



Meeting Minutes

Library Board

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

5:00 PM

La Crosse Public Library
Auditorium (Lower Level)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Call to Order

PRESENT: Sue Anglehart, Kathy Ivey, Araysa Simpson, Aaron Engel, Mac Kiel, Ross Seymour, Jess Thill, Katie Bittner

EXCUSED: Erin Raymus

STAFF: Shanneon Grant, Barry McKnight, Elaine Petersen, Cole Zrostlik, Daniel Whitmore, Cynthia Arauz, Dawn Wacek, Russ McClintock

Agenda Items:

1 2024 Winding Rivers Library Resource Contract

As the resource library, WRLS contracts annually with La Crosse Public Library (LPL) to provide popular materials that fill requests across the system. As required by state statute, compensation for back-up reference service is also included. The 2024 contract was updated to reallocate 5% of the materials portion to cover processing costs.

2 Fund Balance Priorities

The Board-approved Fund Balance Policy specifies that when a balance exists in excess of the contingency amount, the Board will allocate for an appropriate use. Beyond the contingency reserve, the current unallocated amount is \$19,176. Ms. Grant described the top three priorities in order of need.

First, a technology need rises to the top as network access points need to be replaced by April of 2024 for cyber security. The project was previously slated for completion but has been bumped twice to offset other critical technology needs. Due to rising costs with no budget increase, this automation project is our highest priority. In addition to partial funding from fund balance, this cost may be supplemented with earnings from the Donald Gordon endowment after the Main Hall sound system is paid for.

Second, to further advance strategic planning goals focusing on re-envisioning existing spaces to enhance the patron experience, an evaluation of Main would be done through the lens of optimizing current spaces with minimal cost rather than remodel or expansion. Because the outcome improves patron use, it fits the criteria for Special

Trustee's Fund spending. Tangentially, Special Trustee's funding was mentioned as an option regarding a potential donor's provision for matching funds to support specific projects at North Library.

Third, LPL's old truck has been inoperable for several months, making it challenging for Maintenance staff to transport messy, large, or awkward cargo as required for their work. This has led to employees using their personal vehicles. Concerns for safety and potential legal repercussions were raised. Requests to participate in the City's vehicle leasing program and utilization of Capital Equipment funding were discussed.

3 Board Retreat Planning

A Board Retreat is planned for February 17, 2024 at the Nature Place from 8:30am-12:30 p.m. Ms. Grant reviewed proposed topics and invited input from the group, noting topics not covered at the retreat may be added to a future COW meeting agenda.

4 Patron Relations Needs

Balancing access with safety is paramount in providing a welcoming environment for all users. Currently, the City has no permanent solution for the unhoused population in La Crosse. Largely because of this challenge, especially during cold months, the Library is seeing a significant increase in escalating, distressing, or disruptive behaviors. The situation has inflated the number of responses from Patron Relations and Managers, as well as EMS, Crisis Team, and Police. This is taking up a great deal of time, preventing completion of other work.

Ms. Grant proposed that, on a temporary basis over the winter months, LPL hires a contracted security option utilizing an unspent portion of salaries budget. Talon Security is being considered and is different from the contracted security company used in the past. Talon staff are certified and trained in de-escalation strategies, behavioral health issues, as well as multi-age/teen behavior management. Talon provides services for a number of local events, organizations, businesses, medical and mental health facilities. Talon company comes highly recommended by other City departments.

Concerns that the presence of uniformed security may have a negative effect on access and patrons were expressed. The fundamental importance of supporting staff and providing a safe space was also voiced. Ms. Grant will contact Talon and provide additional information at the regular December meeting.

Board President Sue Anglehart expressed continued frustration at the lack of a viable long-term solution, emphasizing the need for the City to act.

While the City and County are working on a five-year response and prevention plan, those solutions are at least a year away. In addition to LPL staff working with County Crisis on increased presence and training, library leadership seeks seasonal security as a temporary strategy.

Adjournment at 6:53 p.m.