

MAUD PRESTON PALENSKE MEMORIAL LIBRARY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Special meeting
Tuesday, Jan. 24, 2023
DRAFT

Call to order: Board President Ren Baldwin (City of St. Joseph) called the special meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

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

Also present: Library director search consultant Brian Mortimore of Mortimore Consultants LLC; Paula Stakely, interim director of the Maud Preston Palenske Memorial Library and director candidate; Claire Gillespie, volunteer coordinator; Curtis Osmun, library assistant for computer service. No members of the public attended, either in person or remotely.

Director interview: Mortimore asked Stakely about her experience as interim director, and how that was different from her previous post.

“The biggest difference is, I’m the one who gets to decide,” Stakely replied. She said several issues came up while she was interim director, such as water leaks, and added that the board had been “very supportive.”

In response to another question, Stakely said former director Mary Kynast was “my light as to how I wanted to be as director.” She said she is taking “a new director workshop” from the Library of Michigan and has been learning about library finances and legal matters.

Regarding working with staff on changes, Stakely said, “If I can communicate the ‘why’ of changes, that helps.”

Asked about maintenance issues, Stakely replied, “Knock wood — it’s been mostly under control since we’ve had our big upgrades.”

On learning about board operations, Stakely said she’s already been “taking charge of board (meeting) packets, and I’ve already made changes.”

Asked about things she’d like to see the board do more or less of, Stakely said she’d like to see the board “dive into fund raising. It’s fallen on staff, and we’re already trying to shoehorn that into other things we’re doing.”

Stakely said she’s been attending St. Joseph City Commission meeting, and has been at one St. Joseph Township Board meeting and plans to attend more. She said she’s also been working on contacts with area schools.

Asked about her possible legacy, Stakely said, “I hope they remember that that I did right for the community, and made the library a gem for our community.”

Stakely said she’s already had a number of “all hand on deck” moments, but added those times are “moments that bond us as a team.”

Clapper asked Stakely what she had learned from her experience as interim director.

“I’m braver than I think,” Stakely replied. She said that on her husband’s advice, she wrote a letter of withdrawal. “I did it, and it didn’t make me feel good. I wasn’t ready to quit. After I did that, I said, ‘Okay then, I’m in.’”

Stakely left the room at 4:48 p.m., and the board discussed her candidacy. All board members agreed she was a superb candidate.

Adjournment: Ast moved to adjourn the special meeting, and Elwell supported the motion. The board voted unanimously to adjourn, and Balwin declared the meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary William Ast