



Attendance: P. Dembe, Chair; D. Allie; C. Arlene; J. Chizick-Agüero; J. Cooper; M. DiBerardinis; T. Dichter; G. Generals; A. Gupta; R. Heim; S. Simons; J. Soroko; J. St. Geme; B. Sutherland; E. Tomlin

Guests: I. Ackelsberg; G. Adesanya; D. Wilson; Press from WHYY and KYW

Staff: S. Reardon; J. Benford; D. Dreher; N. Eddy; K. Foti; C. Kowalski; D. Henderson; S. Moran; A. Nurkin; J. Pecora; L. Walker; J. Wilson

I. Call to Order / Chair’s Remarks – P. Dembe

P. Dembe called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. and welcomed the Board and press.

II. Consent Agenda – P. Dembe

P. Dembe pointed out increased staffing is supporting six-day service well along with noting library closures are mostly due to building issues, which are typically a result of long-term deferred maintenance due to budget limitations.

She then called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was made, seconded, and carried.

III. Library Services Committee – P. Dembe

P. Dembe stated discussion on fine elimination began a couple of years ago, but in order to appropriately address the manner, more research was needed because at the time no large public library system had done so. Throughout discussion on the matter, she further shared, concerns over the financial impact have been expressed as fine income supports certain Library operations along with concern over whether or not more items would be lost or stolen. However, she stated, when Chicago Public Library recently eliminated fines, they received a significant amount of items believed to be lost, and also, with this news, City Council members advocated for the Free Library to follow in Chicago’s path.

P. Dembe went on to state 14% of the Free Library’s cardholders are barred from access to materials due to fines, and of this percentage, she shared, 26% are severally impacted by economic hardship. She explained fine elimination is an equity and a social justice issue and doing so supports the Library’s strategic plan.

She noted a recent fine amnesty day held at the 100th anniversary of Kingsessing Library received positive feedback with many expressing the elimination of fines makes the library more welcoming and has the potential to increase library visits.

P. Dembe concluded by stating her recommendation to the Board is to approve the fine elimination policy.

S. Reardon, then, acknowledged the Strategic Initiatives Department for their efforts in researching and developing this proposed policy.

T. Dichter inquired how many items have been lost due to fines. S. Reardon noted over 500K items have been categorized as “lost.” It was inquired if items are not returned once this policy is in effect, if there will be consequence, and S. Reardon clarified if an item is not returned, the customer will not be able to borrow additional items. It was then asked what the status of the Library’s obligation per the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide the City with \$276K each year from fine income. It was shared the Mayor has given “his word” that the \$276K, which is returned to the Library via the annual budget, will remain in the Library’s annual budget, and so, the MOU will be revised.

P. Dembe shared implementation of the fine free policy will take time since the Library’s integrated system, SIRSI, which handles the circulation and cataloging functions, needs to be modified and staff needs to be informed and trained as well. Additionally, S. Reardon noted the fine free policy impacts three other policies, and so, those need to be revised as well.

J. Soroko stated it would be best to have the revised MOU established before voting on the new policy. However, P. Dembe noted the City is acting in “good faith.” D. Wilson of the Managing Director’s Office also stated the Library’s elimination of fines is part of a larger City initiative to have all City agencies and departments eliminate or equitably adjust their respective fines and/or fees, and so, the \$276K will remain.

S. Simons asked when the policy would officially be enacted since implementation is still in progress, and S. Reardon shared there is an internal anticipated date, but the Library needs to ensure all matters are handled before promoting this date to the public. It was asked if the motion to approve the policy should be delayed until the policy is ready to be put into effect. S. Reardon further explained all needed work related to this is in progress, and so, approval should not be delayed.

P. Dembe then called for a motion to approve the fine elimination policy. The motion was made, seconded, and approved.

IV. Buildings Committee – P. Dembe

P. Dembe stated the condition of the Library’s buildings impact operations. The cost of new roofs and HVAC systems are very expensive, she explained, and the Library has a very limited budget. Additionally, she noted the buildings have been significantly impacted by years and years of deferred maintenance, and so, limited funding to properly handle issues keeps the Library from improving buildings as needed along with routinely maintaining them.

J. Pecora reiterated the deferred maintenance of the buildings causes the Library to be in a constant reaction mode. He then shared a list of repairs and costs, highlighting the following:

- Replacement of chimney liner at the Falls of Library Schuylkill: estimate of \$25K
- Window replacement at Nicetown- Tioga Library: \$8K
- Biohazard cleaning of plumbing pipes at Kensington Library: \$5K - \$10K
- Roof replacements
 - Ramonita de Rodriguez: \$350K
 - Kensington Library: \$322K
 - Fox Chase Library: \$463K

He shared the Library requested \$5M in Capital funding per year over the next five years to rectify building issues, such as roof and HVAC replacements. He noted this funding does not include the operating budget, which was increased to \$1M for FY20.

J. Pecora shared there are multiple vacancies among buildings and operations staff, which also impacts the Library, and so, the importance of highly skilled trade staff was discussed along with need for adequate staffing.

J. Pecora also shared a plan to activate all Library Rebuild sites, which he noted are only 20% of the Library's portfolio, is in progress in order to address building issues as needed. For instance, the Library received Rebuild funding to replace the roof at Fishtown Library.

V. Strategic Plan Oversight Committee – A. Gupta

A. Gupta shared at each meeting, the Committee reviews each goal's indicators to ensure accurate and relevant tracking of progress is made. He explained a new indicator regarding youth literacy activities was created to better track the goal of "Build a Culture of Literacy." He also mentioned another indicator focused on the work of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEIC) and of the Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee (DISC) will be added with regard to the "Promote Diversity and Inclusion" goal.

VI. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee – C. Arlene

C. Arlene shared the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEIC) has met a number of times to work on the draft progress report of the Library's efforts and work. He shared the hearing with the City Council Legislative Oversight Committee went well and their feedback will be incorporated into the report and plan. Furthermore, he shared, the Committee plans to have the report finalized by February 2020.

D. Allie inquired about the City Council's feedback and C. Arlene shared one suggestion was for the Library to work with the Human Rights Commission and to use other City-related resources.

S. Reardon stated on the upcoming Monday, three DEI related consulting firms are scheduled to present their proposals to members of the DEIC, DISC, and the Executive Staff.

VII. Chair's Remarks – P. Dembe

P. Dembe reminded Board members to utilize the Board portal, BoardEffect. She also shared the annual gala will be held on Saturday, December 14th and the *One Book, One Philadelphia* kickoff is scheduled for January 22, 2020.

She then shared the sale of the Automobile Reference Collection (ARC) was announced in the press as it is being reviewed by the Orphan's Court currently.

VIII. President's Report – S. Reardon

S. Reardon began by thanking D. Dreher and P. Nalle with their efforts in the sale of the ARC and shared the proceeds will directly support the Library's special collections.

She then asked A. Nurkin to discuss the Library and its efforts to support Census 2020.

A. Nurkin stated the Library is supporting Census 2020 in a number of ways. He shared a 1% undercount has the potential to result in a loss of \$5M in funding. With this in mind, he explained the Library will provide digital access to the census as it will be available online primarily now; the Library will use its standing as a trusted institution, especially in hard-to-count communities, to provide information to residents along with holding Census Action Days; and the Library will host Census employment job fairs.

S. Reardon then shared the Melville and Whitman exhibition is on display in the West Gallery of the Parkway Central Library.

Additionally, she stated the Library is currently preparing its budget proposal for FY21 and more details will be shared in the future.

R. Heim asked for an update on the Rosenbach. D. Dreher shared the Rosenbach's Melville exhibit celebrates his 200th birthday and highlights many pieces from the collection as the Rosenbach has the largest Melville-related collection in the country. He further shared the spring programs will be announced shortly, and will include events with the new poet laureate and Yolanda Wisher.

D. Allie asked if there will be a holiday wish list for the neighborhood libraries as there has been in years past. S. Reardon shared the wish list is being handled differently in order for there to be equitable distributions among neighborhood libraries, and so, holiday gifts will be placed in a general fund/

IX. New Business – P. Dembe

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.