

MAUD PRESTON PALENSKE MEMORIAL LIBRARY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Special meeting, Wednesday, Dec. 14, 2022
DRAFT

Call to order: Board President Ren Baldwin (City of St. Joseph) called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

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

Also present: Claire Gillespie, volunteer coordinator; Curtis Osmun, library assistant for computer services; Jesse Crosby, library assistant for technical services; and, by Zoom, library director search consultant Brian Mortimore. No members of the public attended, either in person or remotely.

Budget amendment: Baldwin said the board would “forgo” action for on the budget for the time being. Under consideration is transferring funds from savings to professional services in order to compensate Interim Director Paula Stakley for taking on the extra duties of director. Stakley was not present at the meeting, as her father had died recently.

Review of applications for director: Mortimore said advertisements for the vacant director’s post had attracted four candidates, including Stakley. Two candidates later withdrew their applications, he said, but added, “I don’t want the board to be discouraged by that.” If necessary, the library can always seek more candidates, and “it only takes one individual to be library director,” he added.

The application deadline was Dec. 9. Mortimore said the board may extend that deadline.

Mortimore said Stakley has “been in the game since 1999, and is “very vested in the community and the library.” Baldwin added that Stakley “strikes me as someone very dedicated to the library,” and Mortimore added, “On paper, Paula looks like a great candidate.”

Thompson described Stakley as “a capable leader.”

The other candidate is Eric Magness-Eubank of Alpena, former director of the Alpena County Public Library. “Eric on paper also looks like a strong candidate, Mortimore said, adding that his strengths include grant writing, endowments, new services, and “a wealth of library experience ... he’s got great experience.”

In a letter to Baldwin, Magness-Eubank said he had been fired by the Alpena library's board, but would be "happy to discuss this further" with the St. Joseph board.

Magness-Eubank wrote that the Alpena library had been hit hard by the Covid epidemic during a major renovation project. Employees were working at two temporary locations, and, concentrating on the renovation and Covid mandates, he had "set aside some responsibilities, primarily involving workplace tensions.

"Most of my work was time-consuming and invisible to both the staff and the board," Magness-Eubank wrote. "As a result, I was fired."

Mortimore said some think it's noble to resign in such circumstances, but he believes "the noble thing to do is to try to fix the problem."

Baldwin said the next step is a special board meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 10, for interviews with the two candidates.

Clapper moved to interview the two candidates at a special meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 10. Mundy seconded the motion, and the board voted unanimously to approve it.

Clapper moved to extend the director application deadline to Jan. 6, and Buursma supported the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Mortimore said he will ask some "two-thirds" of the questions at the Jan. 14 interview. Some questions will be "basic blocking and tackling for a library director," and some will be tailored to the St. Joseph Public Library, he added.

Board members may also ask questions by writing them on 3x5 cards, and he will read the questions to the candidates, Mortimore said. But the board may also ask questions on their own, he added.

Adjournment: Ast moved to adjourn the meeting, and Buursma supported the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve the motion. Baldwin declared the meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

William Ast
Board secretary

Next meeting: Special open meeting, 4 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 10.

Next regularly scheduled meeting, 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 24.