. She said that the city has dramatically cut the library budget.

Chris Williams said that at a certain point the library has to realize that it cannot give all of the services and direct patrons elsewhere. Perhaps you cannot purchase books if it means saving the jobs of the people here.

Chris Hansen said that he welcomed ideas, but the decision could not be put off forever.

FOUNDATION MEETING:

There was a presentation of \$7,500 from “The Links” of Westchester County to the children’s room.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

Library Director, Opal Brown Lindsay reported the following:

Changes have been made to the children’s room. WLS Children’s Services Coordinator, Judith Rovenger and Youth Services Coordinator, John Sexton are working on ideas for the new space.

A past member of the library foundation would like to do a fundraiser for the library.

A grant from State Senator, Ruth Hassell Thompson in the amount of \$5,000 has been completed.

In April, a new exhibit will be coming to the library.

There have been challenges to the standing order collection with the new budget.

Custodian Donald Smith passed away on March 11, 2010. Opal Lindsay said that she has contacted the city for the new custodians list.

Through WLS the library will offer a “Job Club” that will run from April 9 though May 21, 2010. The club is aimed at ex offenders who are reentering the job market.

A new contractor has been hired to update the library website.

The specifications for the position of library aide have been updated.

Upon a motion by Susan Capeci, seconded by Chris Hansen, the Board approved the new specifications for the position of library aide.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Patricia Hansen reported that the budget is being reviewed and extensive cuts have already been made.

The retirement payment for 2009 was not issued until this year.

The levels of security as well as the cost have gone up.

Gary Newman said that the library is making decisions that will inevitably increase security costs. The young adult department is being moved to the other side of the building and security costs will increase.

Mrs. Hansen said that already around sixty nine to seventy two thousand dollars has been spent that was not budgeted for.

A decrease in the amount of CLDA money in 2009 may be deducted from the 2010 CLDA budget.

OLD BUSINESS:

Chris Hansen said that he felt it was a good idea to share the workplace violence site report.

Gary Newman said that he wanted to look at the site report that the city did and build on it.

He said that CSEA cannot start doing a review until after the trainer comes at the end of April.

The February 2010 Bills and Payrolls totaling \$293,898.66 properly certified by the Director and reviewed by Arlene Roberts-Grant and Susan Capeci were approved by the Board of Trustees and requested paid.

The checks are numbered #019990-020033 (Payrolls), #56175-56206 (payrolls, petty cash), and #030678-030707 (bills).

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

The board entered executive session at 8:40 pm on a motion by Chris Hansen, seconded by Susan Capeci.

The Board returned to regular session at 8:54 pm. No decisions were recorded

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary