

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

April 21, 2010

6:30 pm

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: Susan Capeci called the meeting to order at 6:56 pm.

Present were: Millie Burns, Julie Mills Worthey, Rodney Reynolds and Arlene Roberts Grant, Trustees.

Also present were: Mary Ellen Forte, WLS Trustee; Gary Newman, CSEA Unit President, Fred Smith, CSEA Labor Relations Specialist; Scott Griffith, Leroy Lea, Deborah Ramsey, Kevin Robinson, Nishan Stepak, Cheryl Thomas, Cathy Webb, Christopher Williams, library staff; Andrea Fobbs, patron; Opal Brown Lindsay, Director; Patricia Hansen, Interim Business Manager; and Mary Harper, Administrative Assistant.

MINUTES:

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

PERIOD OF PUBLIC EXPRESSION:

Gary Newman spoke about the contract negotiations in 2009. He said the union tried to live up to spirit of truce. Things fell apart when the staff got a memo about the possibility of something big.

He said that there are things that the union has questions about and has tried to get answers, but the administration would not talk.

Mr. Newman said that the union has requested documents under the Taylor law. The library has not responded under the law.

Mr. Newman said that it would seem the library would want to back-up its claims of possible lay-offs and demotions. He said that the union has looked at the financial documents it was given and does not see the need for layoffs. In the face of potential lay-offs, the library is spending money in ways it should not.

The library is subscribing to expensive databases that no other library in Westchester is subscribing to. Last year only about nine people used the Westlaw database, which is available through Pace Law School.

Mr. Newman questioned hiring an Assistant Director in the face of lay-offs.

Mr. Newman said that the union thinks that layoffs would be difficult to justify. He said he thinks that lay-offs are for the sake of lay-offs only.

Gary Newman said that the union wants peace and both sides must work to get it. He said that the library should think carefully before it makes a decision. The library must think hard about what it might be gaining in the face of what it might lose.

A patron who frequents the library said that in Westchester County Mount Vernon is the only library that has the Westlaw database. Pace is not free and there is a \$20.00 per person fee. There is only one Westlaw computer at Mount Vernon and you have to wait. Many people, including attorneys that come to the library need to use the database.

Gary Newman said that Pace Law School has the database free with a Metro Card. They have Lexis and permit downloading.

Fred Smith said that he came to the meeting in support of the Mount Vernon Public Library CSEA staff. He is very concerned about the budget and layoffs.

Mr. Smith said in regard to the line items and the budget he will depend on the Board to make good solid decisions. He understands that you have to do the same with less, but is concerned about service to a community in need. The library services so many people in need. When people come to the library there are people there who help them to improve their skills.

Fred Smith said he believes by cutting staff you are inadvertently cutting services to someone in need. He hopes that the library thinks very hard and makes a good decision. The staff is the face of the library. Wages paid to the staff are spent in the Mount Vernon Community.

When a family is hurting and loses its breadwinner the strain is on the rest of the community.

Chris Williams said that the library and the union have just come through strenuous negotiations and it seems like the repercussions of settling the contract is to place the blame on the staff.

Mr. Williams said to get rid of anyone without really trying to strip bare the budget would be a disservice to the staff. People have been here a long time and have worked hard for this library. The value of the staff should be taken into account. The library needs to look at the budget harder to see what it can afford to let go.

The union met with the library administration and attorneys. The administration thinks that there are things that it needs, libraries are changing and are not about books anymore.

The staff feels that because the contract was settled these are tactics to get back. If money is going to be used frivolously and people are going to be let go; it seems like a waste that the staff was not considered.

Cheryl Thomas said that working at the library is about community. The library is more than just a building. The community approaches the staff to say thank you. She said that the administration should go over the budget line by line to see what it can save.

Leroy Lea asked if \$200,000 was the actual deficit for 2010. He said that it does not seem like much can be accomplished by downgrading equipment and layoffs. He said that the library is already working with a skeleton staff. Less people to work with will cause more problems.

Mr. Lea said that by cutting how the computers are used and how internet service is provided could save about \$100,000.

Cathy Webb asked that the Board take a close look at the budget. She said that she works at the reference desk and she agrees that Westlaw is important. Lay people come in and want to use the law books. She said that the bigger question is, is there a less expensive database that can do the same as Westlaw.

Ms. Webb said that the library should not take away the desire to use the databases, but because of the dire financial status it should reconsider.

Scott Griffith said that he was familiar with the databases and Westlaw is expensive and Lexis is the least expensive to use. If you could get something more feasible and user friendly; it would help in this community.

**WLS TRUSTEE REPORT:**

Mary Ellen Forte said that she understands that the time frame given for the library to decide the governance issue is one year.

Mrs. Forte said that former WLS Director, Mitch Freedman has offered his services as a consultant as the library goes through the process.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Library Director, Opal Brown Lindsay reported the following:

There is a plan to start putting grants together for the library.

Staff members are being trained on overdrive and eBooks.

Head of Circulation Deborah Ramsey attended this month's circulation meeting. Cathy Webb attended a WLS showcase, Cheryl Berent is doing summer online registration and May Wu is on the eBooks committee.

The Board received a copy of the 2010 CLDA budget.

The library has not reached an agreement with WLS about the salary line for former employee Pearl Gill that is included in the CLDA budget. PLDA has agreed that the salary line would go to WLS. It is up to the Mount Vernon library board to make the final decision. The salary line pays for the WLS catalogers and part of the salary for Electronic Services.

There was discussion about whether the library or WLS would receive the Central Library Development Aid (CLDA) check.

Gary Newman stated that someone from WLS has always worked at Mount Vernon and he felt the money for Ms. Gill's position should stay with the Mount Vernon Library.

Mount Vernon as the central library is supposed to approve the CLDA budget before it is accepted by PLDA.

Upon a motion by Susan Capeci, seconded by Arlene Roberts Grant the board agreed not to approve the purposed 2010 CLDA Budget.

**FINANCIAL REPORT:**

There was discussion regarding the budget and the unrestricted funds for the library.

There was also discussion regarding the amount of usage for the Westlaw database. Mrs. Lindsay felt the database has not been marketed effectively. She said if the library got rid of the Westlaw database it would lose its book discount. If she had to chose, she would choose the database.

Mrs. Lindsay has asked Westlaw to try and pare down the cost of the database.

Patricia Hansen said to get the law books without the database would cost more than the actual database. The 2009 retirement bill has not yet been received.

The March 2010 Bills and Payrolls totaling \$345,316.77 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 #020034 -020072 (Payrolls), #56207 -56241 (payrolls, petty cash), and # 030708 -030794 (bills).

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

The board entered executive session at 8:05 pm on a motion by Rodney Reynolds, seconded by Susan Capeci.

The Board returned to regular session at 9:14 pm. No decisions were recorded

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary