

MAUD PRESTON PALENSKE MEMORIAL LIBRARY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2022
DRAFT

Call to order: Board President Ren Baldwin (City of St. Joseph) called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Other board members present: Vice President Melissa Clapper (St. Joseph Township); Secretary William Ast (City of St. Joseph); Patrice Rose (St. Joseph Township); Mimi Elwell (St. Joseph Township); Barbara Thompson (City of St. Joseph); Betty Mundy (St. Joseph Township); and Kathy Buursma (City of St. Joseph).

Also present: Acting Director Paula Stakley; Curtis Osmun, library assistant for computer services; Claire Gillespie, volunteer coordinator; and Virginia Antonson of the Friends of the Library. No members of the public attended, either in person or remotely.

Friends of the Library: Antonson reported that the Friends of the Library November Used Book Sale will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 18, and from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 1:30 to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 19. The latter hours on Nov. 19 will be the \$6 bag sale.

The Friends will also hold a library bag sale on Nov. 18 and 19, but only 13 bags are left, Antonson said.

The library's August wish list cost \$2,400, Antonson told the board. The Friends have funds for the proposed exterior locker, but that idea is "in limbo," Antonson said. Stakley said she's "not sure there's a huge need for it."

Antonson said the Friends currently has over 50 members "paid up," and about 25 of them are active. The group will elect officers in December, and all officers have agreed to stand for re-election, she added.

Approval of minutes: Elwell, supported by Clapper, moved to approve, with corrections, the minutes of the Sept. 27 board meeting. Osmun said his job title had been incorrectly listed. The board voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

Bills: Elwell moved to approve bills totaling \$11,807.98, and Buursma supported the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve paying the bills.

Revised July bills: Baldwin said the July bills total needed to be revised as it should have included the library lawyer's bill of \$2,635 for negotiating the resignation conditions for former director Stephanie Maisin. A corrected report will be available, he said.

Financial report: Baldwin said due to the economic downturn, the library's Berrien Community Foundation funds have not been doing as well as they once were. However, the funds "do have available balances," he added.

Thompson, supported by Buursma, moved to accept the financial report. The board in a unanimous vote approved the motion.

Computer Use Policy: Clapper moved to accept a second reading of revisions to the library's computer use policy.

Stakley said some library computer users are “getting pushed away from the computers” because they do not have and cannot easily get the required identification credentials. The current time limits for computer use “feel very restrictive” as more and more visitors are bringing in their own devices, and there is no longer a need for time limits, she added.

The board voted unanimously to approve a second reading of policies that correct both conditions.

LED Sign: Stakley said the library’s LED sign “just went out” and was no longer working. The cost of the required new part, a PC controller, is \$2,000. Baldwin said the repair “is within the director’s purview.” “I miss seeing it,” he said about the sign.

Search Committee: Clapper said she and committee members Buursma, Mundy, and Thompson have been meeting to begin the process of hiring a new director. Members have been in touch with the Lincoln Township Public Library board, which is also hiring a new director, she said.

Lincoln Township Board members shared a copy of their director’s job description, and are using a consultant to help their search. “We’re kind of leaning that way,” she said.

Before the position can be posted, the board must agree on a job description, a salary range, benefits package, any residency requirement, and a budget for the hiring process, Clapper said. She also asked all board members for input on short- and long-term challenges, and submit those to the committee before the November board meeting.

Lincoln Township’s consultant is Brian Mortimore, pension plan coordinator for the Kent County District Library, who also runs Mortimore Consulting LLC, according to Mundy. His fee is \$16,000, but he is also “willing to help us with our search even if we don’t hire him,” she stated in a written report. She also said Mortimore told her it is “important to keeping momentum going” in the search.

Baldwin said he had met with St. Joseph City Manager John Hodgson, who gave him information on the city’s benefits package. “I’ll pass that information to you,” he told Clapper.

Elwell, supported by Rose, moved to hire a consultant to help find a new director. The board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Rules of conduct: Thompson in an email to board members said she had visited the library and that a political group advocating voter approval of Proposal 2 was there. She said she would prefer such groups operate outside of the library building itself, as that would make it more evident the library itself is not taking any political position on issues. At least, the library should post a sign stating it is not endorsing a political position, she added.

Baldwin said it’s too late to come up with a policy before the November election, but the board afterwards should consider “how to tweak, or not, our position” on advocacy groups. For now, the library should move any advocate group’s physical location further back in the building, and post a sign stating the library does not advocate any positions on political issues, he said.

Baldwin asked the board for a consensus agreement on that, and no board members objected.

Director’s report: Stakley said the library is “bringing back children’s programming.” Movie night has not been restarted, as that “stretches out our staff a bit,” she added.

Comments: Baldwin thanked Search Committee members for the time they have put into the search. “I feel good about how things are ramping up,” he said.

Clapper asked whether the library had any policies covering objections to books, such as has been happening at public schools’ libraries. “I would like to look at that policy and make sure we’re covered,” she said.

Stakley said there are forms for people to submit if they object to any books in the collection. Clapper she would like to review those forms, and Baldwin said that item should be “put on the agenda.”

Adjournment: Ast moved to adjourn the meeting, and Elwell supported the motion. The board voted unanimously to adjourn.

Baldwin declared the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

William F. Ast III
Board Secretary