

Board of Trustees  
Minutes  
February 10, 2022

A regular meeting of the Westchester Public Library Board of Trustees was held at the Baugher Center, 100 West Indiana Avenue, Chesterton, Indiana on Thursday, February 10, 2022 at 7:00 pm.

Board members present were: Heather Augustyn, Kathryn Cochran, Michele Corazzo, Nick Tilden, and Rondi Wightman.

Board members absent: Abbe Trent and Will Scharp.

Also present at this meeting were: Library Director Lisa Stamm, Library Assistant Director Heather Chaddock, Attorney Lisa Baron, Minutes Recorder Christine Hoover, and one member of the public.

This meeting was called to order by Board Vice President Kathryn Cochran at 7:00 pm.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Michele Corazzo to approve the minutes from the January 13, 2022 regular Board meeting as presented. Heather Augustyn seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Financial and Statistical Reports

A motion was made by Heather Augustyn to approve the Financial and Statistical Reports as presented. Rondi Wightman seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Approval of Claims and Warrants

A motion was made by Nick Tilden to approve the Register of Claims and Warrants for the time period of January 14, 2022 through February 10, 2022 as presented. Michele Corazzo seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Librarian's Report

Service highlights were related from the past month featuring positive feedback and gratitude expressed by patrons regarding their Library experiences.

In observation of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the Library gave out 240 "MLK Kindness Kits". Each kit contained ideas and supplies for patrons to perform six random acts of kindness in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.

In the month of January, 13,991 people visited the Library. Staff created 21 Live Virtual programs with 296 Live Virtual attendees. Staff answered 59 reference questions, 70 tech help questions, and 87 new library cards were registered. Graphs showing materials circulation statistics were provided.

Due to a severe winter storm on February 2 and 3, Director Stamm closed all locations of the Library on both of those days in order to keep staff and patrons as safe as possible. All nearby northwest Indiana libraries were also closed for those two days.

Black History Month will be celebrated during the month of February. The Library newsletter lists a host of programs dedicated to teaching and sharing experiences in support of Black History Month. On February 26, a West African Dance class will be offered by the Old Town School of Folk Music and Muntu

Dance Theatre in Chicago. On February 22, a Museum program entitled Early Black History in Duneland will be held to highlight local Black history.

The Museum store reopened on January 19. The physical portion of the assessment of the Brown mansion by Kil Architecture is complete, and results of that assessment have not yet been received. Drones were used to take photos of the exterior and roof, and photos were taken of every single outlet and electrical panel in the Brown mansion to determine whether or not the quantities are sufficient. Kil raised the issue of the weight of items stored in the attic. A project is in the works of moving the heaviest objects from the attic to the basement which involves moving and discarding unnecessary items that were already stored in the basement.

The Library received a kind note and a donation of \$50 from the McKee family. A thank you letter of appreciation was sent to the family.

The Library Annual Report is underway and must be submitted to the Indiana State Library before the last day of February. The Annual Financial Report is also underway. This report will contain the information requested by the State Board of Accounts (SBOA) regarding the depreciated values of the entirety of the Library's Capital Assets inventory. A good faith effort will be made to answer the SBOA's request accurately. The Library's inventory listing has not been updated in many years, and it is being worked on to update this inventory listing for a more accurate reflection of the Library's assets.

Staff changes for the month include the joining of part-time Clerks Mary Henry and Nathan Alexander; the separation of part-time Clerks Keegan Palonis and Sam Haines and part-time Cataloger Alan Baughman. Siara Cristenson changed her status from part-time Clerk to Substitute.

Old Business                      Thomas HVAC

Architect Tom Kuhn of CSK, Bob Nicksic of Giannini, the Library Maintenance Manager, and Director Stamm conducted a second pre-bid meeting in late January to include the full, amended scope of the project covering the additional work of replacing the ceiling tiles and lighting. There was a large turnout of general contractors for this meeting. The amended deadline for bids had been set for Thursday, February 3; but due to the snowstorm on February 3, the deadline was rescheduled for 3:00 pm on Monday, February 7. The bids were opened in public by Tom Kuhn on February 7, and his recommendation was shared with Director Stamm. This recommendation was presented to the Board at tonight's meeting for discussion and vote.

Director Stamm read a letter submitted by Tom Kuhn in which he recommended awarding the contract for the HVAC Renovations to the Thomas Branch Library and issuing a Notice to Proceed for the Base Bid to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, Circle R Mechanical, for \$1,951,145. Nineteen contractors were given access to the Bid Documents, and the bid from Circle R Mechanical was the lowest of three bids received.

A motion was made by Heather Augustyn to approve the bid made by Circle R Mechanical in the amount of \$1,951,145 for the Thomas HVAC renovation project. Michele Corazzo seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Director Stamm has been working with the Porter County Council (PCC) administrative assistant to be sure that the Library is on their February Agenda to request an Additional Appropriation from the Library's own reserves. Director Stamm has provided the Chesterton Tribune and The Times with a

public notice for taxpayers about the Additional Appropriation, to be published in each paper once, no less than ten (10) full days prior to the PCC meeting.

To ensure coverage for the winning bid plus anything unforeseen that may arise during this project, Director Stamm rounded up 15% from the architect's original project estimation of \$1,937,750 making a total request of \$2,228,413 from the Library Rainy Day Fund. Anything not spent from this amount will go back into the Rainy Day Fund. It was noted that the project now includes planning/obtaining quotes for a small bit of asbestos remediation, as asbestos may be present in the existing joint compounds and drywall that will likely be removed or disturbed during the project. Tom Kuhn updates the shared Dropbox account with amendments and project details. Director Stamm, the Library Maintenance Manager, and Attorney Lisa Baron have access to this Dropbox.

Due to pandemic-related supply chain issues, the rooftop units, which must be done first, won't be available until July (tentatively), so planning for this project has become more difficult since it is not certain when any work will begin or be completed.

#### Dune Acres Property

Attorney Lisa Baron provided Director Stamm with a memo on the Dune Acres property research she did following the last Board meeting. It was discovered that since the Library is not using the property, it is possible that the Library may not be able to maintain or justify a tax-exempt status. Even with the Library being a municipal organization, if the property is unused for Library/public purposes, it could be eligible for taxation. Exemption status looks at the municipal purpose of a property, not just the owner's taxation status. Attorney Baron's understanding is the Town of Dune Acres is reviewing and possibly challenging the Library's tax exempt status.

Director Stamm felt that it is not a benefit to keep the property as there is no plausible way for the Library to use the property for a real public purpose as it is difficult to get to with dangerous terrain for the general public. A question was raised as to if the Library is able to transfer the property into a preservation trust, and if an environmental organization would even accept this property. It was suggested to have a Dune Acres town official speak to the Board to answer questions regarding what their intentions would be for changing the Library's status. These issues will be looked into further by Director Stamm and addressed again in the coming months. It is noted that the previous two letters Director Stamm wrote to the Town of Dune Acres regarding this property went unanswered.

#### Board Reappointments

Trustee Will Scharp was reappointed by Westchester Township Trustee Suzanne Philbrick. He is now in his first, four-year term of serving. The County Commissioners reappointment of Rondi Wightman will be included in their March Regular Meeting Agenda to be held March 15 at 10:00 am.

#### New Business

#### Unacceptable Behavior Policy

Director Stamm recommended making an update to the Unacceptable Behavior Policy adding "sleeping" to the list of behaviors not acceptable within Library buildings and on Library premises. She will train staff on appropriate ways in which they may awaken a sleeping patron (no touching) and/or confirm that the patron is physically alright.

A motion was made by Michele Corazzo to approve the updated Unacceptable Behavior Policy to add "sleeping" to the list of unacceptable behaviors. Heather Augustyn seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

A motion was made by Rondi Wightman to approve the Librarian's Report as presented. Nick Tilden seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Public Comment

Liberty Township resident Tim Cole addressed the Board by stating that he is a descendant of the George Brown family and the Treasurer of the Duneland Historic Society. He voiced his support of maintaining the Brown mansion and the museum contents stating that he felt the Brown mansion and the Westchester Historical Museum were an asset to the community and all of northwest Indiana.

Other Business

There was no other business at this time.

The date of the next regular Board meeting will be Thursday, March 10, 2022 at 7:00 pm at the Baugher Center.

A motion was made by Nick Tilden to adjourn this meeting at 7:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Christine Hoover, Minutes Recorder for  
Will Scharp, Secretary