

Nashville Public Library Board of Trustees
Minutes
May 19, 2020
12:00 noon

Members Present: Keith Simmons, Lucy Haynes, Joyce Searcy, Katy Varney, Adriana Bialostozky,
Charvis Rand

Members Absent: Robert Oermann

Library Staff: Kent Oliver, Bernadette Hugan, Terri Luke, Lee Boulie, Corey Frederick

Also Present: Derrick Smith, Assistant Metropolitan Attorney at Metropolitan
Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Kevin Lyons, Board Meeting
Support from Metro ITS, Danielle Vaughan, Metro ITS

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

- a. Keith Simmons called the meeting to order at 12:09 PM.

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

- a. “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

- a. I move that the items on the meeting agenda constitute essential business of this Board, meeting electronically is necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Tennesseans considering the COVID-19 outbreak, and any rule that conflicts with Governor’s Executive Order 16 permitting electronic meetings be suspended.
- b. Lucy Haynes 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: April 21, 2020

Katy Varney moved for approval of the minutes from the April meeting; the motion was seconded by Charvis Rand and passed unanimously.

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

a. General Report

- i. Kent Oliver explained that the Library Board packet included information about adjusted data points used during the library’s closure. He called the board’s attention to wireless data usage statistics, and these figures indicate the amount of people that are using the NPL network from outside library locations. Mr. Oliver noted that this is a trend that has been seen nationally; NPL will continue to track this data and may consider promoting it in the future. Currently, NPL is considering purchasing WiFi signal boosters. He stated that a stronger signal at the Bellevue Branch might explain the higher numbers of network users at that location. An issue to consider when promoting this service is that of how long to leave signal boosters on throughout the day. Other data within the packet describes virtual programming, and Mr. Oliver praised the success of this programming.
- ii. Mr. Simmons commented that a friend of his had expressed how eAudiobooks, through Libby, have made this period of quarantine easier.
- iii. Mr. Oliver highlighted the circulation numbers to show how NPL continues to lend materials through this period. He stated that division reports within the board packet provide greater detail on how each division has adjusted their services.
- iv. Mr. Oliver explained that a pipe at the Edmondson Pike location had come loose between Thursday, May 14, and Monday, May 19. A part of the building flooded; Susan Drye and her staff have begun clean up. They are currently assessing the damage caused by the leak. Mr. Oliver noted that maintenance staff has continued to check facilities throughout the closure.
- v. Mr. Oliver explained that NPL has applied for different funding at the state and local levels through the CARES Act. He noted that NPL is pursuing all avenues to help purchase equipment as well as online materials in addition to applying for community partnership grants. He stated that Metro has been very helpful throughout the process.

b. Metro Budget Update

- i. Mr. Oliver described the Mayor’s budget and how reductions in the budget will affect community partnership funds. However, NPL will use funding from the CARES Act to supplement these Metro funding shortages. NPL currently has 17 less positions than it did

two years ago, but there are around 45 currently vacant positions. Requests to fill 17 positions and to restructure NAZA to add additional staff are currently on hold due to budget discussions. Given the debate over property tax increases, Mr. Oliver acknowledged the possibility of additional budget reductions.

c. Votes for Women Update

- i. Mr. Oliver stated that work on the Votes for Women room has continued during the library's closure, and the room itself is nearing completion. Vendors have now installed electronic equipment and the tabletop. Jason Baxter, project manager, is now handling the coordination with vendors. The marketing committee is working to promote the room, and the library is looking to open the room in August.
- ii. Ms. Varney added that there are plans for a virtual grand opening of the room, since they are unsure of how many people should attend the event in-person.
- iii. Mr. Oliver emphasized that those involved in the project have been working to determine the content that will be displayed on walls and touchscreens in the room.
- iv. Ms. Searcy noted that she has been in touch with Andrea Fanta on how to promote the room in connection with MNPS and the 2020 Presidential Debate that will take place at Belmont University.

VI. Staff Report

a. NPL Universe, *Andrea Fanta*

- i. Andrea Fanta thanked the board for the opportunity to speak about NPL Universe. With NPL closed, MNPS shutdown, and the Mayor's Safer at Home order in affect, NPL developed a plan to push services to customers in quarantine. There was an estimated 86,000 students in need, in addition to parents and teachers with the need for materials to teach children. Marketing and Communications worked with staff across all NPL departments to fill this need. Additionally, NPL's Education and Literacy Department approached Andrea's department about launching Summer Reading Challenge early, and the group collaborated with MNPS to do this. NPL's virtual programming began modestly with only a few programs, but it has now expanded with the help of over 80 content creators, who are developing content for three different channels. NPL has shared over 7000 e-resources, has had around 44,000 virtual program views over a one-month period, and has seen a 71% increase in youth reading since the closure.
- ii. Ms. Varney and Charvis Rand praised NPL's efforts in developing NPL Universe.

- iii. Mr. Simmons asked about comparing the data to other sets of data.
- iv. Ms. Fanta noted that due to this unprecedented situation, the data should not be compared to in-person programming data. She emphasized the need to maintain virtual programming along with traditional programming once all services are restored.
- v. Mr. Simmons asked about the data that showed an increase in youth reading.
- vi. Ms. Fanta stated that this data was taken from customers who were classified as youth following the library's March closure.
- vii. Mr. Simmons praised the efforts and how the library has been a resource to children during school closures.
- viii. Ms. Fanta remarked how this crisis has exhibited the relationship between NPL and MNPS, which has been cultivated by Elyse Adler and her team. She emphasized the need to build relationships like this before crises occur.
- ix. Mr. Oliver noted that the Education and Literacy division has worked with MNPS to provide devices and textbooks to students during the pandemic.
- x. Ms. Searcy commented on how difficult it has been for MNPS to get information to all students.
- xi. Ms. Fanta stated that the Education and Literacy team collaborated with MNPS to deliver materials to students and that this service was used to distribute Summer Reading Challenge materials.
- xii. Ms. Searcy commended NPL and Mr. Oliver for the work that was done to create the "A Nashville Public Library Snapshot for Policymakers" document.
- xiii. Mr. Oliver noted the portion of the Metro budget process that included completing forms about essential services, and NPL created the snapshot document as a supplement to those forms.

VII. Old Business

a. Draft Reopening Plan, *Kent Oliver*

- i. The plan included in the board packet is about 96% of what the final plan will be. The key to this plan is that it is a phased reopening beginning with curbside service in Phase 1 and ending with business as we knew it in Phase 4. There are safety concerns for both staff and customers in the forms of social distancing practices and how the virus affixes itself to materials. There is no definitive answer on how long the virus lasts on materials; libraries across the nation have adopted material quarantines lasting from three to five days. In

regards to curbside service, customers will place holds normally and staff will safely deliver items to their vehicle whenever holds are ready. The rest of the reopening draft includes information on staffing functions and how the library will continue to operate. This plan is a broad swipe of what the library is proposing, and several subdocuments will accompany this plan to explain functions in more detail. Phase 2 of the plan includes distancing seating as well as making computers available to customers. Metro has recently released two policies: all staff must wear masks and all people entering Metro buildings must wear masks. Mr. Oliver emphasized the difficulty of obtaining PPE and understanding staffing during the reopening process. The obstacle of obtaining PPE could potentially delay the library's reopening. He highlighted the need for PPE due to having so much exposure to the public. For Phases 1 and 2, only the Main Library and regional branches will be open. He commented on the difficulty to social distance in smaller branch locations. He praised Terri Luke, Jena Schmid, and Ms. Drye for their efforts in creating this plan. Ms. Drye and Mark Crowder will be key in developing and maintaining a healthy work environment.

- ii. Ms. Searcy asked about customers who do not have masks entering the building.
- iii. Mr. Oliver stated that NPL should have masks for customers who do not have their own, but he noted difficulties when customers still choose not to wear masks. He alluded to the policy that has been issued by the Mayor's Office, noting that it will be interesting to see how the policy is enforced. He remarked that the Parks Department would encounter similar situations when it begins to reopen facilities. He stated that some health issues related to wearing masks – i.e. anxiety, difficulties breathing, and other issues - must be understood.
- iv. Adriana Bialostozky asked about limiting the number of family members allowed into a facility. She stated that Vanderbilt allows only a parent and a child in the hospital.
- v. Mr. Oliver stated that NPL would consider this. The reopening plan is based on literature that is both library and non-library related. There is information included in the plan about how old an individual must be before they are required to wear a mask.
- vi. Mr. Simmons asked about the hold pickup process for curbside delivery.
- vii. Mr. Oliver explained that library staff will call customers to let them know their materials are ready, and customers will have to present identification to receive materials.
- viii. Mr. Simmons emphasized the need to make sure calling NPL is easy to do.
- ix. Mr. Rand suggested having a number to call curbside service personnel directly.

- x. Mr. Simmons explained his concern for security personnel.
- xi. Ms. Searcy noted that some people may come to NPL only to get a mask.
- xii. Mr. Oliver stated that the key to making the mask policy work would be to get people masks, possibly diffusing most situations. The security team will develop a process to deal with individuals who refuse to wear masks. He further commented that the Office of Emergency Management provides funding to pay for masks, and NPL staff are pursuing avenues to procure masks and other PPE. He is confident that NPL has enough PPE for Phase 1, but finding enough for Phase 2 is more difficult. Moving to Phase 2 will be NPL's biggest challenge.
- xiii. Mr. Oliver remarked that NPL has targeted June 8th as the date to reopen for curbside service. This date will provide NPL time to have PPE in place, understand staffing issues, provide necessary training to all staff, and resolve any issues dealing with holds. Staffing issues revolve around the CARES Act and FMLA when dealing with situations presented by COVID-19. Some staff may not return to work immediately, and NPL is in the process of determining what it will look like in terms of staff in facilities. NPL Human Resources staff are currently contacting all affected NPL staff about limitations concerning returning to work.
- xiv. Mr. Rand stated that June 8th was an aggressive return date. He thought the library would reopen around July 4th.
- xv. Mr. Simmons supported the June 8th reopening and stated that reopening sooner would be better, if possible. He asked about the possibility of maintaining computer access if the library has to revert to Phase 1 after entering Phase 2 of the plan.
- xvi. Mr. Oliver explained that his team could look at that possibility, but it may be dependent upon location. Difficulties will arise when controlling traffic in a building. He stated that IT staff have been working to space computers in preparation for Phase 2. Moreover, Mr. Oliver stated that NPL's plan will not coincide with Metro's phased plan, but it will depend on NPL's ability to obtain PPE. He believes that Metro may go to their Phase 2 on May 25th, if current trends continue.
- xvii. Ms. Bialostozky asked about stratifying reopening based upon at-risk populations, suggesting that people over a certain age could not come to the library. The policy would be difficult to enforce, but it would be justified because of significant risk factors.

- xviii. Mr. Oliver emphasized that at-risk staff have specific guidelines provided by FMLA policies. Staff in this category will have options, but they will not receive full pay when using this FMLA leave.
- xix. Ms. Varney expressed concern with issues dealing with stratifying customers allowed in public spaces. She said that signage on the outside of public buildings should clearly explain what is required to come inside library facilities.
- xx. Ms. Bialostozky noted that the library might be able to suggest certain precautions for at-risk populations.
- xxi. The discussion turned back to Metro's policy requiring everyone coming into the buildings wear a mask, and Mr. Oliver stated that staff will need to be trained on how to positively resolve situations arising from the policy. He commented that NPL hopes to learn things as other Metro buildings open. He emphasized that NPL will have an abundance of signage explaining policies. He asked the group about the targeted reopening date of June 8th.
- xxii. Mr. Simmons supported reopening on June 1st if possible, but he explained he did not have a complete vision of preparations needed prior to reopening.
- xxiii. Mr. Oliver reiterated that June 8th is the most realistic reopening date, given preparations needed prior to reopening. He also commented on social distancing and taking staff temperatures as only staff are allowed in facilities during Phase 1.
- xxiv. Ms. Bialostozky asked about social distancing during staff lunch breaks.
- xxv. Mr. Oliver noted that Metro has guidelines in place for this and that NPL will stagger work schedules, while other staff will work from home.

b. Foundation Budget Discussion, *Kent Oliver*

- i. Mr. Oliver stated that the proposed NPLF budget passed. With this budget, NPL will have to make a 10% reduction if there are reductions in contributions during this fiscal year. Mr. Oliver and NPLF will evaluate contributions monthly to determine if reductions are necessary. Dollar General has increased their funding, which is a large portion of NPLF funding for current NPL programs.
- ii. Ms. Searcy stated that it was a good development for Mr. Oliver to work alongside NPLF concerning fundraising. Other corporate donors have also recently contributed to NPLF.

VIII. New Business

a. Smith Springs Road Property Discussion, *Kent Oliver*

- i. Mr. Oliver stated that he has recently been in contact with a developer about a tract of land on Smith Springs Road. The Facilities Master Plan indicated a planned construction of a library facility in this area of Davidson County in 2023. The developer is considering constructing single-family dwellings and leaving a three-acre section of the tract for a branch library, which will be located almost directly across the street from the community center currently in place. With the owner of the property previously offering the land to the library at \$1,000,000, the developer in the most recent conversation suggests that they are considering donating the land to NPL. The developer has plans for zoning the tract later this summer. NPL has yet to see an official donation offer, and the developer stated that all developments are currently relational.

b. Comment about Staff Work during NPL Closure, *Kent Oliver*

- i. Mr. Oliver praised the staff on the incredible work that has been accomplished during NPL's closure.
- ii. Mr. Simmons, Ms. Varney, and Ms. Searcy agreed with Mr. Oliver's compliment of staff and thanked them for their efforts.

IX. Adjournment

- a. The meeting adjourned at 1:20 PM.

Next Board of Trustees Meeting

June 16, 2020

12:00 noon

Location: To Be Determined

Respectfully submitted by Corey Frederick.