

The Worcester County Library Board of Trustees met on Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at the Ocean City Branch. Members present were Jeff Smith, Sandra Buchanan, Nancy Howard, and Patricia Tomasovic. Jocelyn Briddell joined the meeting at 9:43 a.m and Kathryn Culbertson joined the meeting at 10:10 a.m. Vicki O'Mara was absent.

Also present were Jennifer Ranck, Director; Betsy Gravenor-Stacey, Assistant Director; Alec Staley, Ocean City Branch Manager; and Amy Parker, Business Manager.

Regular meeting was called to order at 9:38 a.m. by Mr. Smith. Recording device was acknowledged.

Mr. Staley said that Dennis Moore is setting up the free train garden today. It is a wonderful addition to the branch this time of year and we are so grateful for his generosity. The Ocean City branch had a great summer. Story times attracted an average of 70 people and we had approximately 80 people attend a special offsite story time at Northside Park. The Ocean City Volunteer Fire Department made special visits to the branch in June and October to teach children and their families about fire safety. June's program attracted 93 people and in October, 45 people attended. There have been a couple of staffing changes. Ms. Ranck mentioned the idea of recruiting a couple of interns for the summer. Mr. Staley is now able to promote events on the Ocean City Tourism website. Mr. Staley presented a session at the Association of Rural and Small Libraries virtual conference about genrifying your library. Sixty-three people attended. Mr. Staley submitted a proposal to speak at the Public Library Association conference scheduled for this Spring in Columbus, Ohio.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Tomasovic; seconded by Ms. Briddell. All present were in favor.

Correspondence – *Bayside Gazette* had articles on the farm-to-library program at the Ocean Pines branch and the Worcester County Arts Council Plein Air winning art displayed at the Berlin branch. The *Ocean City Today* and *Coastal Dispatch* ran articles on the nonfiction author panel held on November 8. Ocean City Today had a brief clip on the RFP for Pocomoke library's construction manager.

Financial Report – Ms. Parker reported on the branch expenses for October 2023. Ms. Ranck explained the encumbrance expense for the youth services vehicle. After waiting for two years for a vehicle, the order was canceled. Fortunately, the Fleet Manager was able to locate a comparable vehicle at I.G. Burton in Berlin and the County Commissioners approved the purchase. Ms. Buchanan suggested asking the Worcester County Technical High School to see if they would be interested in creating a wrap for the van. Ms. Ranck noted that Snow Hill's water and sewer bills have increased. Ms. Parker confirmed the increase and said the Town mailed out notices announcing the rate increase. Ms. Parker maintains a spreadsheet comparing all the branch utilities and will send to Mr. Smith. No comments were made on the statistics.

Administrative Report – Board members received a copy of the Administrative report to review before the meeting. Ms. Ranck said Bill Contarino will begin working at the Ocean City branch on November 27. We look forward to working with him as he brings a lot of experience. Dave Nedrow's Halloween program, "Haunted Laboratory," was hugely successful, with over 1,000 visitors. The Friends of the Ocean Pines Library held a Farm-To-Library event as part of its October membership meeting. Two computer tables—each with four workstations—were purchased with county library and grant funds, replacing two larger, higher diamond-shaped tables. These tables are much more comfortable

than the previous set up which were bar-height and used stools. In addition, the Friends of the Ocean Pines branch purchased four study desks with power and phone-charging features, located in quiet corners of the building. The “Paws to Read” program in Pocomoke drew in several new patrons, all of whom signed up for library cards afterwards. Ms. Ranck said she is proud of the outreach efforts by the Snow Hill branch staff. Angela Schilb and Brittney Herz had a table at First Friday in Snow Hill during the pet costume parade. A lot of people stopped by and picked up calendars and bookmarks. Rachel Jones attended the Judy Center Resource Fair, which was well attended. Ms. Scott has added documents and items from the local history collection to the “CatalogIt” online site, with goals to publish and share the site at the next meeting. Planning for next year’s Summer Reading has begun and Ms. Wheatley has contacted the Ocean City airport for a possible story time. Elena Coelho has been receiving excellent feedback from patrons about the adult programs. Ms. Howard suggested the board give to the “Shore Gives More” on November 28 to help support the Library Foundation.

Assistant Director’s Report – A copy of the Staff Development report was sent in each board member’s packet to review before the meeting. Ms. Gravenor-Stacey said she attended Elena’s Zoom program last night, “Once Upon Death and Dying” with Dustin Pari. This program was part of the Creative Aging Care grant. Ms. Gravenor-Stacey agreed that Ms. Coelho does a great job planning and presenting programs. Several staff attended “Don’t Eat the Red Frog: A Crash Course in Handling Aggressive Customer Behavior.” Seven staff members are enrolled in the ALA eLearning Course, “Human Resources Crash Course for Library Managers,” consisting of three sessions. Ms. Varner wrapped up the “Supercharging your Storytimes” e-course and Ms. Gravenor-Stacey is awaiting her feedback. The next EDI committee meeting is December 11. Ms. Gravenor-Stacey attended an Admin EDI Summit last week. Topics such as employee burnout, employee assistance programs, difficult conversations with staff, and reasonable accommodations were highlighted. The Calendar of Events was delivered. The train garden is featured on the front cover. Thank you to the branches and the staff who work on the calendar of events.

OLD BUSINESS:

Pocomoke The Planning Team meets every two weeks, via Zoom and/or in person as needed. Last Wednesday evening, Jeff Schoellkopf and the civil engineer presented plans to Pocomoke City’s Planning and Zoning Commission. The plans were approved by the Planning Commission. Currently the team is evaluating HVAC options. Gipe is providing cost comparisons. Geothermal is not an option per County Commissioner direction. Ms. Ranck invited the board to the meetings. The RFP for the construction manager has been released. Ms. Tomasovic asked about the process.

Connect Maryland FY23 Connected Devices Program Worcester County’s grant application to distribute 900 devices was approved. Ms. Ranck is awaiting signatures from the County Commissioners. The Library will receive a stipend to cover staff time.

Strategic Plan Ms. Ranck asked board members to share any feedback about the patron survey; examples were shared last month. Plans to create both an online and paper version are in the works.

NEW BUSINESS:

2024 Library Closing and Board Meeting Dates Included in the board packet is the proposed list of holiday closings and board meeting dates for 2024. Ms. Ranck said the library will be open for Election Day; full time staff will have an alternate holiday to use. Ms. Ranck mentioned the half-day for staff day training the last Friday of April. Ms. Howard asked if the library does anything for Veteran’s Day. Ms. Ranck said yes, the branches have book displays and have held programs in the past. This year, the Berlin branch set out a “white table” as often seen in mess halls, to remember veterans who are missing or captured. Ms. Howard suggested partnering with the American Legion in Ocean City. Ms. Ranck said that Library Legislative Day is scheduled for Tuesday, February 13, the same day as the board meeting. Discussion followed about board meeting times in general. The board decided to change the meeting to February 20, 2024 in Berlin at 9:30 a.m. Ms. Howard motioned to approve the 2024 Library Closing and Board Meeting dates; Ms. Culbertson seconded. All present were in favor.

Eastern Shore Regional Library Board Vicki O’Mara is stepping down as Worcester’s representative and the board will need to fill that position. Ms. Tomasovic volunteered to serve as the representative.

Request for Reconsideration Mr. Smith shared a request for reconsideration concerning library programs. The board discussed current policy and practices, including collaborating with outside organizations and partners. Ms. Briddell motioned for library programs to remain consistent with current policies, continue with offsite partnerships, and to deny the request to exclude certain terms from program descriptions; Ms. Howard seconded. All present were in favor. Mr. Smith will draft a response letter.

Closed Session – Personnel Matter

Ms. Tomasovic made a motion to have a closed session as noted on the meeting agenda at 10:56 a.m. under Maryland Open Meetings Act General Provisions Article § 3-305 (b) (2); Ms. Howard seconded. All were in favor. At 11:08 a.m., Ms. Culbertson made a motion to come out of closed session; Ms. Buchanan seconded. Mr. Smith noted the meeting reconvened in open session at 11:08 a.m., and stated the board discussed a Personnel matter during the closed session.

The next board meeting will be Tuesday, December 12 at the Ocean Pines branch at 9:30 a.m. Ms. Howard motioned to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Buchanan seconded. All present were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

Amy Parker