

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MINUTES
Monday, October 23, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Kimberly Cohen called the Library Board to order at 6:35 p.m. Present Board members; Kimberly Cohen, Natalia Menjivar and EJ Greenspan; Library Director Laura Irmscher, and Heidi Reagan, recorder. Members Gail Crockett and Eileen Daly were present virtually (via Zoom).

2. PUBLIC COMMENT - none

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

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

4. THE MEETING MINUTES of September 25, 2023, were approved as part of the consent agenda.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT: Eileen Daly had nothing to report.

6. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Laura Irmscher updated the Board on the progress of the Strategic Planning Committee
 - i. Community Engagement meetings are scheduled
 - ii. Multiple Press releases have gone out regarding the planning process and ways people can participate
 - iii. The Survey was released through a number of outlets, over 1000 responses have been received so far
 - iv. Input from staff was solicited on Staff Day
 - v. Comment Boards are installed in all three locations and Town Hall
 - vi. Feedback is being solicited at all programs and events
 - vii. Teen Advisory Board has been asked for feedback
- b. Gail Crockett recommended the survey be sent to Adrienne Billings-Smith, WASCO, WH Concerned Parents of Color, and the Jewish Community Relations Council
- c. Laura Irmscher led a discussion of the Current Library Mission Statement, a brief, memorable declaration of why we exist.

“Welcoming all, the West Hartford Public Library brings people, information and ideas together to enrich lives and strengthen our diverse community.”

- d. Laura Irmscher asked the Board to consider the future of the library – where does the Board see the library in 3-5 years? If you had a magic wand what would you wish for the library?

- e. Laura Irscher will be reporting on the Strategic Planning Committee's progress at the next Board meeting. A draft of the plan will be ready by mid-December for review by January.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Library Board 2024 Meeting Dates -- attached
- b. 2023/2024 Holiday and Sunday Schedule -- attached

MOTION: On a motion made by Gail Crockett and seconded by EJ Greenspan, the Board unanimously approved the Meeting Dates and Holiday schedules.

8. DIRECTOR'S REPORT -- Laura Irscher

- a. September documents submitted:
 - i. Library Administrative Report
 - ii. Budget Report
 - iii. Circulation Statistics
- b. Current Month Briefing.
 - i. Library Usage Increase --
 - 1. Attendance is up 67% and circulation is up 22% from two years ago at this time
 - 2. September showed the highest attendance figures since February 2020
 - ii. We're welcoming neighbors from other towns due to current library closures. Bishop in particular has seen a 39% increase in circulation
 - iii. West Hartford Reads with author, Nick Hornby was a success
 - 1. Fox 61 interviewed him in the morning
 - 2. Podcaster Julia Pistell interviewed him at the program
 - 3. 250 people attended
 - iv. New Library and Community Center
 - 1. Town issued an RFQ for an architect to design the building
 - 2. Responses are due by the end of the month
 - 3. Selection will be made by the end of the year
 - v. Children's Partnerships
 - 1. School visits to Whiting Lane, Norfeldt's Family Picnic, Bugbee's Reading Under the Stars.
 - 2. American School for the Deaf Partnership
 - a. Families birth-3 joined in story time with an ASL interpreter
 - b. Looking for ways to expand this partnership
 - 3. Children's Reading Partners
 - a. Working with the Children's Reading Partners, part of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford to offer reading mentors for weekly 30-minute sessions at the library
 - vi. Staff Day
 - 1. Staff met to discuss the strategic plan, hold department meetings
 - 2. The opportunity to gather without distractions or interruptions is greatly appreciated
 - vii. Recruitment

1. The Librarian II position, Head of Circulation Services, is currently being recruited because Ann Marie Salerno will be retiring in January.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: The Library Board Meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:43 pm. The next scheduled Board Meeting is scheduled for November 27, 2023 and will be virtual. The January meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held in person.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Cohen
Board Secretary

Library Financials - October 2023 (Period 4)
General Fund

Description	Period Actuals	YTD Actuals	Original Budget	Available Budget
Personnel	\$205,014.31	\$806,943.85	\$2,752,294.00	\$1,945,350.15
Non-Personnel	\$45,521.93	\$275,979.86	\$652,637.00	\$376,657.14
Sundries	\$14,297.85	\$56,152.27	\$206,828.00	\$150,675.73

October 2023 Administrative Report

Library Statistics

Here are some noteworthy stats about library services:

- Faxon's attendance went up 34% in October this year when compared to October last year! Overall, attendance at Faxon is up 11% this calendar year when compared to 2022.
- This past quarter of adult reference desk stats (July - September 2023) was the highest quarter in 3.5 years, with the last busier quarter occurring pre-Covid (October - December 2019).
- For the 3rd month in a row - Bishops Corner had 190 deliveries to the holds lockers! Through September, we have completed a total of 1,615 locker deliveries. The total for all of 2022 was 1689 so we are certain to far surpass that number in 2023. We also now have 259 registered locker users.

Strategic Plan

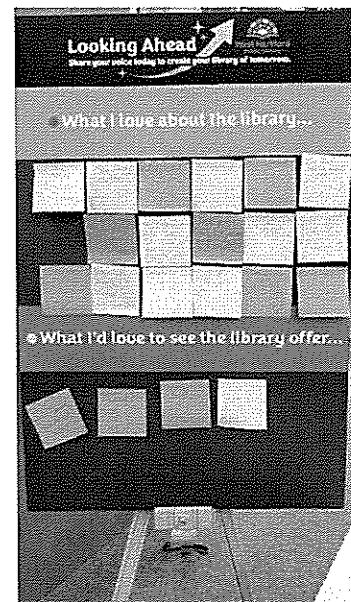
For the month of October, Community Engagement was the primary focus for the strategic planning team. The amazingly talented Programs & Publicity Department helping the planning team create a tagline and branding scheme that brought attention to our efforts and encouraged a lot of participation from the community.

Patrons and non-library users had many ways to participate in our initiative, *Looking Ahead: Share Your Voice Today to Create Your Library of Tomorrow*. We held 3 community meetings, had comment boards at all library locations and Town Hall, and hosted an online survey that garnered 1,250 responses. The Library Board had a thoughtful discussion on the mission of the library and dreamed of their ideal library of the future. Library staff participated in an invigorating brainstorming session about their future library at fall staff day.

The Strategic Planning Team is hard at work analyzing all the feedback collected through the Community Engagement phase and starting to turn everyone's hopes and dreams for our library into a cohesive roadmap for the next 3-5 years. The draft strategic plan is expected to be completed in December.

Several media outlets covered the strategic plan announcement:

- [West Hartford Public Library seeking public input for new strategic plan aimed to improve services \(CT Insider\)](#)
- [West Hartford Public Library Asking for Input for Strategic Planning \(we-ha.com\)](#)
- [Let WeHa Library System Know What You Think \(Patch\)](#)

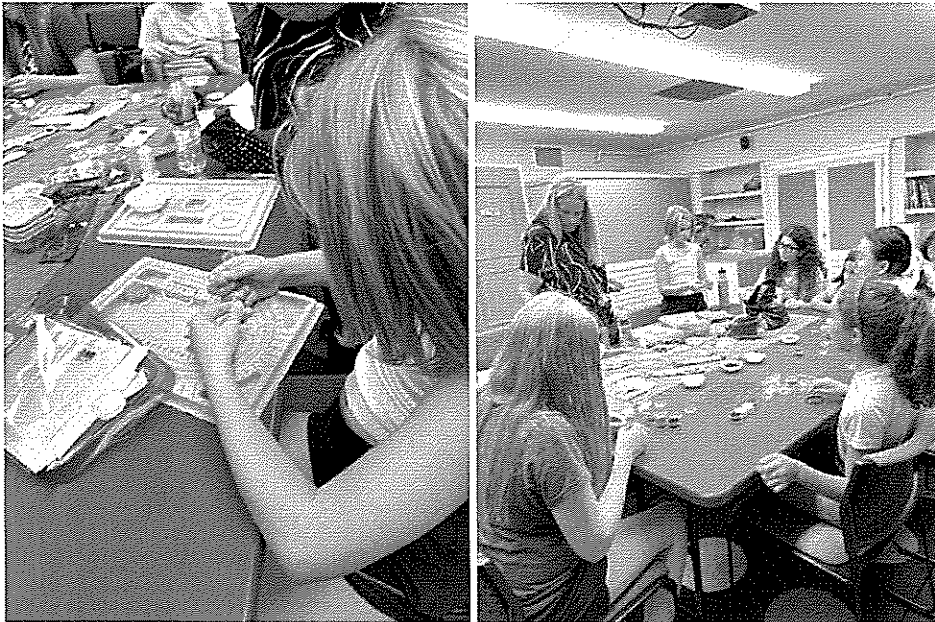


West Hartford READS

This year's West Hartford Reads program was a great success. Nick Hornby came to town for our event and started his day at the Fox 61 studio for an in-person interview with superfan Matt Scott. The event was held at King Phillip Middle School's auditorium and we had over 250 people in attendance. At this year's event, podcaster and producer Julia Pistell interviewed Hornby on his latest book, the impact of his work, and his Connecticut connection from his youth. After the interview there was an engaging Q&A session, and Hornby stayed until the last book was signed at nearly 10pm. Thank you to Andrew Piro and the rest of the staff who coordinated this wonderful program.

Indigenous Peoples Celebration

The library coordinated with the Town's Office of Equity Advancement for a week of programs celebrating Indigenous Peoples history and culture. A Native American Beading Workshop for students in Grades 3-6 was held on the afternoon of October 4 in celebration of Indigenous Peoples Day 2023. Participants created a beaded bracelet or necklace.



Marcie Rendon is considered one of the top ten Native American authors in the country and the library was lucky enough to get her for a virtual author talk. She gave an hour-long talk with a very large question and answer period to 35 attendees.

The Thunderbird Native American Dancers, founded in 1963 by a group of ten Native American men and women whose mission is to pass down information about North American Indian culture through dance and song, made a return appearance in celebration of Indigenous Peoples Day 2023 at the First Church Auditorium. The troupe was founded to keep alive the traditions, songs and dances they had learned from their parents and to travel throughout the

continental U.S. performing for groups of children and adults. Children participated in the show and the audience.



Recent Media

Follow the links below for recent media coverage about the library's programs and services.

[Lead Paint/Vaccines Topic of WeHa Health Program At Library \(Patch\)](#)

Staff Updates

Staff Day

On October 19, library staff gathered at the Noah Webster Library for our fall staff day. We had a lively discussion about the strategic plan, our mission statement, and what we would like to see in our library of the future. We also broke into groups for department meetings, crowned Leslie our trivia winner, and covered a variety of topics in our general Q&A. Thank you to the Professional Development Committee for planning this great event.

November GOAT – Jae Douglas

This month, Barbara has passed the goat to Jae Douglas! For those of you who don't know, Jae is Head of Collection Services and before that she was Head of Circulation. She's been with us over 15 years and, in that time, has always displayed a knack for bringing about positive change and improvements to the library. She played an integral part in expanding library services in the form of Study 20 South and the study pod. She's also Chair of the staff Kilfoil Committee and even ran the Needlecrafters for a Cause group in which patrons knitted/crocheted/quilted blankets that were then donated to children in need through the Project Linus organization.



Community Engagement & Outreach

The Children's Librarians have been invited to evening school events at most of the elementary schools this year. Our goal is to attend events at each of the eleven elementary schools. This week, Carol visited Whiting Lane for a Reading Under the Stars Event and Ellen went to Bugbee for their special event with assistance from Bugbee alumnus, Colin. Other events are planned for November and April.

Pramod was invited as a guest speaker to talk about various library services and resources at the Rotary Club of West Hartford.

Ellen attended a meeting of the West Hartford School Readiness Council as the librarian representative. The group meets several times per year to discuss CT State-funded early childhood programs in town and how some grant funds are allocated. Members include the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment; the Department Supervisor of Early Childhood Education; a health representative; business owner; parent rep, and others.

Pramod attended and facilitated the West Hartford Human Rights Commission monthly meeting. Pramod is also on the WHHRC outreach and program committee. The program committee is planning for the celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, scheduled to be at the WH Town Hall on January 17, 2024, from 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm. Pramod will be signing individuals to read the articles of the UDOHR in various languages.

Laura attended an event at Whiting Lane School representing the library for a Back-to-School Community Celebration for West Hartford families to kick off a new school year. A DJ as well as games and activities, and community members who can help with services and resources as