

**CITY OF NORWALK
PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
JULY 11, 2019**

ATTENDANCE: Alex Knopp, Chairman; Ralph Bloom; Taber Hamilton; Patsy Brescia;
Moina Noor, Tom Cullen, Mary Mann, Tyrone McClain

LIBRARY STAFF: Christine Bradley, Director; Sherelle Harris, Assistant Director

OTHERS: Mayor Harry Rilling

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Knopp called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and moved to agenda item 5a, Remarks by Mayor Rilling.

Mr. Knopp thanked the mayor for his support of the library. Mayor Rilling said that he is here tonight to stress the city's support for the library and to make the library the best it can be. He congratulated the board on the Library's strategic plan and then he outlined some of the opportunities ahead. He said that the city leased the First Taxing District building next door to the library at 3 Belden for offices for the Redevelopment Authority, though they will not use all 4000 sq. ft. He said that the city is negotiating an option to buy the property. They plan to purchase it for use by the library, and are looking at an option to purchase. Mayor Rilling also talked about the courthouse property. He said he could see the state's moving the courthouse to Stamford, in which case, they would have to offer the building to the city to purchase. He said they are also looking at the Eagles property. Mayor Rilling said he enjoyed reading Mr. Knopp's remarks in last month's board minutes about hospitals and universities being anchor institutions. He agrees that the library should be an anchor institution for the Wall Street area.

The mayor wants to make it clear that we will have a partnership between the City and the Library Board moving forward. He wants to get it right and make the best possible use of the property as an anchor for Norwalk's downtown.

Mayor Rilling also said that he has his legal team doing research on the Redevelopment authority and reviewing their strategic plan. Redevelopment's original mission was to restore Wall Street after the flood. We now have an opportunity to re-purpose Redevelopment and the Library board can be a partner.

Mr. Knopp said, speaking both personally and on behalf of the Board, that he is grateful for the mayor's support. He congratulated the mayor for moving quickly to prevent other interests from seeking to take a tenancy in the First District building.

Mr. Bloom voiced his concern about preserving the library's partnership with CT Public. He said that the building issues may have to be addressed sooner rather than later because of that partnership.

Mayor Rilling also announced his plan to put together a task force for the Library area. He also announced that his team went to New York this morning for a review of Norwalk's AAA rating. The mayor expects that the city may save \$2 million in interest payments in the coming year. He expects a favorable bond rating when they meet on July 23, 2019. He also plans to bond for 30 years instead of 15 since school buildings have that long a life span.

Mr. Bloom said that there will be more strength with a city committee. The mayor is very excited about the library's partnership with CT Public. He talked about how our programs were complimentary. Mr. Bloom described the classes that CT Public holds at Norwalk HS. Mayor Rilling talked about when the new Police building was being built, they had renderings available for the public to comment on. Mr. Cullen noted that form follows function.

Ms. Brescia brought up the application for a State Library construction grant. Mayor Rilling noted that the city had submitted the Letter of Intent. Mr. Knopp noted that the application may require approval from the Common Council even if they cancel their last meeting in August. Mayor Rilling said that if needed, they could get a quorum for the one item, to approve the library construction grant.

Ms. Brescia asked what are the next steps. The Mayor will put a team together with Mr. Knopp, Ms. Casey, and Ms. King. Ms. Noor noted that momentum is important. The library has been building momentum; people have the expectation that we will have a new library.

Mayor Rilling said that everything doesn't have to happen at once. We can do one part and then the other. We have had challenges with the schools. It is the state's call as to whether we build new or renovate. Mr. Knopp noted that the state reimbursement for school buildings is down to 32%. The state treats Norwalk as a wealthy town.

Ms. Brescia asked if we would put out an RFP for an architect. Mr. Cullen said that it was important to have a unified committee. The mayor said that his staff is committed. They know that this is what the city wants and needs.

Ms. Noor asked how does it happen. Mr. Knopp and Mayor Rilling will put together a team. The strategic plan is a good start. Mr. McClain asked when the committee would be formed. We do not want to lose momentum. Mayor Rilling said that now that the strategic plan is done, there need be no delay in forming the team. There is no lack of interest in the library. Mr. Bloom noted that during the library's planning process there were no negative comments about the library. The mayor noted that Norwalk people want to go to their own library, not to the Darien or Westport library.

Mr. Knopp then said that he wanted the board to take up items 5B, 5C, and 5D while the mayor was still present. A motion was made and seconded by Mr. Bloom and Mr. Cullen to remove from the table the acceptance of the Strategic Plan, approval of the Building Plan, and approval to submit the Notice of Intent to the State Library Board. All in favor.

A motion was made and seconded by Mr. Bloom and Mr. Cullen to approve the Strategic Plan, the Building Plan, and the Notice of Intent. The Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Brescia said the plan should be posted to the library's website.

Mayor Rilling noted that the Discovery Museum program at the library was a wonderful success.

2. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public were in attendance.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JUNE 13, 2019

**** MR. BLOOM MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**

**** MS. BRESCIA SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH 3 ABSTENTIONS- MS. MANN, MR. CULLEN, MR. MCCLAIN.**

5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

5G. Discussion of August meeting

Mr. Knopp asked that the Board cancel the August meeting subject to recall if we need to meet. Stantec is expected to come up with a design next week. Ms. Brescia said that if we have the meeting she would like to participate by phone.

Mr. Knopp said that the State Library board had sent an email saying that the City could submit certain documents after September 1 as long as the grant application itself was submitted by Sept. 1 by the City, so it may be possibly to acknowledge our approval at the September meeting. Mr. Knopp said that this grant is a big deal so he and Ms. Bradley will recheck the grant application form concerning Board approval. But we do not want

to approve it without seeing the plan. Therefore we will not post the cancellation of the August meeting until 48 hours before the meeting.

5E. Update on Discovery Museum project. Everyone likes the rockets going off in the main library foyer. The rockets will go to SoNo from August 5 to 25. The project is paid for 50/50 from the library budget and from the foundation. Mr. Knopp asked Ms. Harris to do publicity for the project with weekly updates. Mr. McClain offered to share flyers with people in his building. Mr. Knopp noted that we should be sure to include the attendance numbers for the rocket demos in our program statistics.

5F Update on PopUp library

Ms. Bradley said that the PopUp is in Manchester CT getting the top installed. Ms. Oatis will go up there because she is not getting info from the company. Ms. Brescia said that we should use the PopUp to visit seniors in the fall.

Mr. Knopp asked Ms. Harris if she knew what was going on with the BOE's cutbacks to Adult Ed. Ms. Harris will talk with the coordinator and report back at the next meeting.

6. ADMINISTRATION REPORT

A. Statistics July 1, 2018-April, 2019

Ms. Bradley commented on the increase in attendance at children's programs as well as the increase in offsite collections in the train station, tax collector's office, and at the beach. Meeting room bookings have spiked to 3648 from 2000 five years ago. Total door count is over 600,000. Book circulation is down but streaming/downloading of materials has increased to 50,000 titles this year.

7. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed this evening.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business discussed this evening.

9. ADJOURNMENT OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Bradley, Library Director