

**CITY OF NORWALK
NORWALK PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 11, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Alex Knopp, Chair; Sharon Baanante, Ralph Bloom, Mary Mann, Moina Noor, Jannie Williams

OTHERS: Sherelle Harris, Interim Library Director

This meeting was held via Zoom.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Knopp called the special meeting to order at 7:13 p.m. A quorum was present.

2. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:

Ms. Harris requested a Community Services Fair to be held at the Library

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was no one present from the public.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 11, 2021

**** MS. BAANANTE MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 11, 2021 MEETING.**

Mr. Knopp said that he had not found any issues with the minutes and added they were well written.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 11, 2021 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Knopp announced that he had moved the President's Report to the end of the agenda.

5. ADMINISTRATION REPORT— SHERELLE HARRIS

A. Employee Health Report

Ms. Harris said that there was one employee's mother who came down with COVID, but the employee tested negative. The spouse of another employee tested positive, but the employee tested negative.

B. Library One-Day Closing/Week Update

The Main Library is now open from 9 am. To 5 p.m. on Wednesdays. The South Norwalk branch will be closed on Thursdays due to staff shortages for the time being. The departments are continuing to stagger their schedules with the exception of the Technical Services Department due to the fact they have no contact with the public.

Ms. Baanante asked about the quarantine regulations for employees who have a family member who has contracted the virus. Mr. Knopp suggested that Ms. Harris check on whether the employee should be tested multiple times after a positive family testing and how long the quarantine period should be.

C. State Library Reopening Status Comparisons

Ms. Harris said that Norwalk looks like it was fairly average in comparison to the other libraries. Ms. Noor had some questions about the information contained in one of the documents regarding the other libraries' availability.

Ms. Noor asked where the libraries fit into the Governor's pending decision about re-opening later in the month. Ms. Harris said that there had been some pushback from the libraries about re-opening.

Mr. Knopp asked if there had been any decision about whether the staff would have to be vaccinated. He wished to know how the City will handle having some staff who have received vaccinations while others have not.

D. NPL – BOE Collaboration: Student GPAs per pod school location

Ms. Harris said that the pods have been closed due to attendance issues. She followed up with the schools and those pods that had high attendance resulted in high GPAs. Ms. Harris said that it seemed to her that the students who were committed to the pods did well. Mr. Knopp wondered what the students' GPAs were before attending the pods and what it was afterwards. Discussion followed about the effect of the pod opportunity on the students.

E. VITA Tax Service Update

Ms. Harris said that every slot at both libraries has been filled. There are no more slots available.

F. Operating Budget Cuts

Ms. Harris said that both she and Mr. Knopp had attended a budget meeting earlier in the day. DPW has agreed to plow both the South Norwalk and Main Branch library parking lot.

Ms. Harris reviewed the proposed budget reductions with the Board Members. The final reduction came to \$111,000.

Mr. Knopp said that he was concerned that the library was experiencing a disproportionately large budget reduction. He pointed out that the library had experienced reductions in every stage of the budget. Mr. Knopp pointed out that they had a reduction due to early retirement and as a result some positions were abolished. Another reduction happened when unfilled positions were eliminated. This was followed by \$100,000 being removed from the part time budget. Now the Library is being asked to reduce the budget by another half of one percent.

He expressed concern about the elimination of both the full time custodian and the reduction of the part time wages account. The part time custodians were intended to cover the full time custodian duties.

Mr. Knopp pointed out that the City's maintenance contractor, Guardian, covers the Police Department, City Hall and would be adding the libraries to the contracts. If there was some kind of event in the post-COVID environment, he did not want to jeopardize public safety due to these reductions. Discussion followed.

Mr. Knopp said that the Planning Commission restored the digitalization of The Hour. However, the request for the auditorium restoration project was removed from the list. The Common Council will be holding a public hearing about the Capital Budget on April 8th. Mr. Knopp said he was hopeful that the Mayor would restore the funding for the auditorium and it will remain in the Capital Budget.

Community Services Fair –

Ms. Harris said that the Fair would take place during spring break. There will be 25 vendors and the number of visitors would be capped at 30 at a time. Mr. Knopp expressed concerns about insuring that the attendees being accommodated appropriately and maintaining social distancing. Discussion followed.

Ms. Harris said that there would be a meeting on the 12th to finalize whether the Fair will take place. Ms. Mann suggested that they check into the possibility of Community Service Policing working with them. Discussion followed about the details.

**** MS. MANN MOVED TO APPROVE PARTICIPATING IN THE COMMUNITY SERVICE FAIR.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6. OLD BUSINESS

Invitation to Mr. Mohinder Kalsi re Sikh books

Mr. Knopp said that Mr. Kalsi, the leader of the Sikh community, had expressed concerns about inappropriate materials in the library. He suggested that they invite Mr. Kalsi to address the Board via Zoom at the next meeting.

7. NEW BUSINESS

There was no additional new business to consider at this time.

8. PRESIDENT’S REPORT

A. VOTE TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSE: Pursuant to C.G.S. Sect. 1-200(6)(A), discussion regarding candidates for the vacant Norwalk Public Library Executive Director position.

**** MR. KNOPP MOVED TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSE: PURSUANT TO C.G.S. SECT. 1-200(6)(A), FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSION REGARDING CANDIDATES FOR THE VACANT NORWALK PUBLIC LIBRARY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR POSITION.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Board entered into Executive Session FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSE: Pursuant to C.G.S. Sect. 1-200(6)(A), for the purpose of discussion regarding candidates for the vacant Norwalk Public Library Executive Director position at 7:58 p.m. They returned to Public Session at _____ No actions or votes were taken during Executive Session.

9. ADJOURNMENT OF DIRECTORS MEETING

**** _____ MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** _____ SECONDED.
** THE MOTION TO ADJOURN PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at _____ p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk
Norwalk Public Library Board
Regular Meeting
March 11, 2021