

**CITY OF NORWALK  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
DECEMBER 10, 2020  
VIA ZOOM**

ATTENDANCE: Alex Knopp, President; Ralph Bloom; Patsy Brescia; Mary Mann;  
Moina Noor; Janine Williams

STAFF: Sherelle Harris, Interim Director; Laurie Iffland, Director of  
Technical Services

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Knopp called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**5. PRESIDENTS REPORT -- Alex Knopp**

E. Action

Discussion and Approval of NPL Technology Plan (presented by Laurie Iffland)  
[NOTE: This item will be taken up first in the meeting due to Ms. Iffland's schedule.]

Ms. Iffland presented the Norwalk Public Library Technology Plan and fielded questions from the Board. She said that once the goals are accomplished, they need to plan for funding. She said the Library always used the four-prong approach and that will not change. She described the plan implementation and the staff training.

Ms. Iffland said that when she wrote the plan, she had a number of initiatives, but they now need to be reassessed due to Covid. She said the plan was a living document and that she is always open to suggestions. A priority of the plan is to get all staff on the same operating system for both security purposes and best practices goals.

Ms. Iffland continued with her presentation and said she hopes they would go to a cloud based ILS (Integrated Library System) iii's Sierra, ~~Office 365~~ soon. She noted there is a large over subscription for the Library and that they do not need the printers ~~and paper~~ they once did. She added that even before Covid, they did not need as many printers. She said they can do a lot of consolidating and get a large printer. This contract must be negotiated by the City. Belden Avenue has a higher volume of use over the SoNo branch.

Ms. Iffland talked about the differences between this plan and the plan that is currently in place. She said she wrote a mission and vision statement. She said she divided her goals and objectives. Another project is to implement wireless printing. The library will also implement secure, pay by credit card service, for our patrons. We are in the process of

procuring 2 laptop vending machines, one for each branch, for the patrons. Remote services have blossomed since Covid. Ms. Iffland said that all the services she wants to offer are in addition to what is already in place.

Ms. Noor asked how Covid is shifting the library world. Ms. Iffland said the hardware has to be different. Also, with Covid, they need to think about equipping staff with devices that are virtual friendly. Ms. Noor asked about the demographics of users. Ms. Iffland will find out.

Mr. Knopp commended Ms. Iffland on the plan and said he hoped it would be approved tonight. He ~~She~~ told Ms. Iffland that she may want to go through the objectives list and cut it down a bit. Ms. Brescia said that marketing should be a goal. Ms. Iffland said there is no budget for a marketing plan. She said it is important to have a marketing plan for all of the services and will work with Ms. Harris.

**\*\* MS. NOOR MOVED TO APPROVE NPL TECHNOLOGY PLAN  
SUBJECT TO REVISIONS  
\*\* MS. BRESCIA SECONDED  
\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

## **2. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA**

No additions were made to the agenda.

## **3. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments this evening.

## **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Special Meeting of

September 29, 2020 – Special Meeting

November 12, 2020 - Regular Meeting

Update on Minutes of October 8, 2020 regular meeting

Mr. Knopp explained that for some reason, the minutes of October 8<sup>th</sup> were posted incorrectly. Ms. Brescia said she did not have a chance to see the minutes. The minutes were tabled to the next meeting.

## **5. PRESIDENTS REPORT** -- Alex Knopp

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#### A. Status of NPL reopening plan

Mr. Knopp reported that the reopening plan is status quo. They are still accepting individual appointments and sidewalk pickups.

##### 1. Plan for Winter-related “walk-up window(s)”

Ms. Harris explained that she would like to use one of the windows near the main library entrance for curbside pickup. She is working with Guardian. She said that the building and window provide a layer of protection for staff and patron and it is located directly adjacent to the book return for convenience. The South Norwalk branch does not have to make any accommodations, because people can drive up to the door.

#### B. Status of Review NPL ED Job Description and Search

Mr. Knopp said he heard that the City approved the job description and the job will be advertised. A selection committee will be selected.

Ms. Harris recused herself and left the meeting during the discussion.

Ms. Brescia asked about the salary scale. Mr. Knopp noted that salaries are not included in job descriptions.

##### 1. Response of City Personnel Dept. to ED Search Consultant assistance

Mr. Knopp described the recruitment process and said that under past practice, the Mayor makes the decision. He asked Board members to let him know if they wanted to be on the search committee. The City will post the position.

Ms. Harris re-joined the meeting.

#### C. Follow-up re NPL Nov. 17, 2020 Letter on FY 2021 Operating Budget Request\* (see copy at end of this agenda)

The Board agreed to ask the City to retain two positions - full-time Custodian and full-time Library Assistant. Mr. Knopp said the City refused to retain these positions, but he will continue to advocate because it is a matter of public health. He said that the Library seems to be absorbing a disproportionate hit of early retirement and staff reductions.

The next opportunity to present will be in early January to the Board of Estimate and Taxation. Mr. Knopp said that the Library is one of the best used facilities in the City. Ms. Brescia said she is an advocate for fighting the issue. Mr. Knopp said his letter is below and asked if anyone has any revisions. He said they can submit the letter to the Board of Estimate and Taxation. Ms. Harris said she was told by the Finance Department

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that they are not going to replace the positions. Mr. Knopp said the Board has the right to know their rationale for their reason.

D. Follow-up on Board adoption of temporary policy of not accepting book donations (see below):

Mr. Knopp said the following notice is on the website and posted at the book return.

**NORWALK PUBLIC LIBRARY POLICY ADOPTING MORATORIUM ON ACCEPTING DONATIONS OF BOOKS AND OTHER PHYSICAL ITEMS DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC**

Adopted by the NPL Board of Directors on November 12, 2020 Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Norwalk Public Library will not accept donations of books or other physical items until further notice.

The Library's highest priority is to protect the health of our community, including patrons and staff, during the pandemic.

Please do not leave donations of any kind at either of our library locations. We would sincerely appreciate your donations at a later time when we are safely able to accept them.

The Friends of the Norwalk Public Library will resume book sales when it is safe to do so. In the meantime, free library book giveaways are available in the cart in front of the main Library on Belden Avenue.

Please visit the website of the Friends for updates:  
<https://www.norwalklib.org/145/Friends-ofthe-Library>.

Mr. Knopp said he had a discussion with Mr. Bloom and he agreed to not put out the free book cart until the virus recedes.

**6. ADMINISTRATION REPORT— Sherelle Harris**

**A. General Announcements**

**1. Status of Sidewalk Service**

Ms. Harris said the sidewalk service continues to be popular and people enjoy it. Mr. Knopp asked Ms. Harris to compliment the staff.

**2. Status of Library by Appointment Service**

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Ms. Harris said this service is picking up.

### 3. Status of employee health reports

Ms. Harris reported that as a response to some positive tests, she asked the Supervisors to create teams and stagger their working at home and in the library to prevent the wiping out of a department if there are other positive tests. Staff must have a negative test to come back to work.

Ms. Harris reported that SoNo is short two positions and believes they are in the process of being filled. Mr. Knopp explained that customarily personnel has been under the City. He said that he has not interacted with Mr. Daniels, except to object to the cutting of two positions. Mr. Knopp told Ms. Harris that he would be glad to intervene to help. Ms. Mann asked what would happen if someone got sick. Ms. Brescia said that basically, they are down five positions. Mr. Knopp said he would work on this.

Ms. Harris said that all employees are negative now. Mr. Knopp asked Ms. Harris if she needed anything from the Board. She said that the chart showing quarantine requirements was reviewed by the Health Department and sent to the staff. She said she is working on a comprehensive plan as time permits.

### 4. Status of Database and Downloadable items usage

Ms. Harris said the information is in the report in the package. She noted that the data base usage has gone up. Ms. Harris reported that homework help has gone up. A live online tutor is available daily.

### 5. Status of BOE-NPL Learning Pods Collaboration

Ms. Harris reported that attendance report provided in the package has fluctuated due to Covid issues. The Rowayton site closed and the remaining students were given the option to choose another site. Most were moved to the SoNo site. The Pods serve students who are on the hybrid program. Mr. Knopp asked if the Board of Education evaluated the Pods program. Ms. Harris will follow up.

## B. Report on Prior and Current Programs:

Ms. Harris reported that sidewalk service went up. People like the personal service. In person visits are picking up.

### 1. COVID-19 reporting chart (approved by the Norwalk Health Department)

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Ms. Harris mentioned the chart earlier. It was included in the package.

2. Statistics 3. Nijole/Blue Teapot Holiday Sidewalk Sales Plan

Ms. Harris reported that sandwiches will be supplied to staff on an honor system. Nijole is taking orders from Library patrons. Covid limits her traffic, but her list of items is on the Library website.

4. Report on Part 2 of the James Baldwin read

Ms. Harris said that Ms. Darlene Young did a phenomenal job of hosting in her absence. Over 100 people watched on Zoom and Facebook live.

5. Middle and High School debate on the electoral college (December)

Ms. Harris reported that the debate was very well researched by the students. She said she is looking to do more of these debates and will speak with the Curriculum department.

C. Announcement of Upcoming Programs

1. Next One Book One Community Book: *Children of the Land*

The next book will be a collaboration with the Spanish community sometime in March or April.

## 7. OLD BUSINESS

A. MERV Filters (completion)

Mr. Knopp reported that the filters were completed in both buildings. He noted they help with Covid.

## 8. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Brescia asked about the capital budget. Ms. Harris said she heard they were approved but has not seen anything. Mr. Knopp said that with the adoption of the new departments, the Norwalk Public Library's budget is incorporated into the Community Services Department and not the Library budget.

Mr. Knopp said he received a call from Jessica Casey to let him know they put \$4.5 million in next year's capital budget. He added that there may be a request from Finance to move it out further. Ms. Brescia asked how they can rally support for this funding

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request. Mr. Knopp said he believes all of the meetings will be by Zoom. He said he will come up with a Board endorsement of those funds. He said the Board will have to discuss a strategy.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**\*\* MS. MANN MOVED TO ADJOURN**  
**\*\* MS. BRESCIA SECONDED**  
**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi  
Telesco Secretarial Services

\*Nov. 17 letter to Lamond Daniels re staff positions in the NPL Operating Budget Request Lamond— I am writing to request on behalf of the NPL Board of Directors that the positions of full-time Custodian and full-time Library Assistant not be eliminated from the NPL's operating budget. The vote by the NPL Board was unanimous at its November 12 meeting.

The reasons for this request are reflected below in the email analysis we requested from Interim Director Sherelle Harris. As you know, Sec. 87-1 of the Norwalk Code (see below for full text) provides that the NPL Board shall present an annual budget to the Board of Estimate, albeit advisory only. Our budget that should be presented to the Bd. of Estimate does not include elimination of these 2 positions.

The Custodian position is of particular concern during this period of Covid for the safety of the NPL staff and patrons who use our facilities. Unless this position is maintained, I cannot guarantee whether the NPL Board will be able to reopen the libraries to their fullest extent in the future taking into account our concern for public health issues.

As the email memo below from the Interim Director makes clear, the NPL is being asked to absorb a disproportionate share of the City's staff reductions following the implementation of the early retirement program.

Whether this would be fair or equitable under normal circumstances, it certainly is not justifiable if the reduction in cleaning and custodial services might jeopardize public health for staff and patrons.

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As you may recall, I have been requesting from well prior to the retirement of Chris Bradley a proposed new staff restructuring proposal from the City but have never received it, so I felt it necessary at the request of the Board to communicate our recommendations prior to the final determination of the NPL's operating budget submission.

Regards, Alex