

THE TALBOT COUNTY FREE LIBRARY
100 W. Dover St.
Easton, MD 21601
Minutes of the Board Meeting
April 20, 2023

The meeting was called to order by Susan Sherman, President at 5:05 pm. Meeting held in St. Michaels.

Attendees: Susan Sherman, Charles Yonkers, Marlene Thomas, Becky Amaral, Mary Pellicano, Robert Forloney, and Sue Regier

Director, Dana Newman and Scotti Oliver, Assistant Director, Christina Acosta, Communications Manager, and Shauna Beulah, St. Michaels Branch Manager represented the TCFL.

Excused: Pete Leshner, Talbot County Liaison, Ron Engle, Town of Easton Representative and Andrew Thaler

Absent: Estela Ramirez, Heena Paracha

Action Items:

Board members approved the February 16, 2023 minutes.

Board members approved the Income and Expense Statement.

Board members approved Mary Pellicano to fulfill the role of Treasurer.

Action items that didn't require a vote:

Dana to research succession planning training.

Place advocacy sharing on the agenda for the May meeting.

Annual or every other year library policy reviews.

Review board job descriptions.

Committee chairs submit a written report before the meetings.

Board packets to be sent out one week prior to the meeting.

Tent cards with board members names will be created for the May meeting.

Executive Committee will discuss unexcused absences.

Board members were reminded to turn in volunteer hours.

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Board President, Susan Sherman. It was announced that Mary Pellicano is officially the new board treasurer.

Review of the February 16, 2023 Minutes: Susan Sherman asked the board if there were any changes. Hearing none, asked for a motion to approve with Charles Yonkers moving and Robert Forloney seconding. The motion carried.

The treasurer's report had been emailed to the board prior to this meeting. Dana Newman asked if there were questions. Hearing no other questions, Susan Sherman asked for a motion to approve the Treasurer's report with Mary Pellicano moving and Robert Forloney seconded. All in favor. The motion carried.

Dana Newman: General reminders :

On Tuesday, April 25th Scotti Oliver and Susan Sherman will attend a special Proclamation at the County Council meeting in honor of National Library Week.

Board members were encouraged to attend one of the County Council budget hearings on May 2nd. One meeting is at 2:00 p.m. at the Bradley Room at County offices and the other is at 7:00 p.m. at Easton Elementary.

All were welcomed to the May 4th Community Input session at the St. Michaels library at 6pm. This will be a chance for the community to give feedback about the St. Michaels renovation and expansion project.

Old Business: None

New Business:

Board effectiveness training:

Dana Newman gave some background on how the Board Effectiveness report got started. In 2021, several Directors and others who work with libraries' identified training needs for library boards across Maryland. A survey was initiated and sent out to every board member across Maryland libraries resulting in a great response. Several key areas were identified as best practices of effective boards, including transparency, trust and respect, confidence of the executive director, forward thinking and understanding.

Dana then reviewed what makes an effective board member and referred to the four page section of this report where several topics were reviewed, such as transparency, forward thinking, confidence of the Executive Director and more. Our library board is very involved and we keep as a goal to continue to strive for diversity in our board. Some questions for the board to think about is where does the board want to put their focus, what priorities need to be worked on, and what training is needed to become a successful board member. Dana encouraged board members to keep any eye on future goals. Our board does a good job with having the EDI committee, as well, as members participating in meetings, community events and fundraising. The topic of succession planning was discussed and a board member asked if there is succession planning training available. Dana will look into this. A few other topics were discussed around board evaluations as few boards do an evaluation process. This could be the start of a conversation around this topic. Evaluations help to build teamwork.

Susan Sherman asked the board to look at the handout where 5 topics were prioritized as being the most important for building board effectiveness: Advocacy, Communication, Finance, Training and Board recruitment, diversity, engagement and retention.

Advocacy: These key questions were discussed: What does it mean? What is the Board's role? Does the Board know the current issues affecting libraries? How can the Board stay informed regarding issues affecting libraries? Who should take the lead?

- Advocacy means speaking up and representing your views

- The role of the board is to inspire people, generate support and raise awareness. The board needs to get out into the community more and introduce ourselves and to speak up when there are issues about the library
- Be proactive, attend County Council meetings, speak to our Representatives and let them know what the library is doing.
- Board members can also participate in library events so that our patrons see library supporters show not just the staff. A board member could read a story at a children's program for example.
- Action is good but it is key to listen to stakeholders and to humanize our work.
- Casual conversations are important
- Personal contacts, the Facebook page, the eBlast, and newspaper articles are all important ways to reach the community.
- Regarding who should take the lead: It is the responsibility of all Board members.
- Regarding the issues of the library: what are we speaking up for?
 - Helping people to understand that libraries provide a vast amount of services not just a place to reserve a book.
 - We need to educate the community on all that we offer
 - Build awareness and ways to get people's attention
 - Access: we want people to be able to get any book they want. We strive for intellectual freedom. Libraries are being challenged. Book censorship is increasing.
 - It would be helpful to have our own templates and talking points to challenge topics like censorship. We need our own arguments so that we can be a platform for change.
 - We advocate for marginalized people and we strive to serve our population.
 - We advocate also for the St. Michaels expansion and renovation project.
 - The library is an information provider. We teach about how to look at data and improve literacy.
 - The library improves the quality of life. The impact of what the library offers goes beyond the building. Many programs are key to everyday needs, such as the AARP tax aide program.
 - We strive to get our services out to the underserved and to align our resources with those who need these services.
- How does the board stay informed?
 - Listening
 - All board members are institutional members of ALA (American Library Association)
 - Institutional member of United for Libraries
 - Assign areas of responsibility or focus
 - EDIAJ committee is doing a great job at listening and advocating
 - More crossover between committees so that there is more communication between committees. Our committees are: Executive; Nominating; EDIAJ; Finance and Development Work group
 - Board members are all responsible. Advocacy is the underpinning of what we do and what communication is about.
 - An idea was discussed of each board member reporting at a board meeting on something they did to speak up for the library. We can call it advocacy sharing time-advocacy report.

COMMUNICATION

- The library board is a governing board and not a working board, but with our committee tasks we do some working board tasks. We are more big picture and not so much into the day to day details of the library.
- Fiduciary responsibilities
- Prospective board members learn about the board and library from the Director of the Library, Board President and Nominating Committee. We also have bylaws and policies. There is a board orientation packet.
- Having an annual or every two year review of library policies was suggested.
- It would be helpful to review board job descriptions.
- Identify what the different committees are, what they do and the schedule of all committee meetings
- Board committees might submit a written report a week before board meetings.
- Internally sharing pictures of board members
- Provide tent cards at meetings to show names of members
- We want to represent the library in a positive light and so to fulfill this, it is important for members to attend monthly meetings. Unexcused absences will be discussed further by the Executive Committee.
- It would help boost communication with the community if board members could attend library programs, to sign up for events, invite a community partner to one of our board meetings as a guest. The benefit of this is maybe the community partner would reciprocate with us.
- Become familiar with the library website, Instagram and Facebook pages
- Continue to invite library staff members to the board meetings.

This discussion will continue at the May meeting as we had to conclude. Topics to be covered at the next board meeting include: finance, training & board recruitment, diversity, and engagement and retention.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Our next regular board meeting will be on Thursday, May 18, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. at Easton.

Respectfully submitted, Katie Dodds