

The Worcester County Library Board of Trustees met on Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at the Berlin Branch. Members present were Jeff Smith, Sandra Buchanan, Nancy Howard, Patricia Tomasovic, Vicki O'Mara, and via phone Jocelyn Briddell. Kathryn Culbertson was absent (arrived after the meeting adjourned).

Also present were Jennifer Ranck, Director; Betsy Gravenor-Stacey, Assistant Director; Alice Paterra, Berlin Branch Manager; Amy Parker, Business Manager; and Claudette Keyser, Library Services Assistant, Ocean Pines.

Regular meeting was called to order at 9:31 a.m. by Mr. Smith. Recording device was acknowledged.

Ms. Paterra said AARP is on the other side of the meeting room doing taxes. January was a quiet month with no issues. The meeting room was busy. County Maintenance is working to unclog the staff workroom sink. Lights in the gallery have been rearranged because some new parts are needed and they are difficult to obtain. Alice Paterra created a display regarding Human Trafficking Awareness Month using materials given to the branch from the Life Crisis Center. Susan Todd is retiring March 1, after 28 years. We will have a little gathering for her on February 23 at 1 p.m. Julie Johnson will be filling the Youth Services Specialist position. Ms. Johnson has arranged several creative displays in the teen area and graphic novels in the children's area; please take a look before you leave. The branch welcomed local author Al "Hondo" Handy for a speaking and book signing event. He had a small but thoroughly engaged crowd. ESRL helped branch staff with the transition to Outlook from Zimbra. Berlin will be ready for the Chromebook distribution likely to take place in April.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ms. Howard; seconded by Ms. O'Mara. All present were in favor. Mr. Smith introduced Ms. Keyser from the Ocean Pines branch. Part of the Early Start LATI program is to attend a board meeting.

Correspondence – *Bayside Gazette* and *Ocean City Today* both ran articles detailing the Library's Creative Aging series. Gracie Ocean City shared an inspirational Facebook post about a gentleman in his 80s who starting taking martial arts class; he became interested after attending a library sponsored self-defense demonstration class in Berlin.

Financial Report – Ms. Parker reported on the branch expenses for January 2024. No comments were made on the statistics. Ms. Ranck noted the Snow Hill and Ocean Pines branches need new computers and grant funds may be used to acquire new computers for the Snow Hill branch this fiscal year. ESRL is working to install a new driver on machines to help them from shutting down unexpectedly. Library staff will be looking into using Microsoft Teams as a communication tool. It is similar to Slack which we currently use. We also hope to learn more about Microsoft Outlook to take advantage of their scheduling feature. Alec Staley is already using these features at the Ocean City branch.

Administrative Report – Board members received a copy of the Administrative report to review before the meeting. Ocean Pines former Youth Services Specialist Jacob Nail was featured in a WMDT-47 segment on January 9. There is a full time opening in Berlin and Ms. Ranck will be posting it this week. Ocean City is seeing higher stats in the children's area. A Community Resource Fair was held on Wednesday, January 24 at the Ocean City branch. It was so successful that the Health Department and Ocean City Branch are looking at holding another one in June. Carol Rose, Foundation President,

entered the meeting at 9:45 a.m. Ms. Howard asked if the success of Ocean City is from generifying the collection. Ms. Ranck said that is a possibility; the branch has also had a wonderful youth services specialist and their program attendance and branch visits have increased due to their club-based programs and homeschool participation. Dungeons and Dragons has been successful in capturing tweens at the Snow Hill branch. Thank you to the Friends of the Ocean Pines Library for purchasing books for the Great Books reading club. Ms. Ranck shared a story from the Pocomoke staff. A single mom came in the branch needing services. Lisa Voss and Dawn Ingrassia were able to secure services and supplies for the family. Ms. Ranck appreciates the above and beyond service. Ms. Tomasovic said that the Pocomoke staff do a very good job serving their community. Ms. Ranck and Ms. Parker have noticed more people coming in the Snow Hill branch. Ms. Howard commented the library is more on the horizon. Ms. Tomasovic said the attention is from having a social media presence. Ms. Ranck said the Pop-Up/bookmobile is planning summer stops in different parks around the county (this will be in addition to the regular visits the Pop-Up makes to facilities). Ms. Ranck commented she is pleased with the Pop-Up's contribution to library service. Ms. Rose said the bookmobile has filled a void. Adult programs in January included a series on business and the class entitled 'The Joy of Owning a Small Business in Retirement' was well received. The next Library Foundation meeting is scheduled for March. The applications for the annual scholarship have been sent to the public school counselors and posted to the Foundation webpage.

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 several updates have been made to the "Welcome to Worcester County Library!" Niche Academy course completed by new employees. Changes include a new section about the Pop-Up Library, the new eTimesheet system, and the Outlook email change. Claudette Keyser and Allison Blakeman have almost completed the Early Start LATI program. Michael Hayes and Erin Scott are also working towards their Library Associate certifications through the Advanced LATI program. The virtual graduation will be held on March 6. Cathy Moore has compiled a list of supplies for the adaptive supply kits. The EDI committee is continuing to try to create awareness for the memory kits.

OLD BUSINESS:

Pocomoke The County Commissioners selected Keller for CM at risk services. An initial meeting was held with Keller on February 14 at the Berlin library and included a tour of the branch. Ms. Ranck said Keller has an office in Salisbury and they are currently working on the new Berlin State Police barracks. Whiting Turner has been wonderful to work with and Ms. Ranck is so very grateful for their help moving this project forward for close to five years. They are working to complete a cost estimate which is expected to be given to the Commissioners at the March 5 meeting. We were very thankful to see close to \$1.8 million for the project in the Governor's proposed budget in FY 25. Ms. Ranck believes we will be able to use the \$2.2 million from the State awarded in FY 24. Ms. Tomasovic asked if the size of the building will change. Ms. Buchanan asked if we will be able to include the children's porch. Ms. Ranck said we are continuing to move forward.

Strategic Plan Ms. Ranck said she got responses from staff. Ms. Ranck thinks the best time to get community input for the survey is during the summer season when we see an uptick in visits. Ms. Ranck

will continue to include this topic on the agenda.

Chromebook Distribution Grant Snow Hill has distributed 260 laptops to Worcester County households. An evening distribution is tentatively scheduled for February 28 from 4 to 6 p.m. The Pocomoke Library will begin distribution on March 4 and March 9. The Berlin branch will most likely distribute Chromebooks in April.

Upcoming Projects New carpet and meeting room furniture have been ordered for the Ocean City branch. We are looking into having the space painted as well. Branch Manager Alec Staley has also selected new blinds. The Ocean Pines branch is finalizing an order for a new circulation desk. Plans for the Snow Hill branch are underway and a kickoff meeting was held on February 7. We are putting together a draft plan and updated budget figures to determine how to best move forward.

NEW BUSINESS:

Rutgers Externship Ms. Ranck, Ms. Gravenor-Stacey, and Mr. Staley are working with a group of students from Rutgers University to develop marketing strategies for the library's online learning resources. Ms. Ranck said there are five students working on the project and they are asking great questions. Mr. Smith added the students are getting experience in the real world of business. Ms. Ranck said we can include their suggestions into our strategic plan.

Ms. Ranck added an item to the agenda, the Freedom to Read act (HB785/SB738). The County Commissioners had questions about the bill and how it could potentially impact the library. Ms. Ranck believes that the bill will not change how we operate because we have a strong collection development policy in place now. Children under the age of 18 are required to have parental/guardian permission to sign up for a library card. Ms. Ranck also reiterated that library staff are available to help people make sure they find the right books for them and for their families.

Ms. Ranck remarked that the library's FY 25 budget will be presented to the commissioners on April 9 in Snow Hill. The library's request is less than a 3% increase. Ms. Buchanan asked if the County Commissioners responded to the Board's letter explaining our programming policy. Ms. Ranck said there has been no response.

The next board meeting will be Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at the Ocean City branch at 9:30 a.m. Ms. Buchanan motioned to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Tomasovic seconded. All present were in favor. The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Amy Parker