



Free Library of Philadelphia | Board of Trustees Meeting  
September 24, 2020 | 8:00 AM – 9:30 AM | Virtual

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

Staff: L. Walker; J. Benford; D. Edwards; D. Henderson; C. Kowalski; S. Moran; A. Nurkin; J. Pecora

**I. Welcome – P. Dembe**

P. Dembe called the meeting to order at 8:00AM and welcomed the Board of Trustees.

**II. Consent Agenda – P. Dembe**

P. Dembe called for the approval of the consent agenda. The motion was made, seconded, and carried.

**III. Director's Report – L. Walker**

L. Walker began sharing she is honored to be serving as Interim Director and recognizes there is much work to do, but progress will be made.

L. Walker shared safety is at the forefront of the Library's reopening. She noted the first phase of reopening included twelve libraries and the second phase included eight, and so, currently right now twenty are open. She also noted fifteen libraries are also providing curbside service, which is materials pick-up and drop-off. She went on to share the Library has four locations serving as access centers for students.

Additionally, she noted thirty-six libraries will be polling sites during the upcoming election. She stated the Library is meeting with the City Commissioner consistently on this.

L. Walker also shared the City is currently paying close attention to Covid-19, the budget, and the election, and with regard to the Commonwealth, she noted the budget for December 2020 through June 2021 still needs to be approved, and so, the status of how this could impacting the Library is still an unknown.

With regard to other updates, L. Walker shared she is focusing on improving communication and is meeting with staff and visiting sites regularly.

P. Dembe asked if there is an operating plan for the access centers. J. Benford noted there is no finalized operating plan for the sites yet, but the current draft is rather comprehensive.

P. Dembe inquired about the Library budget and if any funds would be reallocated. L. Walker shared as of now the budget is set; however, she noted the importance of the Trustees advocating for the Library

budget. She also stated that although the City is under a hiring freeze, they approved funding for the Library to hire municipal guards and library facility guards.

P. Dembe shared G. Generals asked if there has been any communication with the Concerned Black Workers (CBW). L. Walker stated members of CBW served on the search committee for the interim director and are serving on Diversity and Inclusion Steering Committee. She also shared she would continue to reach out to them and to forge a continued dialogue.

P. Dembe asked about a letter from CBW regarding the Library's Author Events. A. Nurkin stated CBW issued a letter regarding the upcoming series for the fall. He shared the letter was helpful in that it indicated ways in which authors who wish to appear with the Library can demonstrate their solidarity with the CBW. He noted this is a positive development and is really grateful that it was communicated and that the Library is moving forward with the series.

Lastly, P. Dembe shared D. Edwards will be serving as interim CEO for the Free Library Foundation.

#### **IV. Buildings and Rebuild Update – J. Pecora**

J. Pecora shared the he and his team has been visiting libraries to prepare them for reopening and they also are doing follow-up visits. He stated overall, 110 site visits have been completed. He noted the Library has secured a contract with a moving company as furniture needs to be removed to ensure safe social distancing. Furthermore, he shared the Library secured a cleaning contract. He also shared HVAC improvements are being made through the upgrading filters and handling ventilation issues.

Also, he stated the elevator at Blackwell Regional Library needs its inspection and he is working to have it expedited.

With regard to Rebuild, eleven of the twelve sites have various levels of activity occurring.

#### **V. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee – C. Arlene and S. Olanipekun-Lewis**

S. Olanipekun-Lewis shared the Committee's draft action plan is in the process of being finalized and she is recommending a joint meeting of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors, so it can reviewed

She also noted the Trustees and Directors are participating in trainings facilitated by DiverseForce which will be scheduled for late fall. Other updates included the addition of two Library staff members to the Committee; DiverseForce has shared their draft report and it is to be reviewed by the Committee shortly; and the interviews for the DEI Officer position are in progress with a panel of Library stakeholders whom will submit three candidates to L. Walker for consideration.

#### **VI. Strategic Plan Oversight Committee – C. Arlene**

C. Arlene shared the Committee meet last week and they are focusing on determining a process for a short-term plan since the Library is in a period of transition with the search for a permanent director to begin soon, and the current plan is due to expire at the end of the fiscal year.

**VII. Search for Permanent Director Committee – P. Dembe**

P. Dembe shared R. Heim would be serving as Chair for the Committee. R. Heim stated the first step is identifying funding to hire a search firm. He shared S. Olanipekun-Lewis would be serving as Co-Chair as well.

S. Olanipekun-Lewis stated the Committee will be seeking to have a hiring panel that encompasses an equitable representation of Library stakeholders.

P. Dembe asked for any Trustees interested in participating on the Committee to reach out to her or R. Heim.

**VIII. Public Comment – P. Dembe**

Linda Colwell-Smith of the Free Library Friends organization stressed the importance of their work, especially with the neighborhood libraries and advocating for increased funding. She also congratulated L. Walker on her new position as interim director. P. Dembe thanked L. Colwell-Smith and the larger Friends organization for their work in supporting the Library.

**IX. New Business – P. Dembe**

E. Tomlin asked with the Library reopening, especially to the public, if there is a contingency plan in place in the event of the Library needing to close again and if the Library is offering any testing to its staff in order to ensure safety.

L. Walker shared all City affiliated employees must complete a health screener before beginning an in-person shift, and depending on responses, the employee may be informed to not report to work along with taking other measures. She also shared the City has contact tracing efforts in place.

Additionally, L. Walker shared the Library has secured a contract for a cleaning company which will support sanitizing efforts. She also shared the Library is following guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control, the State, and the City along with guidelines from national library organizations.

E. Tomlin asked if the Library will provide onsite testing for staff and if there is any medical support onsite for staff along with precautions for the access centers. L. Walker explained there is no plan to bring in health professionals for testing, but she noted the City has a plan for the students participating in the access centers which include temperature checks.

P. Dembe informed staff who wanted to further discuss the search committee for the permanent director to reach out to R. Heim.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:54 AM.