



BILLINGS PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

September 8, 2022
12:00 p.m.

Board and City Staff present:

David Darby, Chair
Staci Samuelson
Gavin Woltjer,
Library Director
Kelsie Rubich,
Info. Systems Coordinator

Andrea Horrell, Vice Chair
Trudi Paulson
Hannah Stewart-Freeman,
Assistant Director

Peggy McSweyn, via Zoom
Roger Young
Jamie Bratlie,
Library & Facility Coordinator

Absent:

Jennifer Smith

Cheryle Fisher

Guests:

Kenzie Lombardi, Foundation

PJ Smith, Genealogy Forum

Eric Benson, BPL Maintenance

Public Comment

None

Chair's Comments

Chairman Darby thanked Vice Chair Horrell for covering the August meeting in his absence and Director Woltjer for his assistance with the City Administrator comments. Darby said in recognition of the last three board chairs, the library has provided a cake for dessert.

Darby clarified that the Library Board has two committees – the strategic planning committee and the board development committee. A third, non-committee group, serves to keep the Board focused – for example, by creating the agendas.

Darby offered a reading recommendation: Abraham Lincoln's Lyceum Address. Lastly, Darby requested and asked for a motion/second to cover agenda items #5 and 6 first and then the rest of the agenda, excusing staff during Board discussion of item 7: director evaluation. Moved, seconded and approved.

McSweyn/Horrell

Consent Agenda

a. Motion and second to approve the August 2022 minutes. All in favor.

Mickelson/McSweyn

BPL/Mgmt Updates

- a) Meet the Staff: Eric Benson, Facilities Maintenance II. Bratlie introduced Mr. Benson and told the Board Benson has been with the library for 2 ½ years. He is a very compassionate person in regard to staff and patrons. He is dedicated and an exceptional worker who knows the building well. Benson gave an overview of the Facilities II job duties and the regular maintenance items that he and his partner manage.

Hannah Stewart-Freeman, Assistant Director: Stewart told the Board she will be leaving the BPL to pursue her love of Youth Librarianship. After her recent Story Time reading, her heart longed to be back with the children. She is honored to have been a part of the BPL team. The Board replied they are happy for her and will miss her.

Stewart said the Jamie Ford author program attracted 149 people. Every chair was out and occupied. Friday Night Fun is starting again – Back to School Bingo will be the first Friday Night highlight. MSUB Serving Saturday volunteers will come to the library on Saturday to do some weeding and outside cleaning. Next Saturday Adventures in Music will be all over the first floor of the library and in the Community Room. Kids will be able to touch and hear instruments and ask questions.

Kelsie Rubich, Information Systems Coordinator: Rubich expressed appreciation to Library Maintenance for the quarterly delivery and pickup of 300+ items at the Worden Sunnyside Library. September is the last month of the season for the bike library. It has been a very successful season for the volunteers riding the bike library. Rubich also noted the self-checks are up for replacement in October. Lastly, September is library card sign-up month. Again this year, there will be a raffle of five Kindles from all the new library card holders.

Jamie Bratlie, Library and Facility Coordinator: Bratlie told the Board the oculus hail repair will take place the week of September 19. It will only take a few days.

Gavin Woltjer, Director: Woltjer had fliers for Save the Date – City of Billings Boards and Commissions Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on October 25. He also had some updated pages for the Board's binders.

b) Foundation, FOL, YGF

Library Foundation, Kenzie Lombardi: Lombardi said the Royal Johnson Forum is next Wednesday. The luncheon to be held in the Community Room is sold out, but there are still tickets available for the reception at MSUB. The Foundation is very excited; there will be some great guest speakers.

Genealogy, PJ Smith: The Genealogy room had 22 visitors in August. Smith said the Forum is looking for a new meeting location as the Mormon Church recently said they can no longer meet there.

“Trust Me” documentary

Darby spoke to the Board regarding the “Trust Me” documentary. The link to the program is edited to one hour. Darby knows Rosemary Smith, who has been training people in Romania as they are having the same issues. He said the question is if the Board wants to sponsor a showing of the film. If so, he mentioned the possibility of open civil conversations with guest speakers such as former Billings’ mayor Chuck Tooley, former Billings Gazette editor Darryl Ehrlich, and Rosemary Smith who has already confirmed she would attend. There was a lengthy discussion including thoughts after watching the documentary. These thoughts included shock; concern that it could be inflammatory, especially in an election year; there are some very good points in the film, but what would be the Board’s role following the presentation; it is created content with an agenda behind it, therefore, the Library, as a neutral entity, cannot sponsor it; there is some good stuff, but it is polarized too; anything can be interpreted as

political, but cannot think of an issue where education is more important; and a library is a place where people come to be educated and to educate themselves. The majority of members present did not want to make a decision without first hearing the thoughts of the absent members as well. Following the discussion, Darby felt to shelf the idea for now. He mentioned speaking to other organizations to determine their interest in sponsoring the film.

Future Retreat

Woltjer gave the history of the Board retreat back to 2018. He noted it is historically held in the fall, as spring is a difficult time for Staff due to the budget process every spring. He asked if the Board has decided on a major focus. They replied they had discussed education: current challenges and trends libraries are facing. There was lengthy discussion whether to have a fall or spring retreat, or not have a 2022 retreat; instead add it to the calendar/agendas and begin planning for 2023.

Darby thought the Board needs to discuss new goals as well, so he proposed to add the retreat as the major discussion topic in October and add goals discussion to the November agenda. The Board agreed with his proposal.

Executive Session: Director Evaluation

The Board excused Staff while they discussed this agenda item.

Good of the Order

None

Adjournment