

**Nashville Public Library Board of Trustees**  
**Agenda**  
**February 20, 2024**  
**Main Library**  
**615 Church Street**  
**Nashville, TN 37203**  
**12:00 PM**

- I. Call to Order / Roll Call
- II. Metro Ordinance required to be announced at all Board Meetings – *Chair, Joyce Searcy*
  - 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. Public Comments
  - a. “Pursuant to T. C. A. § 8-44-12, time is reserved at the beginning of Library Board meetings for which there is an actionable item on the agenda for public comment germane to items on the agenda. Up to five people will be allowed up to three minutes each to speak. Speakers must register within one half hour prior to the beginning of the meeting by signing their name on a physical sign-up sheet available at the entrance, and identifying any agenda item on which they intend to comment.
- IV. Remarks, *Mayor Freddie O’Connell*
- V. Board Chair Comments, *Joyce Searcy*
- VI. Approval of Minutes: November 16<sup>th</sup> amended minutes, December 12th.
- VII. Interim Library Director Report, *Terri Luke*
- VIII. Foundation Report, *Shawn Bakker*
- IX. New Business
  - a. Black Music History Video with Elliot Robinson, *Andrea Fanta*

b. Wishing Chair Video, *Bret Wilson*

X. Adjournment

**Next Scheduled Board of Trustees Meeting**

**March 19, 2024**

**Edgehill Branch Library**

**1409 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. S**

**Nashville, TN 37203**

**12:00 PM**

**Nashville Public Library Board of Trustees**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**February 20, 2024**  
**Main Library**  
**615 Church Street**  
**Nashville, TN 37203**  
**12:00 PM**

**Members Present:** Joyce Searcy, Keith Simmons, Charvis Rand, Kate Ezell, Katy Varney, Nadine De La Rosa, and Rosalyn Carpenter

**Library Staff:** Linda Harrison, Terri Luke, Andrea Fanta, Susan Drye, Kyle Barber, Jena Schmid, Larry Jirik, Lisa Bubert, Lee Boulie, Anna Harutyunyan, James Staub, Chi Amaefula, Shawn Bakker, Klem-Mari Cajigas, Elliott Robinson, Ashley Tyler-Walker, Alex Danner

**Others:** Derrick Smith, Assistant Metropolitan Attorney at Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Mayor Freddie O’Connell, Scott Harrison, Shawna Chesser, Don Hardin, Steve Reiter, Joseph Johnston

I. Call to Order/ Roll Call

- a. The meeting was called to order at 12:01 PM.

II. Metro Ordinance required to be announced at all Board Meetings – *Chair, Joyce Searcy*

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III. Public Comments

- a. “Pursuant to T. C. A. § 8-44-12, time is reserved at the beginning of Library Board meetings for which there is an actionable item on the agenda for public comment germane to items on the agenda. Up to five people will be allowed up to three minutes each to speak. Speakers must register within one half hour prior to the beginning of the meeting by signing their name on a physical sign-up sheet

available at the entrance, and identifying any agenda item on which they intend to comment.”

b. Ms. Lisa Bubert stated the following:

“Lisa Bubert here, speaking on behalf of the unionized workers of NPL. We urge the Board to move the library toward finding a permanent director. It was previously mentioned that other departments are operating with an interim director, and we can too.

However, I want to show the trickledown effect of that decision. As Terri fills the role of Interim Director, Jena Schmid has now taken on her duties as Assistant Director of Branch Services. Kyle Barber has now taken Jena’s duties as Assistant Director of the Main Library. It’s not clear who has taken on the duties of Adult Services Manager at Main, which is also Kyle’s job. Kyle has also requested and been granted a transfer to manage the EP branch, which has been without a manager since September. (Jena is currently office-ed there.)

A similar but more dire situation has unfolded with the BL and BX branches. BL has been without a manager since December 27, 2022. BX manager Annie Herlocker requested and was granted a transfer to BL but cannot complete her transfer until a manager is found for BX. Hiring for that position is proving to be impossible.

In the meantime, regional managers from other locations have been sharing the burden of checking in on the branches that do not have managers. Currently, Angela at SE and Emily at HM are both handling operations at BL as best they can. Emily now has a manager vacancy in her HM cluster at OH, which means she’s covering her branch, BL, and now an additional branch in her cluster.

Of course, these managers can’t be everywhere all at once. So, it is the staff at all of these locations who are handling the day-to-day managerial duties – setting schedules, handling customer complaints, managing staff workflow and interpersonal issues, managing safety and security issues, all for months, in one case for over a year, with no extra compensation for their interim duties.

Every time an interim duty is placed on a leader at a higher level, the staff below them are required to take on more tasks to compensate and simply keep the library running. The longer it takes to hire managers and administrators into permanent positions, the longer staff at lower, less-compensated levels run a hamster wheel to keep up. And we’ve been doing this since August of 2022.

On a personal note, it grieves me to think of what we've lost since the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, if you called NPL an award-winning world-class library, I would have said heck yes and had plenty of things to point to prove it. Now, The Civil Rights and Civil Society training is no more, after Andrea Blackman's departure. Our mentoring program, Odyssey NPL, pioneered by Helen Sanders who has also left the library, is stalled, replaced with occasional Zoom webinars. We no longer have a system-wide programming coordinator, making it nearly impossible for branches to properly plan for system-wide initiatives, such as Black History Month and Summer Reading. Salon 615 is dead.

Our institutional knowledge has now frittered away so much, we are essentially being tasked to rebuild in every area. But we can't rebuild until we hire a permanent director who will set our course. Or at least, that's the answer staff have been receiving for 19 months. We cannot continue to operate like this."

c. Mr. Joseph Johnson stated the following:

"Madame Chair, I am here as a private citizen, a task payer, property owner, and a patron of the public library [...] I don't know what the banned books are, and I would like to suggest that a list of the banned books be posted somewhere in a branch library with an explanation for why they're banned, whether t's by staffing [...] by some other policy decision by the board [...] the minutes of the board meetings, I'm sure those are publicly accessible, and I'd like to know how to obtain copies of those board minutes [...] and the person responsible for administering the banned book policy [...] I was advised I should call the department of Marketing and Communication, and I tried to call that three times during the week [...] and did not get a voicemail, did not get an answer [...] so I'm asking the board to direct me to the appropriate administrative official to get this information."

d. Ms. Searcy acknowledged Mr. Don Hardin and informed him that he would not be allowed to make public comment because his comment did not address any item listed on the day's agenda.

#### IV. Remarks, *Mayor Freddie O'Connell*

a. Mayor Freddie O'Connell made remarks:

"Good afternoon everyone, board members, staff, community members, thank you for the opportunity to address this board and the important work that you do in the city. Libraries connect people to information, increasingly to their communities and each other. We're so fortunate in Nashville to have access to an outstanding library system, including this one. I will say on a personal note, I am

fortunate both to have grown up with the Nashville Public Library and now to watch my two daughters learn in large part a combination of things. We are a proud Metro schools' family; they thrive in our public school system, but they've also been raised on Wishing Chair Productions and many of the materials in the stack. In fact, we just watched them compete in the recent Lego contest. My 6-year-old daughter is learning to read, and has great resources in her school library, but also here. Every time I see her eyes light up over a new success [or] something new she's learned, I think about the gratitude I have for the teachers and librarians who have turned on new lights and joined us in introducing her to new worlds.

Tonight, the Metro Council will consider our proposed capital spending plan. We've released it a few weeks ago [and] one of those priorities in that plan is strengthening our library system. We believe that the deferred maintenance that is evident in certain parts of the system are being addressed by the capital we're looking to allocate. We're putting our money where our people are, in our neighborhoods, and taking steps to ensure that Nashvillians know their government is responsive to their needs. Our libraries, parks, schools, and roads are community assets that bring us together, enriching a shared pride that we have in our home.

I know that everybody here today has tremendous pride in the library system, the impact it has on children and lifelong learners, and I am here as mayor, asking that this board set aside the challenges of leadership transition for now. I'm asking this board to come together under the shared passion for learning and the board's direct decision on the director. And so, for the library, the Board of Directors, like many of our [organization] or commission-led departments, is the appointing authority for the type positions, and the board approved Terri Luke as Interim Director in November. I support that decision. I think that for many of us, including me, the search process didn't unfold the way we had expected, but I have full confidence in Terri as Interim Director and we are not conducting a new search at this time. I want to thank Terri for her work and her leadership during a challenging time. She has my full faith and confidence. She will remain the Interim Director of this department as voted by the board.

A title of interim doesn't mean we don't address operational facilities or staffing issues at general services. Velvet Hunter has just completed a multi-year period as one of Metro's longest interim directors, and we are very excited about Gerald Smith stepping in that role as permanent director, but under Velvet's leadership we made fleet improvements. General services continued to build and maintain multiple buildings and have maintained the confidence of staff. I want to thank the candidates and everybody on the board for participation in this process and

passion for your work. Transition is never easy, but this search has gone on for a long time, and we get to take a break from that process to follow its legal conclusion and to move onto the work at hand under Terri's leadership. The full committee has acknowledged the board's November vote to conclude the previous search and affirm that Terri Luke will serve as Interim Director with full responsibilities and authority until the next search is launched, and I know she will continue to bring excellence to our library system during her tenure. Thank you, Terri, and thank you Madame Chair."

V. Board Chair Comments, *Joyce Searcy*

- a. Ms. Searcy thanked Mayor O'Connell for his remarks, and shared her pride in knowing that each of The Library Board members valued the responsibility of supporting the library system.
- b. Ms. Searcy addressed statements made at the conclusion of the director search, where The Library Board as a whole, as well as two individual board members, were publicly maligned. Ms. Searcy continued that the accusations made were both untrue and unfair, and that research and The Library Board members' own experiences and wisdom reinforce the fact that diversity is essential to ensure that organizations can thrive, and that is the only way to be innovative. Ms. Searcy expressed her hope that these things were behind them, and that NPL heeds Mayor O'Connell's directive to give full support to the interim director as they continue to seek excellence in all that is done in the library system.

VI. Approval of Minutes: November 16<sup>th</sup> amended minutes, December 12<sup>th</sup>.

- a. Mr. Charvis Rand made a motion to approve the November 16<sup>th</sup> amended minutes. Ms. Kate Ezell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- b. Mr. Rand made a motion to approve the December 12<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. Ms. Ezell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Interim Library Director Report, *Terri Luke*

- a. Ms. Terri Luke informed The Library Board that some of the report statistics were down for the first time since the pandemic due to the snowstorm that caused the library locations to close for seven operational days; however, the numbers for e-books and audiobooks usage were up during the month of January.
- b. Ms. Luke stated that the admin team had had trouble filling the open Manager 3 positions, which had been reposted three times due to issues hiring for the position. Ms. Jena Schmid and Ms. Sherry Adams will meet with Ms. Luke to discuss further plans to best fill all three of the open manager positions.

- c. Ms. Luke and Ms. Searcy planned to attend the council meeting for Ms. Searcy's reappointment to The Library Board. Ms. Luke thanked Ms. Searcy for all her years of service to the library.
- d. Ms. Luke and Ms. Searcy planned to attend the Minority Caucus reception on February 21<sup>st</sup> at Meharry Medical College.
- e. Ms. Luke informed The Library Board that for 4% funding, NPL usually received three funding allocations. The first was approved for \$1.675 million, which was allocated for maintenance, which was an increase from last year. The mayor's office also recommended a total of \$4 million for collections: \$2 million for the second quarter and \$2 million for the third quarter. Ms. Luke stated that, if received, this would be the largest amounts for collections in the last 10 years.
- f. The Hermitage and Green Hills branches were recommended for renovations by the mayor. Ms. Luke stated that these two libraries were 23 years old and were next in line for renovations according to the Master Facilities Plan. Ms. Luke continued that Green Hills is number one in circulation throughout the system, and Hermitage is number four, so both branches see a lot of traffic. The mayor's office also recommended a design development process for both the Hadley Park and Richland Park branches.
- g. Ms. Luke informed The Library Board that on Feb 9<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Susan Drye submitted the FY25 operational budget request to the mayor's office and would be presenting to the mayor's office on February 28<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Luke stated that the team expected to cut back on the number of items asked for due to potential cuts. Ms. Katy Vary asked if The Library Board should be expected to show up to the mayor's office and the council meeting to support the budget asks. Ms. Luke answered that The Library Board's presence would be appreciated at the May council meeting. Ms. Searcy asked which budget funds were responsible for the courtyard repair. Ms. Drye answered that the funding for the courtyard was received in FY23's maintenance budget, and the amount allocated was approximately \$5 million. Ms. Luke added that they should have a report in the next few weeks regarding what needs to be done concerning the courtyard.
- h. Ms. Ezell asked what the hindrance was for hiring the manager 3 positions and where the admin team needed help. Ms. Luke stated that they are not receiving the number of applications that were received in the past, and the cost of living in Nashville has had a huge impact as well. Several applicants denied taking the job because of several factors, some of which also had to do with pay.
- i. Mr. Rand asked if The Library Board could obtain data on the utilization of other digital resources such as NYT and Linked-In Learning. Ms. Lee Boulie said she



could get that information for the next month's board report. Ms. Boulie also verified that these resources are being used frequently throughout the system.

- j. Ms. Luke updated The Library Board that the renovations at the Edgehill branch were taking longer than expected. Ms. Drye added that because the building was 70 years old with very old pipes, the renovations required all three restrooms to be excavated. Ms. Drye continued that the building could not be considered operational without useable restrooms, so until the renovations were finalized, the building would need to remain closed.
- k. Mr. Rand asked if there were plans to create new policies and procedures to lower some of the incidents that had been occurring at the branches. Ms. Drye stated they were working on filling the security guard positions and creating a more effective schedule so all guards can be trained and scheduled at different branches. Ms. Drye clarified that a lot of the "incidents" reported— specifically at the Main branch— involved sleeping patrons that, when awoken, were agitated and the situations were escalated. Ms. Luke shared that a safety coordinator position was requested in the FY25 budget. Ms. Luke added that several reference staff conducted a survey comparing NPL to other "like libraries" to see what they are doing to address security issues across the country.
- l. Ms. Ezell asked if the research being done on security would be shared with The Library Board soon. Ms. Luke stated that she and Ms. Searcy planned to meet to discuss certain topics for the upcoming Board Retreat, and security would be one of those topics discussed.
- m. Ms. Luke informed The Library Board that the Bellevue branch had a leak in one of the bathrooms, where one of the flush valves became loose and resulted in a flooded building where approximately 75% of the building was affected. Luckily, none of the collections were affected, but the front desk was lost, and the branch had to be closed for repairs. Ms. Luke thanked Ms. Jena Schmid, Ms. Annie Herlocker, Ms. Angela Brady, Ms. Jennifer Fournier, all Bellevue staff, and Metro General Services for their work during this time. All Bellevue holds were sent to Green Hills, and staff were relocated to other branches in the meantime. Ms. Luke stated that they hoped to reopen the Bellevue branch at the end of March.

#### VIII. Foundation Report, *Shawn Bakker*

- a. Ms. Shawn Bakker informed The Library Board about the kickoff for the fundraising campaign for early literacy on February 26<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Bakker stated that those attending would hear Ms. Linda Harrison talk about some of the

programmatic nature of what would be taking place with early literacy, including an exciting fundraising announcement.

- b. Ms. Bakker stated that the Black Women in Leadership Coffee and Tour was so successful that NPLF was asked to plan a Black Men in Leadership Coffee and Tour, which occurred on January 21<sup>st</sup>, with 25 black men in attendance. Ms. Bakker informed The Library Board that they received great feedback from that event as well. Another Black Women in Leadership event was scheduled for February 27<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Bakker asked any interested in attending to contact either Ms. Claudia Schenck or herself.
- c. The String City fundraiser was scheduled for March 1<sup>st</sup> from 6:30 – 9:30 PM at the Main branch, and tickets were already on sale.
- d. Ms. Bakker and the NPLF team were working to secure a spot for an ambassador to offer public comment at the March 19<sup>th</sup> Metro Council Meeting at 6:30 PM. Ms. Bakker continued that they would be presenting the 2023 NPLF Annual Reports to council members and asked The Library Board to save the date and stay tuned for details, as they hoped to have a large presence at this event.
- e. Ms. Bakker shared that plans were underway for a system-wide “Thank-a-Thon” postcard campaign— to thank the council members and the mayor for their support of the library budget— in preparation for Take Action for Libraries Day on April 11<sup>th</sup>.
- f. The Picnic with the Library is scheduled for April 28<sup>th</sup> at the Main branch, and the theme will be *The Wizard of Oz*.
- g. Ms. Searcy asked if there would still be a Hispanic Women in Leadership event. Ms. Bakker answered that she was working with Ms. Renata Soto, who recommended a slightly different approach to that event, but more details would be announced later.

## IX. New Business

- a. Black Music History Video with Elliot Robinson, *Andrea Fanta*
  - i. Ms. Andrea Fanta introduced one of many videos that Mr. Elliott Robinson created to celebrate both Black History Month and the Civil Rights Room. The video series was called “A Journey Through Black History.” Ms. Fanta informed The Library Board that the series could be found on all NPL social media and the NPL YouTube channel.
- b. Wishing Chair Video, *Bret Wilson*

- i. Ms. Linda Harrison introduced Mr. Bret Wilson and the Wishing Chair Productions informational video. Ms. Harrison informed The Library Board that the video was intended to be used as a training tool for new hires to be informed on different departments throughout the library.
- ii. Mr. Wilson introduced the Wishing Chair Productions informational video, and informed The Library Board that all images— save one— were captured in 2023.

X. Adjournment

- a. The meeting was adjourned at 1:11 PM.

**Next Scheduled Board of Trustees Meeting**

**March 19, 2024**

**Edgehill Branch Library**

**1409 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. S**

**Nashville, TN 37203**

**12:00 PM**

*Respectfully submitted by Lana Boleyjack.*