



Attendance: A. Appulingam; J. Chizick-Agüero; J. Benoliel; J. Cooper; P. Dembe; D. Generals; D. Gould; J. St. Geme; R. Heim; J. Hinckley; D. Moore; F. Olanipekun-Lewis; S. Simons; M. Stitt; E. Tomlin; L. Walke

Staff: K. Richards; D. Cottman; C. Patton; J. Pecora; S. Pollie; C. Ryder; G. Sims; P. Suero;

I. Call to Order and Chair’s Remarks – F. Olanipekun-Lewis

F. Olanipekun-Lewis called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. and welcomed the Board of Trustees. She stated the public meeting is being recorded and will be posted online per City Ordinance noting participation in the meeting constitutes consent thereto and posting online complies with 65 Pa. C.S. §§709(c.1), 712.1.

F. Olanipekun-Lewis welcomed two new board members, Dr. Lisa Walke and Julia Hinckley. F. Olanipekun-Lewis acknowledged K. Richards’ efforts to build relationships with Mayor Kenney, City Administration and City Council yielding positive results. The goal to reactivate standing committees and begin the strategic planning process for fiscal year 2023 was delayed due to focus on the Library’s fiscal state and working to achieving stable, five day service.

II. President and Director Remarks – K. Richards

Info Item: President and Director Report

K. Richards shared that the Library began the school year by hosting the Youth Poet Laureate press conference. The Philadelphia Poet Laureate, Mayor Kenney and others joined in celebrating Telicia Darius as our 2022-2023 Youth Poet Laureate.

K. Richards also met with representatives of the Friends of the Free Library to discuss collaboration opportunities and to thank them for their unwavering support.

P. Suero joined the Free Library as the First Deputy Director/Chief Administrative Officer shortly after the September Trustees meeting. Prior to joining the Free Library, Priscilla served as the Director of Administration for the Office of Children and Families (OCF).

The executive team of the Free Library continues to meet with Mayor Kenney monthly to provide progress updates on plan to achieve stable, five day service and concerns.

As the Library heads into the budget call season, K. Richards will reach out to each Councilmember to share our operational plans and goals for the remainder of FY23 and FY24.

The budget transfer ordinance process is completed. The Free Library received:

- \$3.4 million to purchase new public and staff computers

- \$415,000 to support temporary staff for our HR department until their full-time Civil Service vacancies are filled.

City Council also approved \$10 million in additional capital funds, bringing our total budget increase to \$26.4 million for FY23.

K. Richards is working with the Executive Team to begin thinking about the strategic planning process, which is expected to begin in FY23 and continue through FY24. I hope this process will elevate my goals for the Library, including:

- Stable, consistent service including five day service with Saturday hours at all libraries
- Sustained early literacy programs
- Prioritizing safety and security to support climate challenges
- Rebuilding morale and fostering positive workplace culture

III. Action Item: Consent Agenda –

a. Minutes of the September 16, 2022 Board Meeting

F. Olanipekun-Lewis called for a motion to accept the consent agenda. The motion was made, seconded, and approved.

IV. Budget Briefing – P. Suero

Info Item: FY23 Operating Budget

P. Suero noted that there are no changes to the budget and highlighted the mid-year transfer funds received for temporary staff for the HR department until their full-time Civil Service vacancies are filled and for new public and staff computers.

F. Olanipekun-Lewis asked if a firm for the temporary staff has been identified. P. Suero replied that the Library is able to be added to an existing city contract and a scope is forthcoming.

E. Tomlin inquired about a timeline for staff hiring. P. Suero shared that this will be covered in the Hiring Status report later in the agenda.

P. Dembe asked if the Library has an expected date for the full complement of staff and P. Suero replied that the Library hopes to have new staff on-boarded by the end of the fiscal year.

V. Facilities Report – J. Pecora

Info Item: Info Item: Status Report

J. Pecora stated that Chestnut Hill is being addressed presently with a major renovation including full ceiling restoration, structural repairs, and lighting upgrade in the back half of the library

\$1.4 million in projects are forthcoming. The additional \$10 million in capital funds provided by the City will help with outstanding projects, 89% of which are HVAC or roof related. J. Pecora remarked that these funds greatly help the Library catch up, but will not fix all issue.

In-house renovations have been completed for the Nicetown Library, as well as Central Children's and the Central Newspapers.

Construction at Frankford begins in February. 1/3 of West Oak Lane is still in need of restoration.

Kingsessing and Paschalville have been cleared out and are ready for Rebuild renovation construction to start. Lawncrest and Blanche Nixon/Cobbs Creek will begin their Rebuild renovations in the second quarter of 2023.

Roof work at Richmond is forthcoming, as well as upcoming projects at Wynnefield and Cecil B. Moore.

E. Tomlin asked if J. Pecora has connected with community leaders about the basement area at Greater Olney Library, as J. Pecora mentioned previously that a lot of work is needed before that space can be useable. J. Pecora replied that Greater Olney needs a new roof first and that he is happy to set something up to listen to what is needed.

P. Dembe asked if the Library needs \$5 million - \$7 million in capital every year and J. Pecora confirmed. P. Dembe asked how many libraries are closed at a time due to building issues. J. Pecora replied that staffing usually closes buildings more than deferred maintenance but that can change with the current challenges. F. Olanipekun-Lewis stated that the Library will ask for additional resources for capital needs. J. Pecora said confirmation was received that the Library will receive more money in addition to the \$10 million but an exact amount has not been confirmed.

VI. Hiring Status – G. Sims

Info Item: Staffing Report

G. Sims projected that it will take a year to get to full staffing capacity. The priority is still stable, five day service. Hiring for Library Assistant 1 employees are in process, with interviews taking place on December 17.

A new Training and Development manager joined the HR team and will assist with onboarding new staff. Also, a new Safety Officer joined the HR team.

D. Gould asked for clarification about how the Library defines full capacity when 100% staffing will not happen due to retirements, separations, etc. G. Sims replied that full capacity is having the staff to open for the hours scheduled, even if a staff member is out. D. Cottman shared that librarian interviews are also occurring virtually.

J. Benoiel asked for projections and G. Sims agreed to prepare this for the Trustees. F. Olanipekun-Lewis echoed the request for projections and noted that Civil Service is a factor. R. Heim suggested deploying new hires to libraries in the most need.

P. Suero shared that hiring is contingent on Civil Service exam schedules and that the Library asks for exams to be prioritized. J. Hinckley shared that the Mayor's Office is having the same conversations with the Library's executive team to assess and assist with troubleshooting. D. Cottman replied that the

executive team is talking to staff about what they need to achieve equitable, stable five day service and acknowledged the support from the Mayor regarding the Library's needs.

VII. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) – G. Sims

Info Item: Quarterly Report

G. Sims reported that he is representing the Library in the city's first Racial Equity Cohort. Along with 10 other City departments, the members are working toward advancing racial equity in the city by identifying issues.

G. Sims is close to completing his branch visits, with two remaining.

Community conversations will continue in 2023. The December conversation consisted of a "fireside chat" with K. Richards, where the vision for DEI at the Library was discussed at length.

Senior leadership received training through Temple University a few days prior to this meeting. G. Sims stressed that utilizing training to ensure that leadership on the same page is important as the Library moves forward.

G. Sims shared that the execution and action of DEI initiatives will occur this year and training for all staff will be held by June.

VIII. Standards of Acceptable Behavior – F. Olanipekun-Lewis

F. Olanipekun-Lewis explained that the Standards of Acceptable Behavior were reviewed by a committee within the Library and that the document governs how the public should act in our buildings to maintain a safe environment. P. Dembe inquired if the unions are on board with the Standards of Acceptable Behavior. G. Sims replied that he served as the chair of the reviewing committee and the members represented all stakeholders, including union members. The document was also reviewed by the DISC committee.

J. Hinckley asked if calling the police is the current practice for going against the Standards of Acceptable Behavior. G. Sims responded that the Library's goal is not to call the police but it is sometimes necessary. D. Cottman added that the current policy states that if a patron is non-compliant, the police may be called.

F. Olanipekun-Lewis called for a motion to approve the updated Standards of Acceptable Behavior. The motion was made, seconded, and approved.

IX. Public Comment - J. Chizick-Agüero

J. Chizick-Agüero stated each speaker will have three minutes to speak on agenda topics and once time is up they will be informed and the next speaker will be called.

Linda Colwell-Smith, Interim Co-Chair of the Friends of the Free Library stated:

“Thank you for the opportunity to speak for folks who don't know me i'm Linda Calwell smith interim co-chair of the Friends of the Free Library. And first off I'd like to thank you for the opportunity. It's good to see everybody again. We're celebrating a very, very successful year. And we're planning for 2023 right now. While we're still building our advocacy platform, we are focusing on what our communities want, and we are speaking to community members in every branch across the system. One main focus, though, is building maintenance so long. We've agreed with Jim Pecora. We really need more money to bring the buildings up to date and for maintenance. Especially, we're concerned about McPherson, Branch, Chestnut Hill and Chestnut Hill. Other concerns we've heard is a lot of folks want the Saturday hours back, so we're very encouraged to hear about the hiring...the hiring progress and the emphasis on 5 day service. We'd also...and the emphasis on Safety. That is a growing concern.

We'd like to congratulate Director Kelly Richards, for being named one of 2022's Most influential Philadelphian. Congratulations, Kelly, for being a strong advocate for our library system. And on behalf of all the members of the Friends of the Free Library, I would like to wish the Board and all of the Free Library administration and staff a happy holiday, and a very healthy and productive 2023.

Emma Rackshaw stated:

Hi everybody. So I just want to preface my quick comment with the fact that this is coming from a place of love and concern for the Free Library. So I'm, hoping to better understand what the sort of underlying issue is with the severe staffing shortages that are affecting... it sounds like a lot of branches, although I'm most familiar with the Philadelphia City Institute branch. So it sounds like it's notthat there is a lack of funding for hiring. It's not that it's difficult to hire at the prevailing wage. It's not that branches are being phased out. Rather it sounds like it's the Civil Service hiring requirements that are just taking a very long time, but it'd be helpful to know if there's sort of other underlying issues. The PCI location is, you know, by far the closest location for a big chunk of people who either live or work in Center City this week. It was only open 2 days for a handful of hours, so every time I've gone to try to pick up a book I have on hold in the past couple of weeks, I've arrived to discover it closed. First on I think it was a Friday. Then it was a Tuesday that it was Wednesday. And so i'm curious it. It sounds like the branch probably will not be functional again for a year. It sounds like that's when hiring will have caught up. So it would be helpful to better understand sort of when things will feel more normal and if it's at all possible at minimum in the meantime to keep it open.

You know a regular set of days or hours, week to week to the extent possible. And more generally, it'd be helpful to know if library patrons can do anything to help with the underlying issues.

X. New Business – F. Olanipekun-Lewis

E. Tomlin inquired about civics and citizenship lessons for the Library. R. Heim agreed and stated this is important to young people.

R. Heim asked for hours to be available to patrons. F. Olanipekun-Lewis replied that the schedule of hours is posted but staffing is thin and the Library is working toward stable, five day service. G. Generals

suggested taking a regional approach to provide a level of certainty to achieve five day service. D. Cottman replied that hours are a priority, but COVID and flu season have impacted service.

J. Chizick-Agüero asked for a clearer understanding of the fiscal and facility responsibilities that fall under the Library vs Parks and Rec. vs Rebuild.

XI. Adjournment

F. Olanipekun-Lewis called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made, seconded, and approved. The meeting adjourned at 10:02 a.m.