

Nashville Public Library Board of Trustees
Minutes
June 16, 2020
WebEx - 12:00 noon

Members Present: Keith Simmons, Kate Ezell, Joyce Searcy, Katy Varney, Adriana Bialostozky, Robert Oermann, Charvis Rand

Library Staff: Kent Oliver, Bernadette Hugan, Andrea Fanta, Jena Schmid, Lee Boulie, Corey Frederick

Also Present: Derrick Smith, Assistant Metropolitan Attorney at Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Charda Johnson, Board Meeting Support from Metro ITS, Debbie Jackson, Metro ITS

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Keith Simmons called the meeting to order at 12:06 PM.

II. Metro Ordinance required to be announced at all Board Meetings

“Pursuant to the provisions of § 2.68.030 of the Metropolitan Code of Laws, please take notice that decisions of the Nashville Public Library Board may be appealed to the Chancery Court of Davidson County for review under a common law writ of certiorari. Any appeal must be filed within sixty days after entry of a final decision by the Board. Any person or other entity considering an appeal should consult with an attorney to ensure that time and procedural requirements are met.”

III. Motion to Approve Conducting Meeting by Electronic Means and Suspending Rules

Robert Oermann moved to approve conducting the meeting by electronic means and suspending rules; the motion was seconded by Joyce Searcy and passed unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes: May 19, 2020

Joyce Searcy moved for approval of the minutes from the May meeting; the motion was seconded by Katy Varney and passed unanimously.

V. Introduction of Kate Ezell, new NPL Board Member – *Keith Simmons*

Mr. Simmons congratulated Kate Ezell upon being appointed to one of the “plumb boards” of Metro government. He noted that it was an interesting time to serve on this board, and he welcomed the new board appointee.

VI. Board Re-Election of Vice Chair

- a. The Vice Chair position was left vacant due to Lucy Haynes not being reappointed to the board.
- b. Robert Oermann nominated and moved Joyce Searcy serve as Vice Chair; the motion was seconded by Katy Varney and passed unanimously.

VII. Library Director Report – *Kent Oliver, Library Director*

a. General Report

- i. NPL strives to determine the most meaningful data since the recent changes in service offered. Kent Oliver stated that the most significant statistics to review in the board packet were the amount of e-contacts. Overall circulation trends are down, which is to be expected. He is excited to see the continued success of virtual programming.
- ii. Developers of the Church Street Park, which sits across from the library, have received \$465,000 from the Historic Capitol Corridor Foundation. A portion of this grant will be used to support programming in commemoration of the passage of the 19th Amendment. A commemorative outdoor event in the park will take place in August.
- iii. Ms. Varney stated that there are still plans to host a virtual event to celebrate the opening of the Votes for Women Center at the Main Library. NPL has encouraged the community to get involved with the celebration through the “I Ring The Bell” campaign, which begins on July 9. The campaign asks participants to video themselves ringing a bell and stating the cause for which they are ringing. These videos will then be shared on social media. This campaign will culminate on August 18 with all of Nashville going outside to ring bells.
- iv. Ms. Searcy stated that universities throughout the city are planning to participate in this campaign.
- v. Ms. Varney noted that there has not been much contact between those involved in the Votes for Women project and those involved with planning the celebration in the park.

- vi. Mr. Simmons supported the idea of cooperating with the group in celebrating the passage of the 19th Amendment.
- vii. Mr. Oliver mentioned that NPL has applied for various CARES Act grants. In particular, NPL has applied for grants provided by Metro, the State and the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Monies from these grants will be used to help fund NAZA and Bringing Books to Life as well as to purchase hot spots, tablets, and flash drives to support MNPS.

b. Curbside Service Update

- i. Curbside services have been incredibly successful. In the first week alone, NPL has had over 4,000 unique patrons who took advantage of curbside service with almost 18,000 items checked out and over 30,000 holds placed. The reopening plan seems to be working well; NPL has reduced how long it will quarantine returned items from 5 to 3 days. This change will help NPL keep popular titles circulating and free-up quarantine space.
- ii. NPL's curbside video has gone viral and was included in the *New York Times* e-newsletter.
- iii. The current safety measures seem to be working well. These measures include taking each staff members' temperature when they enter library facilities, providing plenty of soap for washing hands, and keeping regularly used doors open to avoid repeated contact. There have been discussions about adjusting staff schedules to maintain social distancing.
- iv. Mr. Simmons asked what will be needed to move to Phase 2 of NPL's reopening plan.
- v. Mr. Oliver explained that there would have to be a decreasing trend in new virus cases. Moreover, additional PPE supplies and sanitation equipment are needed for staff. NPL has ordered these items, but currently there are not enough supplies on-hand to sustain opening locations. He noted his concern for the recent increases in COVID-19 cases in Tennessee.
- vi. Ms. Ezell commented about the pressure felt by the Mayor's Office to go to the next phase of their reopening plan. The mayor refuses to move to the next phase given the current trends with the virus.

- vii. Mr. Oliver stated that staff appear comfortable since coming back to work. Staff members are mindful of spreading germs, washing their hands, and social distancing. He also said that customers are closely following curbside service protocol.
- viii. Mr. Simmons asked about the number of onsite staff.
- ix. Mr. Oliver explained that NPL has as many staff onsite as possible, while still trying to maintain social distancing standards. Staff from smaller branches that are still closed, work at their corresponding regional library. Some staff members are currently on FMLA and others are working remotely.
- x. Mr. Simmons asked about conclusions that may influence the future of NPL's services.
- xi. Mr. Oliver described the difficulty in doing this now. However, he feels confident that virtual programming will be part of NPL's services moving forward. It is still undecided whether curbside service will continue to be a part of NPL's future. He mentioned constructing new branches with drive-up windows in preparation of potential outbreaks. NPL's eBook collection will only continue to grow. Mr. Oliver has heard from community members wanting to meet at the library but understands that some are hesitant to use a public space.
- xii. Mr. Oermann asked about classic civil rights literature in NPL's eBook collection.
- xiii. Mr. Oliver stated that many of those classics were available, and NPL staff have posted booklists on the website to direct customers to those materials.
- xiv. Ms. Searcy suggested adding streaming movies available through NPL to these lists.

c. Budget Update

- i. The Metro Council will work on the budget at tonight's meeting. Mr. Oliver noted the Council will decide between the Mayor's budget and a few other budgets submitted by Council members. NPL was asked to prepare an impact response for a potential targeted savings of \$265,000. This targeted savings continues to whittle away at the total number of library staff. Since 2018, NPL has lost 17 positions, and currently has 29 frozen positions, creating a loss of 46 total positions. With the additional savings, Mr. Oliver indicated that NPL would need to consider closing locations. He is concerned that if the library reduces its service hours, there would be substantial difficulty in retrieving those hours once staffing numbers rebound.
- ii. Mr. Simmons asked if the frozen positions were already lost.
- iii. Mr. Oliver stated that these positions were not yet lost.

- iv. Ms. Searcy remarked that the budget proposed by Council Member Mendes would open community centers on Saturdays, but it would not include anything additional for NPL.
- v. Charvis Rand asked about the number of libraries that would be closed, if NPL had to shutter some locations to meet the targeted savings.
- vi. Mr. Oliver replied that more planning would be needed to determine the number of closed libraries. NPL would consider differences in temporarily closing specific branches and rotating closures across the system. Rotating closures would be a more equitable way to plan closures throughout the city.
- vii. Adriana Bialostozky described COVID-19 hotspots throughout the city and asked if NPL had considered closing locations in those areas. She expressed concern that these are commonly underserved areas of the community.
- viii. Mr. Oliver stated that this had been considered. He also explained that budget savings could be met by keeping frozen positions open. These virus hotspots, most notably the area around the Southeast Branch Library, will be reconsidered when planning to move to Phase 2 of NPL's reopening plan.
- ix. Mr. Simmons agreed with the idea of rolling closures. He explained that the rolling closures, if necessary, should impact everyone and not just low activity branches in underserved areas. This could help apply pressure on the Council to make positive changes for NPL.
- x. Ms. Bialostozky supported this idea and commented that NPL will be needed to support MNPS's service to underserved populations.
- xi. Ms. Ezell stated that MNPS has plans to educate students through virtual means. She also commented that Council Member Welsch proposed a radically different budget to redirect police funds, providing \$4 million for the library.
- xii. Mr. Oermann emphasized the need for safety as NPL continues to look at reopening.
- xiii. Mr. Simmons explained that NPL is an essential service, and he hopes it will remain one, at least in Phase One.
- xiv. Mr. Oliver stated that NPL should know more about the budget within the next week.
- xv. Mr. Simmons asked about the possibility of having positions unfrozen and open for rehire.
- xvi. Mr. Oliver confirmed that the currently frozen positions could be unfrozen. In last year's budget, NPL froze 17 positions in order to make the required savings. Metro

Finance tried up the budget this year and NPL lost those 17 positions. Keeping the other vacant positions open, NPL could meet potential savings in the new budget. Cost savings would be derived from staff salaries, benefits, and other factors.

- xvii. Ms. Ezell asked if curbside service was spread throughout Davidson County or just in particular parts.
- xviii. Mr. Oliver replied that the service is spread throughout the county at NPL's regional libraries and at the Main Library. The Main Library has been NPL's least busy curbside location, but curbside services at other locations have been somewhat brisk.
- xix. Mr. Simmons asked about the general details of Phase 2 of NPL's reopening plan.
- xx. Mr. Oliver stated that it is planned that regional branches and the Main Library would reopen to the public; furniture, as well as computers, would be reconfigured to maintain social distancing. NPL staff would clean computers and self-check stations after each use. NPL would continue to offer only virtual programming.
- xxi. Mr. Simmons asked about additional locations to reopen during Phase 2.
- xxii. Mr. Oliver replied that the current plan would only open the regional branches and the Main Library, but this plan may be altered. He also stated he is regularly asked when NPL will advance to Phase 2. Staff are excited, but some are hesitant and concerned.
- xxiii. Ms. Searcy asked about Metro government ordering PPE supplies for all government departments.
- xxiv. Mr. Oliver commented that the Office of Emergency Management ordered supplies, but it has taken some time for these supplies to arrive. NPL's business office ordered the supplies for the library. NPL will be retrofitting public service desks with acrylic shields. Some supplies related to COVID-19 are being purchased with CARES Act monies.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:54 PM.

Next Board of Trustees Meeting

July 21, 2020

Location: TBD

Respectfully submitted by Corey Frederick.