

**CITY OF NORWALK / NORWALK PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING / MARCH 12, 2009**

ATTENDANCE: Stan Siegel, President; Mohan Tracy; Charles McMullen;
Grace Vetter; Regina Krummel; Mary Mann; Mary Pugh; Jannie
Williams; Lori Torrano

STAFF: Les Kozerowitz, Library Director; Frank Ferro, Assistant Library Director

OTHER: Ms. Joan Joakim, Ms. Salima Hirani

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Siegel called the meeting to order at 7:45 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Joan Joakim, a Norwalk resident and ESL teacher made a statement to the Board in support of the Norwalk libraries. She stated that the importance of public libraries today has escalated from books to computers; from story hours to programs and concerts; providing the community a valuable resource and haven of education and services. She gave a brief historical perspective relative to the administration of the South Norwalk Library which had its own Librarian, Reggie St. Fort, and was independently operated. Now that it is a branch of the Norwalk Public Library system, Ms. Joakim is concerned that things are changing, and she wants the Board to keep South Norwalk Library as a warm, friendly environment, conducive to the diverse population of South Norwalk. The multi-cultural community is multi-racial, multi-income level and socio-economically based, and is really geared to the melding pot atmosphere of the South Norwalk Library. In view of the City's budget restrictions, she is concerned that downsizing the staff would do a disservice to the many positive programs that exist. The renovated building is beautiful and the improvements made to the interior layout provide an ideal environment, conducive to the needs of the area. The current librarian is a wonderful dedicated, professional who has served the South Norwalk residents and especially the Haitian community, in an extraordinary capacity. In summary, Ms. Joakim asked the Board of Directors to allow the South Norwalk Library to return to normal and remain a fully functioning service to the South Norwalk Community.

Public Comments – continued

Ms. Salima Hirani, a Speech and Language Pathologist with the Norwalk Public Schools expressed concern about staffing at the South Norwalk Library Children's Department. She stated that the South Norwalk Library provides a place for children and parents to go to a resource center for books, learning, and so much more. There is no other place like the Library for them. The South Norwalk Library is more like a community center, and it enriches the lives of so many children and families. On behalf of the many children and parents she asked the

Board to kindly reconsider their decisions in order that the South Norwalk Library maintain its current level of service.

Mr. Siegel added that he had two e-mails to read to the Board:

The first was from Sheila Teed, a resident of Norwalk, who stated her concern over the decrease in Library staff. She urged the Board to reconsider this action and to do all in its power to maintain the staff and programs of the South Norwalk Library.

The second e-mail was from Andrea Light, who happens to be the daughter of Ms. Joan Joakim. Her message also urged the Board to not eliminate Reggie St. Fort's position because of the valuable interface service that he provides. He is always on the floor assisting patrons, residents, and it would be an irreplaceable loss to the library. She went on to say that she had foreseen that all the new renovated buildings would present a debt service to the city to make staffing needs unattainable. She urges the Board to reconsider their actions that will have such a negative impact on the residents of South Norwalk.

There were no other public comments.

Mr. Siegel took a moment of personal privilege to restate the decisions made at last months' meeting. He read from the February minutes that "The Board moved to support the recommendation of the Library Director to defund the position of Branch Manager in order to fund the position of the Assistant Library Director." The motion was seconded and approved unanimously. Mr. Siegel stated that the bottom line with this decision was if there was an Assistant Library Director, that person could easily manage and help manage the South Norwalk Branch Library. Quite the contrary, if the Library lost the Assistant Library Director's position, the South Norwalk Branch Library Director could not perform the duties as required of the Assistant Library Director. Mr. Siegel clarified that there would be no upward capability but there would be downward capability. He also stated that in no way shape or form has a service reduction taken place in staffing hours or services at either of the two libraries over and above what has already taken place. He stated that in his opinion, the recent public fears regarding loss of hours and/or services are somewhat unfounded.

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA/ACTION ITEMS

There were no additions to the agenda or action items.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 14, 2008 MEETING

The following correction was noted: Pg. 1 Isabel Bulen should be Bullen

- ** MS. MANN MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY MEETING AS AMENDED.
- ** MS. TORRANO SECONDED.
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

DISCUSSION OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Siegel stated that an Executive Session with Mayor Moccia was held at 6:30 p.m. prior to the start of this meeting, regarding the staffing scenarios presented to the Board. The scenarios being that the Library Director and Assistant Library Director's positions have been defunded and the staff members have been offered an early retirement Package in an effort to save the city some dollars in their current budget. He reported that the Board recommended that a search be put in place for the Library Director but noted that the Mayor has the following options:

- Search for a new Library Director.
- Appoint the Assistant Library Director as an Interim Director during the search, or:
- Appoint the Assistant Library Director as the Director without a Library Director search.

The Mayor will make his decision on Monday, and the outcome will be reported at the next meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT

There was no Treasurer's Report for this meeting.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Kozerowitz reported the receipt of the following gifts to the Library:

1. The S.Y. Killingsley Memorial Trust issued the assignment of royalties to the Library. This came as a surprise; and it turned out that a friend of Ms. Tracey, who has written a book, had attended the grand opening of the Library, and was so impressed with the organization, that the book royalties have been assigned to the Norwalk Library.
2. A grant from the Fairfield County Community Foundation has been received in the amount of \$500. This has been at the suggestion of Dr. Herbert Rose for the third year in a row, and the Board is very grateful to Dr. Rose for his efforts.
3. Bay Water Properties has donated \$4,000 in behalf of Dave Genovese's and Sherrelle Harris's efforts and work with Autism issues. Bay Water Properties had donated the Children's Computer Lab at the South Norwalk Library and has now generously donated to the purchase of software for the computer lab.
4. The Tuesday Book Club has donated \$120 in appreciation of our support. The Library has purchased multiple copies of books they use for their club.
5. The Library has received a \$500 grant from Stolt Nielsen, USA for the good work being accomplished in the community.
6. The Library has received an acknowledgement of items given to the United Methodist Church of furnishings and fixtures from our recent renovations that they have put to good use.

Mr. Kozerowitz provided an update on the early retirement incentive package that has been offered to the staff members, and they that have to declare their decision by tomorrow. Mr. Siegel clarified that the date the early retirement package that goes into effect is April 30 of this year.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Siegel gave an update on the “2009 Big Read” program which will feature the book *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. There will be two 11”x 21” wrap around ads donated by the Hour newspaper that will run on March 22 and 29. There will be a Mark Twain impersonator that will meet and talk to the audience for the two hour event.

There will be a private kick-off reception with “Mark Twain” at the Norwalk Inn and Conference Center on Friday, April 3, followed by a dinner, All Board members, key Library staff members, the Mayor, local legislators and guests will be invited. The Board is expecting 30-35 people.

Mrs. Krummel asked how this was being funded. Mr. Siegel responded it was funded by the \$15,000 1-1 grant and reviewed the grant requirements that it is a matching grant with NEA. Based upon the in-kind spending with the Hour, the ad contribution alone is approximately \$7,000 of services. Other elements will include a fence painting contest, where local neighbors will send in pictures of their fences, from which five will be picked to have their fences painted by one of the local teen groups.

Ms. Torrano asked about the marketing piece and offered her help to make the advanced publicity and marketing elements of this program successful. Mr. Siegel said that there are many marketing elements in place.

In addition to the above, the Library has purchased 2009 copies of “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” to be given out to 2009 people. There will be a film festival of Mark Twain, and a tour of the Library Museum. Mr. Siegel said that the Library has adopted the traffic box for Graphic Traffic Box program. They have arranged for Jerry Craft, a local cartoonist and professional artist to paint the Library’s traffic box.

Ms. Vetter suggested that copies of the wrap-around be made into flyers for distribution to the schools, and Mr. Siegel said they have arranged to have several thousand copies printed to be dropped off at the schools and various groups throughout the city.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Siegel stated that there was no other new business to report on at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** MR. MCMULLEN SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted / Recording Secretary.

DRAFT