

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MINUTES
Monday, September 18, 2023 6:30 p.m.
VIRTUAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Eileen Daly called the Library Board to order at 6:05pm. Present virtually, were Board members Kim Cohen, Eileen Daly, Gail Crockett, Natalia Menjivar and EJ Greenspan, Library Director Laura Irmscher, and Heidi Reagan, recorder.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT - none

3. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA (Items 4 & 8a i, 8a ii, 8a iii.)

MOTION: On a motion made by Gail Crockett and seconded by EJ Greenspan, the Board unanimously approved the Consent Agenda.

4. THE MEETING MINUTES of June 26, 2023, were approved as part of the consent agenda.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

- a. Natalia attended the ACLB Intellectual Freedom Training
 - i. Recording of the program is available.
 - ii. Emphasis was on the ongoing challenges libraries are facing, the message is to go high when they go low, reinforcing inclusion of all members of the community and open access to materials.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Strategic Planning Process – Laura Irmscher
 - i. The strategic planning process has begun with a team of staff members assembled to plan, research, and coordinate community and stakeholder input.
 - ii. The team met last week with the CLC cohort. Discussions included the meaning and importance of strategic planning, and a brainstorming session on the current issues and trends facing society and libraries.
 - iii. The previous strategic plan (2016) will be studied for accomplishments, and lessons learned from that process.

- iv. The community engagement process is being planned. Input will be solicited from library patrons, and we're brainstorming how to reach people who don't use the library at all.
 - 1 Suggestions were made regarding town-wide events, area churches, grocery stores, offering public tours of the library, a bookmobile, public schools, and reviving the Outreach Network
- v. A primary objective is to review the Library's Mission, Vision, and Values and hope the Library Board will take a leadership role here.
 - 1 The Board agreed they will discuss this at the October meeting.
- b. Staff Updates – Laura Irmscher
 - i. Leah Farrell, our Programs and Outreach Librarian, started three weeks ago. She is from the Wallingford Public Library, and Farmington prior to that. She has so much creativity and energy, her impact is already noticeable.
- c. New Library & Community Center Update – Laura Irmscher
 - i. The Town will release an RFP for an architect to design the new Community Center & Library based on the determinations from the Feasibility Study that was completed by Tecton.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Staff Day: October 19, 2023 (Library closed 10am – 2pm) Focus will be on gathering feedback for the strategic plan.

MOTION: On a motion made by EJ Greenspan and seconded by Gail Crockett, the Board unanimously approved the closing of the library on October 19, from 10am to 2pm for Staff Day.

8. DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Laura Irmscher

- a. July and August documents submitted:
 - i. Library Administrative Report
 - ii. Budget Report
 - iii. Circulation Statistics (issued Quarterly) include stats for FY23. Compared to FY22, visitors are up 29%, Public Computer Sessions are up 33%, and Circulation is up 10%
- b. Faxon Fun
 - i. Paid for by a grant from the Stanley D. and Hinda N. Fisher Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Faxon Fun ran for

four weeks in July and August. The program was successful in providing enjoyable activities for the children and enabling the teens to gain valuable work experience.

- 1 The first session of 1-3rd graders averaged 24 children per day. Activities included Mad Science, Sam from Studio 20 South, tie dye t-shirts, an interactive drumming session, a visit from the Forest Park Zoo animals, the Book Buddies program, where they partnered with older kids to practice their reading skills. Many grades 1-3 students returned in the following weeks to continue Book Buddies for 45 minutes 3 days a week.
- 2 The second session of 4-6th graders averaged 25 children per day. Programs included Mad Science, the Forest Park Zoo, a Drumming Circle, an opportunity to play with the VR glasses, and 3D Printing workshops.

c. Bishops Corner

- i. Children's Librarian, Bailey Berardino, launched our first Grandfriends program series in coordination with the Senior Center. This is an intergenerational program for school age children and senior members of the community to enjoy fun activities and make new friends of all ages. Grandfriends participated in an ocean themed yoga class, enjoyed an afternoon of board and card games, and made no-bake treats.

d. Adult Summer Reading

- i. Our adult summer reading challenge ended on August 31.
 - 1 18% more people participated in the challenge.
 - 2 46% more books read.
 - 3 284% increase in activities.

e. Bloomfield Patrons & State Funds

- i. Bloomfield Libraries are closed for renovation, and their patrons are visiting our libraries, especially Bishops Corner. July circulation statistics were up almost 16% over last year, primarily from adult materials. CT's borrowIT program allows patrons to use their card at any participating library. State funds support this program, and we are welcoming new patrons while Bloomfield sets up their temporary services and finishes their renovations.

- f. West Hartford Reads
 - i. Nick Hornby will be at King Philip Middle School on 10/12. Ticket distribution is at Main on 9/19 at 6pm. We've hosted book discussions and film screenings of Hornby's works all summer. The last one is High Fidelity on 10/2.
- g. Donations
 - i. Diaper Drive - We are collecting diapers for the Healthy Babies Diaper Drive now through 10/14 at all three libraries.
 - ii. Legos - We are collecting bricks, building base plates, creator sets, the Classic Creative Brick box, and minifigures this month.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: The Library Board Meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:15pm. The next scheduled Board Meeting is Monday, October 23, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Cohen
Board Secretary
West Hartford Library Board

"This meeting was held remotely and the public had the ability to view the meeting in real-time live on West Hartford Community Television at www.whctv.org and www.youtube.com/whctv5."