

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

March 18, 2009

6:30 pm

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER: Chris Hansen who presided called the meeting to order at 6:38 pm.

Present were: Susan Capeci, Arlene Roberts-Grant, Danna Wood-Webb, Trustees.

Also present were: Mary Ellen Forte, WLS Trustee Board; Gary Newman, CSEA Unit President; Shirley Garrett; Deborah Ramsey and Cheryl Thomas, Library Staff; Carmela Bonaiuto; Former Library Staff, Ruth Shire, President, Friends of the Mount Vernon Public Library; Althea Anderson, Robert Gardner and Emma Traore, Patrons; Opal Brown Lindsay, Director; Karen Preuss, Assistant Director; Willie Lou Gayles, Chief Account Clerk and Mary Harper, Administrative Assistant.

MINUTES:

The Minutes of the meeting of February 25, 2009 were approved without objection.

PERIOD OF PUBLIC EXPRESSION:

Ruth Shire spoke about her long association with the Mount Vernon Public Library and how she felt about the proposed move of the Virginia Moskowitz McClellan Local History Room. Mrs. McClellan was a curator and volunteer who set up the room and the room was named after her. She was also on the library trustee board for a period of time.

Mary Ellen Forte said that she had tried to contact Mrs. McClellan but was unable to speak with her.

Carmela Bonaiuto said that many hours were donated to preserving the Local History Room by Mount Vernon residents. The room is a treasure and it would be a shame to lose it. She said that the room should be protected and remain where it is. Mrs. Bonaiuto suggested that the room be named after Mrs. McClellan. She said that there were maps, zoning, ethnic collections, genealogy and family collections. She said it would be a disaster if the materials in the room were put on open shelves and asked that the room not be allowed to be moved.

Deborah Ramsey and Cheryl Thomas questioned when the library would grant salary increases. Chris Hansen stated that there had been no contract agreement.

Althea Anderson stated that she felt there was a lack of security in the library. She spoke about the fearful atmosphere with many young people misbehaving. She said that many times patrons must call the police and get involved. She felt that people are getting turned off from coming to the library.

Robert Gardner said that when groups of kids are unruly it is hard to find security to handle the situation.

Mr. Gardner also questioned the need for a better security policy regarding the public restrooms.

Emma Traore spoke about a security incident she witnessed while entering the building. Althea Anderson questioned if security's hands were tied and if they were allowed to call the police.

Suggestions regarding new security procedures and guidelines were also discussed.

Mr. Newman question why security was never addressed by the administration unless it was brought to their attention by the public.

The issue of patrons viewing pornography on the WEB was also discussed. The issue of censorship and preventing patrons from viewing objectionable materials was debated. Chris Hansen said that he was strongly opposed to censoring. He said that there were two separate issues, what patrons look at and what can be seen by other patrons passing by.

It was suggested that the computers be relocated or privacy screens be put in place. Mrs. Lindsay felt that moving the computers back was not a proper use of space.

Gary Newman stated that the library has made a conscious decision to deemphasize education, students' educational needs and the role of the library. Mr. Newman continued that the library is tossing out thousands of books. The library is being turned into a community and recreational center. He said these are not the decisions of the Board of Trustees whether they know it or not.

Mr. Newman stated that twice the board told the Director not to move the Local History Room without Board approval. The Director has moved to rearrange the fiction room and now the Board is seeing what is happening. The response of the administration is always to blame the staff.

Mr. Newman continued that there are major changes that the public does not understand and there is no attempt to solicit public opinion. He said that the public is not being given honest answers.

Chris Hansen said that the Board of Trustees does not agree with Mr. Newman's opinion.

COMMUNICATIONS:

A letter was received from former employee Nancy DeSantis regarding the Local History Room.

A letter was received from the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) announcing the Black Achiever in Industry Award will be presented to Mrs. Christine Gibson, a member of the Friends of the Mount Vernon Public Library. The Board congratulates Mrs. Gibson on this award.

FRIEND'S REPORT:

The "Friends" will issue a newsletter.

There will be a general membership meeting of the "Friends" on March 21, 2009 to discuss future plans and projects.

The Friends will hold a "Book and Bake" sale in May.

WLS TRUSTEE REPORT:

Library Lobby Day was attended by over 1000 library advocates, with 31 being from Westchester County. WLS partnered with other library systems to attend. Advocates are encouraged to send emails to their local legislators regarding the budget.

The Book and Author Luncheon will be held on Thursday, April 16, 2009. The emphasis will be on mystery and thriller writers. WLS Trustee, Dave Donelson will be one of the authors.

WLS Trustee Mary Ellen Forte attended a play on January 18, 2009 at the library. She said that it was extremely well attended. She said that positive things are happening at the library.

Mrs. Forte said that the new WLS Director, Terry Kirshner is doing fine.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Opal Brown Lindsay reported the following:

Karen Preuss was welcomed as the new Assistant Library Director.

Last month the library received a grant for the Junior League of Bronxville for the Children's Room to sponsor supplies that will be helpful in managing Homework service.

Opal Brown Lindsay and WLS Director, Terry Kirchner visited State Senator Jeff Klein on behalf of the library system.

Discussions were held regarding a Health Advocacy program to be stationed here at the library.

An additional \$500.00 was received from Arts of Westchester for the "Through the Years" project. The initial grant received by the library was for \$2000.00. The start date of the project has been moved back in the hopes of receiving additional funding.

The installation of the new 3M security system will begin on Monday. Additional security guards will be needed.

DPW has approved estimates for carpeting in the Periodicals and Reference areas.

Recent adjustments have been made to the Main Library area to better utilize library space.

Scholastic Incorporated is sponsoring a children's story time with author, Debbie Guarino; author of "Is Your Mama a Lama" on Saturday, March 21, 2009.

The two part-time librarians have been hired for full-time positions. The director wishes to replenish the library's part time stock. The library continues to search for a Collection Development Head.

Volunteer services and partnerships include; Americorps, the Mount Vernon Youth Bureau; Teens in action (Parks Dept.) and Mount Vernon High School; National Honor Society students.

FINANCIALS:

Willie Lou Gayles said that the revised January 2009 report was sent to the Board.

Several line items must to be shifted in the budget. The carpeting expenditure will be reimbursed out of the capital budget.

The February 2009 Bills and Payrolls totaling \$397, 781.24 properly certified by the Director and reviewed by Danna Wood-Webb and Arlene Roberts Grant were approved by the Board of Trustees and requested paid.

The checks are numbered #019264 - 019316 (payrolls), #55663-55703 (payrolls, petty cash), and #29969-030022 (bills).

OLD BUSINESS:

There are a number of people expressing concern about the closing of the Local History Room. It was agreed that this decision would be made as a board. The Board toured the Local History Room and the Young Adult area.

Mrs. Lindsay said that the time line for moving the Local History Room would take a while. Every item must be viewed and identified.

The downside to moving the Young Adult room to the fiction area is that fewer materials will be instantly accessible. There is concern that concentrating all of the young adults in one closed area may exacerbate the problems.

Arlen Grant said that many new libraries are focusing on a designated space for Young Adults.

Karen Preuss said that if the young adults have their own space, it frees up the problem of computers, but more equipment is needed.

Gary Newman spoke about the basic philosophy of young adults and children using the reference and YA areas. He said many under educated adults and kids may be intimidated by having to use a room with a large teenage population.

The question arose, how you service informational needs. It may be more difficult to service children and adults if the collection is moved. It is felt if a librarian is present at all times, then there should be no problem with service.

Opal Lindsay stated that she felt putting the young adults in a separate room would diminish the need to constantly call the authorities.

The board agreed that there were pro's and con's to changing the Young Adult room, but would defer to the director.

The Board unanimously decided to allow the Director to change the Fiction Room to the Young Adult Room. The Board postponed any decision on moving the Local History Room.

It was felt that items in the Local History Room could be put around the library without a danger of being taken. It was proposed that a security door be placed at the new site for the Local History Room once the collection is cataloged.

Karen Preuss said she thinks that there are a lot of materials in the room that any use could destroy. An archivist is needed and materials should be digitized. Grant money has been identified for this project. There are things in the room that no one should handle or they may disintegrate.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chris Hansen said if there were additional money in the budget for part-time librarians, he was in favor of hiring them.

The Board authorized hiring two to three part-time librarians and at least one full time librarian.

There are still questions regarding the West Law program and the need to keep volumes of books in the law collection that can now be accessed online.

Chris Hansen said there is concern about the amount of money being spent on legal fees. The library will talk to other lawyers in order to get a better deal.

Trustee Susan Capecci will represent the library board on the Board of Education's library trustee selection committee.

Several new policies should be examined; rules of conduct, bathroom policy and security policy. The library's Code of Conduct will be reexamined.

The need for added security in the library was discussed. With the installation of the materials security system, two additional guards will be working at the library. It was felt that the library should hire a private security firm to assess the library's needs.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

The Board entered Executive Session at 8:40 pm. The Board returned to public session at 9:07 pm.
The following decision was recorded:
The Board authorized the expenditure for a mediator for union negotiations.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m. without objection.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary