

THE TALBOT COUNTY FREE LIBRARY
100 W. Dover St.
Easton, MD 21601
Minutes of the Board Meeting
February 15, 2024

The meeting was called to order by Susan Sherman, President at 5:30 pm. Meeting held in St. Michaels.

Attendees: Susan Sherman, Charles Yonkers, Becky Amaral, Andrew Thaler, Ron Engle, Sue Regier, Pete Leshner, Talbot County Liaison, and Vivi Morris, Student Liaisons to the Board
Director, Dana Newman, Scotti Oliver, Assistant Director, and Shauna Beulah, St. Michaels Branch Manager represented the TCFL.

Guest: Julie Shaw, Page & Circulation Clerk Sub

Excused: Marlene Thomas, Mary Pellicano, Don Abatiello, Town of Easton, Robert Forloney, Van Tran, Student Liaison

Action Items:

- **Board members voted on and approved the January 18, 2024 minutes.**
- **Board members voted on and approved the Treasurer's Report: Income and Expense Statement and the Statement of Activities.**
- **Dana Newman will email to the board a template for letters of support for the Freedom to Read Bill.**
- **Board members were reminded that we do not have a board meeting in March.**
- **Dana will keep board members informed of the date & time for Budget presentations to the County Council.**
- **Instead of a retreat in March, a board training will happen this evening at 7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. via Zoom on "Book Lovers Bash: Public Libraries and Our Freedom to Read"**

Review of the January 18, 2024, Minutes: Susan Sherman asked the board if there were any changes or corrections. Hearing none, asked for a motion to approve with Sue Regier moving and Ron Engle seconding. All were in favor with none opposed. The motion carried.

Guest: Julie Shaw, Page & Circulation Clerk Sub

Julie explained to the board some of her background of working as a teacher at a Presbyterian pre-school and that she also had experience as a substitute teacher. She was hired at the library last October and enjoys her job of working at the Circulation desk and she has been helping out a lot at St. Michaels with their weeding of the collection. She also appreciates being able to have a schedule that allows her to still homeschool her daughter. Julie mentioned that she is very impressed with the library staff. With her work of homeschooling she relayed to the board that there are many homeschooling groups in the area and suggested there be a link on the library website for homeschooling resources. Dana told the board how much we appreciate Julie's contributions and that she does a great job. The board thanked Julie for her service.

Advocacy sharing:

Sue Regier shared that she went with Dana to Legislative Day in Annapolis and that it was very interesting to hear from Representatives.

Shauna Beulah also shared that she also went to Legislative Day and it was gratifying to know our representatives were listening to us.

Dana Newman added that we talked about the Resource Center and the Freedom to Read bill. Representative Chris Adams seemed supportive. Johnny Mautz and Chris Adams were very supportive of the St. Michaels expansion and renovation project. Dana shared that she doesn't see anyone voting against the capital request of 2.8 million.

Susan Sherman shared that she went to the CML meeting where there was strong advocacy for the Freedom to Read bill. She hoped it will pass. Dana mentioned that she will send the board a template for support letters.

Charlie Yonkers shared that he went to California recently to visit family and that his grandson did a paper on censorship. I sent the paper to Dana as it is amazing to see this topic as a national issue.

Becky Amaral shared that she is sending her class of 4th graders to the library to check out books.

Dana Newman also included that she recently spoke to TCPS media center specialists on library resources and had a good discussion about how the library can support the public school system. We talked about how we can come together to apply for grants for materials, such as Spanish materials.

Old Business: None

New Business:

Financial Policies needed review:

Dana explained to the board that over the next year we will be developing some financial policies to bring to the board such as accounting and audit policies; patron and other debts, etc. It is important to have these written down in case we are ever questioned. We will be looking at other library policies to help give us some guidance.

President's Report-Susan Sherman had just one item and that is a reminder that the board does not meet in March.

Treasurer's Report

Mary Pellicano was not present and so Dana Newman presented the two reports. Earlier, the finance committee reviewed the Income and Expense report & Statement of Activities and approved the documents. A few things to note:

Income & Expense:

- The library received from ESRL for 23/24 an amount of \$41,911.
- There is a difference in the amount of insurance from

- 23 and '24 due to the fact that we are anticipating paying a 2nd bill.
- The total for postage and delivery has increased to \$2,678. The reason for the increase spent is due to the rise in postage costs and the library is mailing out a lot more.
- There has been an increase in staff going to workshops and training in person so travel expenses are higher.
- To clarify an automation cost from ESRL. Last year, ESRL paid this bill, but this year the library will pay some of this.

Statement of Activities:

- Our gross profit reflects where we are with spending so far and it is at 54.1%.
- It was noted that we are at 57.3% of total salaries and total payroll expenses are at 54%.

Susan Sherman made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report with Andrew Thaler moving and Ron Engle seconding. All approved and none opposed. The motion carried.

County Council Representative's Report- Pete Lesher had nothing to report other than he was just at a Public Works Advisory Board meeting where they talked about the St. Michaels project. We will have to wait to hear back.

Easton Town Council Representative's Report –Don Abatiello was not present and had no report.

Librarian's Report-Dana Newman highlighted a few key items:

- We have received an anonymous grant of \$10,000 which will be put toward the St. Michaels expansion and renovation project.
- We have a donor interested in a naming opportunity and so we will have more information about that later.
- Shore United bank is offering a positive pay service that helps prevent check fraud. The library will be signing up for this.
- The Library just migrated to Microsoft Outlook 365 and so staff are learning about this new software.
- We just put down a \$500 deposit at the old Y location in St. Michaels to reserve our place to rent. This would be a good location for the temporary location of the St. Michaels library.
- Amy Wise has started a new program with the detention center. She is leading a book group-a women's group and a men's group.

Scotti Oliver also added that we have the *Kin* author program next Saturday (February 24th at 2pm) and encouraged board members to attend this event at the Avalon. The day before will have the St. Michaels 7th graders meeting the author, Carol Boston Weatherford and her son, and illustrator, Jeffrey Weatherford. She writes about her family history who are from Talbot County.

Diversity and Inclusion Committee- Charles Yonkers reported that the EDI committee met last month. He reported to the board that there are pointed attacks on EDI committees and that we have to be educated and aware of what is going on. Even with critics of EDI out there like Bill Ackerman, we need to understand that we are in an atmosphere where libraries, staff, etc. are doing the right thing but even having an EDI committee can be troublesome.

Teen Liaison's Report-Vivi Morris reported that she and Van Tran have a meeting with the Friends of the Library to ask for funding for STEAM summer camp. The camp will be offered in two sessions from 10-2pm and will

include lunch. They have a lot of volunteers to help. Vivi also reported that they just finished the Holiday book club.

Nominating Committee-Robert Forloney and Marlene Thomas were not present and so Susan Sherman reported that the committee has been in touch with a potential new member. We hope to be able to present their name at the April board meeting.

Friends' Report- Sue Regier reported that the Friends will be listening to the presentation about STEAM camp funding and are planning for the 50th Anniversary of the TCFL Friends and hope to have an event in May. We will have a table at the Fire and Ice Festival and Emilie has contacted the St. Michaels Christmas committee about the application process.

Sue also reported on the progress of the Development work group where we have heard from a few people who might want to give a gift to the St. Michaels expansion and renovation project. Sue relayed that she and Dana met with Jaime Windon at Lyons Rum who is very excited about the idea of having a Rum fundraiser. Jaime also graciously said there would be no charge.

Foundation Report- Dana Newman reported that the Foundation will meet next on April 18th so no report. Dana did share that Ralph Alexander, who recently just joined the board, is moving to a different state.

The board meeting officially closed at 6:45 p.m. where we had a short break before the Zoom training began at 7pm.

Reminder: Our next meeting will be on Thursday, April 18, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. in St. Michaels.

Respectfully submitted, Katie Dodds

7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

“Book Lovers Bash: Public Libraries and Our Freedom to Read”

Summary of Training

Reading, along with the liberty to choose what we want to read, is one of our greatest freedoms. Learn how public libraries champion and protect our right to read in a moderated panel discussion around censorship, access to information and intellectual freedom led by Baltimore County Public Library’s CEO, Sonia Alcántara-Antoine. Panelists include Joyce McIntosh of the American Library Association and the Freedom to Read Foundation, University of Illinois professor Emily Knox and attorney and Executive Director Nate Coulter of the Central Arkansas Library System. This program is part of our Book Lovers Bash, a month-long celebration of books, authors and reading.

Host welcomed the three panelists and said that we will be exploring the idea that libraries allow you to think for yourself; censorship challenges and the role of public libraries in your freedom to read.

Emily Knox

- *setting the groundwork for understanding intellectual freedom. Our freedom of expression is a broad term. We have the press, religion and we also have the right to seek and receive information.
- *Censorship is oppression; suppress ideas found dangerous
- *We all have the right to information; First Amendment in the US; freedom of speech is codified in the Constitution.
- *allows for human dignity; being their full self; autonomy comes up when you talked about book banning.
- *books show us who we are
- *several things are lost when you ban a book: lose the ability to learn about others. Libraries are key in providing this knowledge.

Joyce MacKintosh

- *2001-2020 we saw about 400 book challenges per year. All of a sudden, this doubled to 1,000 and more in 2022.
- *Challenges used to be one or two patrons with a concern and now we see organized groups and legislation trying to censor.
- *Every library worker & volunteer need to be prepared.
- *There are resources that can help such as United Against book bans; ALA has resources also.
- *local citizens can make a difference
- *It is helpful for libraries to report what books or materials are being challenged.

Nate Coulter

*A statute was passed in our state:

*Availability provision-up to one year in jail if someone gives a book deemed inappropriate to a youth.

*Challenge provision-request for re-distribution; entails taking authority and giving it to elected officials.

*On a hopeful note, even a state like Arkansas where a survey was taken showing 83% were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with public libraries.

*It is important to show people all the other things libraries do and if someone doesn't like a few books, look at all the other things going on in the library, such as events, training, programs and more.

Joyce MacKintosh continued:

*Censorship practices, the 4 "R's":

Removal: when a book is banned.

Redacted: a book uses bad words or has nudity

Restriction: book is kept behind a desk or counter

Relocation: not a book for youth but for the adult section

*There is a shift in where challenges are happening-they are now in public libraries where they used to be in school libraries. Censorship isn't just in a particular state – it is everywhere.

*Preparation and community involvement is so important and having policies in place is key.

In closing they offered these tips:

*funding is key

*using power over others is not just

*write your legislators

*encourage youth to go to the library

*unite against banned books

*role playing when you are challenged

*You are not alone

*look for allies