



Meeting Minutes

Library Board

Tuesday, June 4, 2024

5:00 PM

La Crosse Public Library
Auditorium (Lower Level)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Call to Order

The Vice Chair, Ms. Ivey, called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

PRESENT: Sue Anglehart, Kathy Ivey, Ross Seymour, Jess Thill, Katie Bittner

EXCUSED: Erin Raymus, Aaron Engel, Araysa Simpson, Mac Kiel

STAFF: Shanneon Grant, Elaine Petersen, Cole Zrostlik, Daniel Whitmore, Dawn Wacek

GUEST: Chadwick Hawkins

Agenda Items:

1 Presentation by City of La Crosse Finance Director, Chadwick Hawkins

The purpose of Director Hawkins' visit was to help clarify some questions from Library staff and Board. LPL wants to maintain a good working relationship with the City, to follow state statutes, and to understand City processes. Hawkins has been in local government for 14 years, with three separate municipalities. He explained that his goal is to work collaboratively and support the Library however possible. His work philosophy is to treat departments fairly and equitably. Requests are considered with all City department needs in mind.

1.1 Expenditures from "Other Benefits" line: These include FMLA Source subscription fees and pre-employment screenings. Sometimes, the City's financial system (Munis) is not updated at the time of Board meetings. Referring to related information provided by Mr. Hawkins' staff, Director Grant extended thanks to City Budget Analyst David Tauscher for helping LPL staff understand discrepancies due to timing, as well as providing guidance and additional details on City financial processes.

1.2 Health insurance: Overall numbers in the health insurance line are to the dollar so LPL should be able to calculate costs internally on a monthly basis if deductions are not posted in Munis ahead of monthly reports to the Library Board. This becomes more complicated at year end and into the 13th Month. Benefits budget line items are calculated as if we are at full staff.

1.3 Cost of living and step increases: Mr. Hawkins described year-end processes around the salaries and benefits portion of the operating budget. He reviewed the City's procedure of adding amounts for Cost-of-Living-Adjustments (COLA) and step

increases separately after the 13th month reconciliation. COLA and step increases are lumped together and put into a non-departmental line item as if departments are fully staffed. Mr. Hawkins indicated that Finance will share Library information as requested, but processes need to be consistent across all City departments. Library will calculate and note these figures in future financial reports to the Board.

1.4 Fund balance policy: Board members voiced concern about using Fund Balance to pay for operating expenses like security. Mr. Hawkins specified that carry over/fund balance is not meant as a savings account or slush fund and should be used within the following calendar year for needs like security, building improvements, or unanticipated expenses. Funding challenges and security needs are prevalent throughout the City but there is currently no line in the City Operating Budget for security/homelessness services. Mr. Hawkins has recommended that this be added as a line item for departments to request, but funding will be entirely up to Common Council. With other departments needing security services, a Board member suggested that security personnel be hired as City positions to assist across departments including Parks, MTU, and Library. No City contingency funds are available for security services.

1.5 Budget: Forecast remains bleak for the foreseeable future because the City is able to increase the levy by only \$250,000 per year, which does not keep up with \$700,000 increase for COLA and step raises, along with rising health insurance costs and overall inflation. Potentially, future increases in state shared revenue would help. Staffing costs make up 70-80% of budgets. Non-personnel lines have been cut repeatedly over many years to the point where there is nothing else left to cut as IT, utilities, and supply costs continue to rise. Because of Maintenance of Effort, funding levels for Police and Fire need to be maintained or the City loses significant funding from the state.

1.6 Board members discussed the tipping point of public budgets with regard to the essential services that the library provides. Staff continually adapts to meet needs not wants. Services for children are essential. Everyone who walks through the door is a patron. The library provides a safe space in addition to other services. Nothing we do is "just for fun" as we are meeting real needs for all patrons; many have their own economic challenges. Library staff not only works for the public, they work with the public, serving a variety of community needs. Members of the Board see a need to advocate and educate. Staff will put together a list of experiences that depict daily events and capture the wide spectrum of services they provide.

2 Fund Balance Priorities

2.1 Last month, approval was given for architectural design costs. Ms. Grant reviewed remaining priorities and recommended that with the exception of contingency, available fund balance be allocated before August.

Adjournment at 6:50 p.m.