

AUSTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MEETING

June 10, 2024; 4:30 p.m.

Board Chairperson Stephanie Postma called the regular meeting of the Austin Public Library Board to order at 4:30 p.m., on Monday, June 10, 2024, at the Austin Public Library.

PRESENT: Melissa Bonorden, Kristi Beckman, Sue Grove, Ted Hinchcliffe, Nitaya Jandragholica, Stephanie Postma

ALSO PRESENT: City Council Liaison Jeff Austin, Julie Clinefelter, Sara Steinhoff

ABSENT WITH NOTICE: Jwokamer Debock, Gema Alvarado-Guerrero, Valerie Sheedy

AGENDA:

Kristi Beckman moved to approve the agenda; Melissa Bonorden seconded. Motion carried.

MINUTES:

Julie Clinefelter noted an error in the May 13, 2024, minutes, stating the Sicora full-day leadership workshops would be completed in May and June, and not July as recorded. A motion was made by Sue Grove, seconded by Ted Hinchcliffe, to approve the May 13, 2024, meeting minutes with a change reflecting the correct information. Carried.

EXPENSES AND FINANCE REPORTS:

Julie Clinefelter advised the repairs and maintenance category of expenses was over the budgeted amount for the year by a significant amount, but only because the line item includes the cost for replacing/upgrading the lighting fixtures, which will be covered by use of library fund balance monies as previously approved by the board. She noted without that cost in the total, the amount spent on that category would reflect normal spending for this point in the budget year. A motion was made by Kristi Beckman to approve expenditures and accept the finance reports for May 2024. Ted Hinchcliffe seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous roll-call vote.

GIFTS REPORT:

A motion was made by Melissa Bonorden to accept all gifts and grant funds received by the library in May 2024. Nitaya Jandragholica seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

SELCO REPORT: None.

CITY/COUNTY LIAISON REPORTS:

City Council Liaison Jeff Austin reported the employee engagement full-day workshops for those in leadership roles have been going well. He noted the 2025 budget process is getting started and filing for candidates who will run in this year's elections closed recently.

County Liaison was not present.

OPERATIONAL REPORT:

Julie Clinefelter provided a written report prior to the board meeting, and discussed the following items:

Library Staff:

Julie reported she participated in a full-day training course on Mental Health First Aid offered to county and city employees recently. In addition, she stated Adult Services Librarian Courtney Schmitt attended a four-day workshop as part of the MLA Institute for Leadership Excellence (MILE) and will continue her participation in that program through working with an assigned mentor and assisting with future events.

Library Programs:

Clinefelter noted the library received approval of the SEMAC grant for a skateboard art program for youth ages 8-18, with a specialty artist from the Twin Cities, Mark Rivard. She also reported she had received a video of the presentation given by her and Dylan Berthiaume at MCTC on the Drag Queen Story Hour program, and she will share that recording with SELCO libraries. The director also provided reports on the recent Story Time with Roxi, the Summer Reading Program in progress, and the 4th Avenue Fest and Project 25 Wrap-Up party, which all produced good results and positive feedback.

Administration:

Julie made note of the recent New York Times article on changes in libraries over the past few decades. Board members discussed the impact of those changes on how the library is and should be staffed, how they affect the programs and services offered in order to respond to community needs, and how that message can be shared more widely to assure ongoing support and financial well-being for the library.

Clinefelter reported the library has discontinued its advertising and weekly program with KAUS, since changes made by station management were significant enough that the program no longer fit the library's needs. She also advised the library will be closed on August 6, and close early August 7, for the employee engagement departmental sessions with Sicora Consulting, noting the dates were selected because they coincide with the Mower County Fair, which are historically low-traffic days for the library.

Hotspot Program:

Director Clinefelter reported she attended a recent Apex meeting regarding internet access in the community. She noted the conversation emphasized the equity aspect of the digital divide and that it must be addressed if we are going to be a welcoming community. In response to questions, Julie noted library staff time for hotspots is approximately four to six hours per week to administer and implement the lending program, not including irregular tasks and projects such as mass device updates, grant applications and reporting, etc. In response to how those hours might otherwise be used, Julie advised there would be opportunities to stay on top of emerging trends in technology, additional education programs for the public, and a wide variety of new programs and services to be explored. She stated the plan for 2025 is to apply for Hormel Foundation grant funding to support the current 160 library devices, which would likely have longer waiting lists now that the 100 devices provided to families of students through Austin Aspires have been discontinued.

Sunday Open Hours Follow-Up:

Julie informed the board that statistics from the last few weeks with Sunday open hours showed no drastic changes from the stats for January through April, and supported the board's decision in May to discontinue Sunday hours going forward, unless a change in circumstances or community need warrants reconsideration of the issue.

Library Services:

Clinefelter discussed the issues with availability of digital resources, such as eBooks and eAudiobooks, as use of and requests for those items continue to increase. She commented on the complexity of the obstacles to making those items easier to access, including the interests of publishing companies and their complicated relationship with libraries.

Also related to digital equity, Julie noted she has written an article for the Herald that will come out soon that highlights the digital divide and the need for a community response, in light of the May 31 end date for Austin Aspires' grant-funded student hotspot program. Julie advised she is working to revive interest and momentum with the digital equity community group, especially since the federal affordable connectivity program has also ended, noting the issue is a larger conversation than something the library can solve on its own - even partially - with the hotspot lending program. She stated she will keep the board apprised of developments and feedback she receives.

OTHER BUSINESS:

The Finance Committee scheduled a meeting to discuss the proposed budget for 2025 on July 8, at 3:45 p.m.

CITIZEN'S COMMENTS: None.

BOARD COMMENTS:

Kristi Beckman expressed appreciation for Youth Services Librarian Salie Olson's work with the Teen and Tween Advisory Boards, noting they are great leadership development opportunities. Sue Grove commented on the success of the 4th Avenue Fest and said the Project 25 Wrap Up celebration went well.

ADJOURNMENT:

Kristi Beckman moved to adjourn at 5:15 p.m.; Ted Hinchcliffe seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sara Steinhoff, Secretary

NEXT BOARD MEETING – Monday, July 8, 2024, 4:30 p.m.