



Meeting Minutes

Library Board

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

5:00 PM

La Crosse Public Library
Auditorium (Lower Level)

1 Call to Order

The Chair, Ms. Anglehart, called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

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

EXCUSED: Katie Bittner

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

GUESTS: Gary Padesky

2 Approval of Minutes from Regular Board Meeting – September 12, 2023

Motion to approve the minutes from the regular Board meeting of September 12, 2023.

(Kathy Ivey/Aaron Engel) Carried

3 Approval of Minutes from Committee of the Whole – October 3, 2023

Motion to approve the minutes from the Committee of the Whole meeting of October 3, 2023.

(Aaron Engel/Araysa Simpson) Carried

4 Approval of Bills & Financial Reports – September 2023

Motion to approve the bills and financial reports from September 2023.

(Aaron Engel/Jess Thill) Carried

Motion to move public comment to beginning of the agenda.

(Araysa Simpson/Aaron Engel) Carried

5 Public Comment / Other

Current La Crosse County Board Supervisor/ former La Crosse Common Council Representative and Library Board Member Gary Padesky pledged his support for whatever budgetary decision the Library Board ultimately determines to be in the best

interest of the library and the La Crosse community.

6 New Business

7 Old Business

7.1 Operating Budget 2024

7.11 Review of Budget Adjustment Options as discussed at Committee of the Whole Meeting – October 3, 2023.

Library Director Grant reviewed three options initially presented at the October 3rd COW meeting, noting that the proposed reduction in the amount of 2% was confirmed at the October 9th Board of Estimates meeting:

Option A: Freeze/eliminate currently vacant positions. This option would reduce library FTE count by 2. La Crosse Public Library (LPL) has lost 20% of staffing in the last 10 years.

Option B: Intermittent furlough of all library staff. This option offers a short-term solution to a systemic budget problem. Services would be reduced by closing the Library for 7 days in 2024 and puts all financial burden on staff.

Option C: Close South Branch and reduce positions accordingly. This option provides long-term savings in terms of facility repair and upkeep and has the least impact on staffing level.

Ms. Grant emphasized that LPL is at a tipping point between choosing a satellite facility and losing more staff. A decision to close SCL is not a reduction in LPL's commitment to library services. According to Ms. Grant, it is a necessary strategic move to ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness of La Crosse Public Library services as a whole. LPL remains dedicated to prioritizing resources with intention and providing equitable service for the entire community. Ms. Grant explained that scaling back a physical facility and retention of staff is the scenario that allows LPL to be agile in responding to serving neighborhoods and communities with the highest need.

7.12 Direction and Next Steps

Next steps were briefly reviewed. After the Board's decision at tonight's meeting, Ms. Grant will ensure the Library allocation of the proposed 2024 City Operating Budget is amended accordingly. There will be a public hearing to adopt the City's 2024 Operating Budget in November.

Library Board members shared their considerations, expressing repeatedly that a decision was not being made lightly. As the library is primarily a service organization, comments touched on the vital role staff plays and the impressive amount of programming offered despite an incredible (20%) reduction in personnel over recent years. The reason LPL has been so successful is because of talented staff. Objections were voiced regarding Options A and B because of the negative impact they would have on staff. Library staff was commended for their innovative problem solving, and for continually creating opportunity out of challenges.

Board members discussed the need for long-term solutions rather than stop-gap

responses because the Library has been grappling with structural deficits for more than a decade. Future budget increases cannot be counted on. In the ten years since closing a branch was initially considered as a way to meet budget constraints, efficiencies and reductions have been made. Brick and mortar buildings are more expendable than anything else, especially when considering projected maintenance costs. When weighing the options, top priorities include reaching people through community outreach along with achieving the other goals identified through strategic planning. Any viable solution needs to position the library to serve more people and to move forward with the City in a better position.

Director Grant expressed her appreciation for the Board's support and thoughtful decision-making through a difficult choice. She restated the Library's commitment to looking forward and serving the community in the best way possible despite the impact of budget cuts.

**Motion to approve option C as presented, to close South Branch and reduce positions accordingly.
(Aaron Engel/Kathy Ivey) Carried**

8 Topics for Future Meetings

8.1 2024 Winding Rivers Resource Contract

9 Adjournment

Time: 5:45 p.m.

(Aaron Engel/Jess Thill) Carried