



BILLINGS PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

August 10, 2023
12:00 p.m.

Board and City Staff present:

Staci Samuelson, Vice Chair
Roger Young
Trudi Paulson

Susan Plath
Peggy McSweyn
Gavin Woltjer,
Library Director
Jaclynn Reaves,
Patron Services Manager

Lawrence Klee
David Darby
Kelsie Rubich,
Assistant Library Director
Jamie Bratlie,
Library & Facility Coordinator

Absent:

Jennifer Smith, Chair

Cheryle Fisher

Guests:

Debbie Willis,
Friends of the Library

Leslie Modrow, Billings
Library Foundation

Council Member Pam
Purinton

Public Comment

None

Chair's Comments

Vice Chair Samuelson shared a few thoughts following the July 10 meeting. She questioned whether anyone speaking in front of the Library Board would face possible public opposition before they speak as she felt occurred at the July meeting. Samuelson referenced the Board binder where it states the library will offer a balanced perspective of ideas. Woltjer explained to Samuelson and the Board that any meeting where a quorum of the board is present must be legally advertised. Public comment is always the first item of a meeting and each speaker may have 2 minutes. Woltjer asked the Board to reread their bylaws and then ask if they have any questions. Woltjer said, as the Director, he tries to be A-political and A-religious as the library serves all of Yellowstone County; people with different views, beliefs, etc. Samuelson stated the Board serves as advocates for the library.

Consent Agenda

- a. Motion and second to approve the May 2023 minutes with correction. All in favor.
Paulson/McSweyn

FY23 Board Report

Woltjer reminded the Board their report to Council is typically complete by the end of August and presented to Council in September. He said the report is a general overview of what the Board has done and/or accomplished in the past fiscal year. Darby stated since he was Chair for the first half of the year, he emailed his notes to current Chairperson Smith. As Smith is out of the country on vacation, Woltjer recommended the Board set up a deadline with a backup contingency plan if Smith is unable to put the report together in time. Discussion included compiling the report, keeping Smith in the loop via email,

and Samuelson agreed to step in if Smith is not available. The Board discussed their goals and combining the goals report into the annual report. McSweyn noted, in the past, the Board has mentioned completed goals in the annual report.

Conversation/Debrief July 10 Meeting

- a. Labeling books: Separating and labeling books by their content has been presented to Woltjer. Woltjer stated that while some bookstores do this, the library is not a bookstore. There was much discussion regarding this idea. McSweyn stated what she called a rhetorical question of who decides which books to separate. More than one board member said isolating specific books is a “slippery slope.” Darby stated his opinion that books with gun violence specifically could be stickered. The Board discussed the impossibility of distinguishing where to draw the line in labeling books by content. Darby inquired about the BPL’s acquisition policy and vetting materials. Woltjer referred him to the Library Policies that the Board votes on annually. Pages 24 – 30 explain the collection development process. Klee said Darby made a good point about violence. People are subjected to violence and questionable material everywhere – in the books they read, movies they watch, the news, etc. Comments from the July 10 meeting regarding parental responsibility were brought up a few times during the Board’s discussion. Klee continued his thought that parents can control content in their own home, but that control cannot transfer to the Community. McSweyn reminded the Board about the challenge system. She said decisions cannot be made on generalities.
- b. ALA partnership: Woltjer stated the Montana Library Commission has severed its partnership with the ALA in a recent vote of 5-1-1. Woltjer relayed the reason for this action from the MSL Commissioners stems from a Twitter (now known as X) post from ALA President Emily Drabinski stating her views of being a lesbian-Marxist. This decision by the MSL Commissioners does not alter the relationship the Billings Public Library (library) has with ALA. The library does not have an organizational membership with ALA; four (4) library staff members do have memberships. Woltjer reiterated that the library does not take directives from ALA, the Montana Library Association (MLA), or the Pacific Northwest Library Association (PNLA). The library will continue to strive to reflect the wants and needs of the citizens of Yellowstone County.

BPL/Mgmt Updates

- a. Jaclynn Reaves, Patron Services Manager: Reaves told the Board she is looking for volunteers to lead language groups. Her Spanish-speaking group is successful and she would like to expand with other languages. Samuelson inquired what the time commitment would be as she knows someone who speaks a foreign language fluently. Reaves said 1 – 2 hours a week, or that can be adjusted also.

Megan Thomas, Information Systems Coordinator: Thomas said book lockers #3 and #4 are in the works. Locker #3 is ordered, and Staff are currently working on the concrete pad at the Lockwood location. Staff is finishing the last details for Locker #4 placement at the Children’s Clinic on 32nd Street West (Zimmerman Trail). Thomas also said installation is scheduled for the new RFID gates next week.

Kelsie Rubich, Assistant Director:

Rubich told the Board this year’s Summer Reading was a success with the most participants ever. There were over 1,000 participants. Pre-readers (5 and under) read over 18,000 books,

kids and teens read over 12,000 hours, and adults read over 1,300 books. Plath said she has heard very positive comments regarding the library's programs.

Jamie Bratlie, Library and Facility Coordinator: Bratlie said the north door repair is progressing with a hopeful completion by the end of September. The scrim project award to Council is scheduled for August 14 with completion by the end of October. The parking lot reseal is pushed to next spring due to the scrim repair. Bratlie also told the Board the library is hiring for a new Facilities I position. This is a custodial position that will increase the Facilities I team to two, allowing the two Facilities II personnel to focus on the maintenance items in the aging library.

Gavin Woltjer, Director:

- If the Board would like to renew their MLA membership, send the invoice to Woltjer and the library will pay the renewal.
- Board shadowing: Thursday, August 17, 2:00 pm. If interested, let Thomas know.
- Master Gardners' programs have brought in over 1,000 people. The Seed Library is very popular.
- Woltjer provided the Board with a 2023 Legislative update/summary. He asked the Board to review it.
- Friday, Aug. 25: The library will close for the day for mandatory all staff training. Woltjer invited the Board to lunch and for the afternoon session of Safer Libraries. He asked the Board to RSVP to him. If a quorum is present, public notice will be advertised that no business will be conducted.

b. Foundation, FOL, YGF

Library Foundation, Leslie Modrow:

- Food for Thought this year sold out in less than a week, and Modrow said there were more tables than in previous years.
- Modrow announced she is retiring. Cody Rose has been hired in her place. He will come in on September 1, and a donor reception will be held on October 16 to introduce him.
- The Foundation continues to fund raise for the lockers.
- Sign up for One Book Billings (OBB) at the Reference desk. *Perma Red* is available now. Bernie Rose will continue funding OBB; however, Cindy Ostlund is the new coordinator for the program.

Friends of the Library, Debbie Willis:

- The Friends have a new brochure, and Willis brought a stack to share with the board.
- Friday, August 11 – Pop up sale for teachers. This sale consists mainly of children's books, priced at \$.25/ea. It will be in the lobby from 9:00 am – 2:00 pm.
- Saturday, August 19 – pop up sale.
- October 14 – 16 – big book sale in the Community Room. Thursday is members only preview. The Friends are always taking donations.

Genealogy, PJ Smith via email: The Genealogy room had 11 patrons in July. Volunteers are in the room Monday through Thursday, 1:00 – 3:00, and most Fridays.

Good of the Order (Discussion Only)

Plath commended the library for the Where's Waldo participation and the graphic novel art class. She said her grandson was very enthusiastic about both and commended Staff for their good work.

Council member Purinton thanked Director Woltjer for his leadership and thanked the Board for their service to the community. She also gave some pointers of what she appreciates in the Board report to the Council.

Samuelson thanked the Board for the open discussion at this meeting. She felt it was a great discussion.

Adjournment: 12:55 pm. Next proposed meeting: 9/14/2023

Paulson/Darby