

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
October 17, 2012  
6:30 PM  
MINUTES

Na'im Tyson, who presided, called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.  
Present were: Millie Burns and Marcia Dupree  
Absent: Winston Maharaj and Julie Mills Worthey

Also present: Janet Langsam, Executive Director and Joanne Mongelli, Deputy Director, ArtsWestchester; Gary Newman, CSEA Unit President; Greg Maker, The Daily Voice; Cara Matthews, The Journal News; Hafeezah Basir, , Clyde D. Herring and Tamara Stewart, Library Patrons; Shawn Lucas Dunnom, Scott Griffith, Leroy Lea, Rebecca Newman and Cheryl Thomas, Library Staff; Donna Hurwitz, Library Director and Mary Harper, Administrative Assistant

MINUTES:

The minutes of the meeting of September 19, 2012 was approved as amended.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Millie Burns said that the screening of "Every Mother's Son" by Tami Gold was scheduled for Monday, November 19, 2012 at 6:30 pm.

The film deals with overzealous police and three mothers, Iris Baez, Kadiatou Diallo and Doris Busch Boskey whose sons were unjustly killed by police.

Ms. Burns said that Tami Gold suggested inviting Kenneth Chamberlain, the son of a marine vet killed by the White Plains police.

She said she realized that it was the anniversary of Mr. Chamberlain's father's death and instead sent a letter.

Kenneth Chamberlain replied that he had no plans for that day and would not only be delighted to attend the screening, but will be a speaker.

Ms. Burns said that a first announcement with the date of the screening will be sent via eblast.

PERIOD OF PUBLIC EXPRESSION:

Tamara Stewart inquired about the status of getting the 2014 budget out to vote next spring.

Donna Hurwitz said that she was waiting to here from Winston Maharaj, the financial guru. There are figures that must be discussed.

Donna Hurwitz said that she gave the mayor the figures for the 2013 budget. These figures have not been discussed with the board.

Tamara Stewart asked if there were ongoing discussions about the 2014 budget going out to vote.

Na'im Tyson said as we go along we will have discussions about the 2014 budget based on the 2013 budget.

Tamara Stewart said that when it was last discussed there was some confusion about what the process was.

Na'im Tyson said that he would take a different tactic. He said that they were more concerned about the 2013 budget since they must close the books for 2012.

Janet Langsam displayed the maquette of the public art piece selected to go on Second Avenue. Ms. Langsam said that ArtsWestchester has had a relationship with the library for about five years and has brought exhibitions to the Rotunda Gallery. They have done many shows that were wonderful.

Janet Langsam said that they have brought workshops for children and adults to the library. Trustee Millie Burns has curated an exhibition of Mount Vernon artists.

Ms. Langsam said that ArtsWestchester had put out requests for proposals for a public sculpture for the Second Avenue side of the library.

Over fifty artists submitted their work. A panel reviewed the submissions and three finalists were chosen; one from Brooklyn and two from Westchester.

The maquettes of the three works were displayed in the library for public comment.

The panel met and picked one finalist and one alternate. The sculpture chosen is from the Brooklyn finalist.

The sculpture is made of steel and high quality paint and has whimsical elements on the top.

Janet Langsam said that some work must be done with the city in terms of engineering to make sure that the sculpture can go down in the ground.

Ms. Langsam said that they have the cooperation of the city departments. She has met with a representative of Mayor Davis.

The alternate sculpture seems less difficult to install. It is an archway and inside of the arch there are quotations from children's books

Janet Langsam said that she would like to talk about engaging the community with the sculpture. She said that she wanted to talk to the board about how to engage.

Na'im Tyson asked about the paint on the sculpture and whether chemicals used to clean it would compromise the steel.

Ms. Langsam said that the sculpture will be constructed at the library. It measures four feet underground and ten feet above ground. The alternate sculpture, the archway design is ten feet tall. The third sculpture had a lot of edges and it was fearful that children could climb it.

Janet Langsam said that she hoped to work with the library to figure out some issues. She said that she was depending on the library for discussions with the community.

Donna Hurwitz said that she thought the library had already agreed that the winning choice was what she preferred.

Janet Langsam said that she thinks before the piece is constructed we should get community support about having a public art piece in Mount Vernon. She said that there is very little contemporary public art in Westchester County.

Ms. Langsam said that she could bring the artist in to discuss the work or do a workshop.

Millie Burns said that one of the issues is can the piece be installed. She said there may be issues with underground blockages where a post cannot go down four feet.

Janet Langsam said that the artist has said the piece can be modified.

Janet Langsam said that ArtsWestchester will move ahead with the city and would also like to work with the library on a plan to introduce the art piece to the community.

Ms. Langsam said that ArtsWestchester is working with the Mount Vernon Arts Council. She said that they are very excited about having a public art piece in the city. She said that she thinks they would like to work with the library.

Tamara Stewart said it was a shame that the process was not done in a way that was more aggressive about involving the community. It is a shame that the children were not involved in the process earlier. She said that the vast majority of the community did not know that this proposal was out there; now you want them to get excited when very few people knew.

Ms. Stewart said there have been broader opportunities where people could have seen the work.

Janet Langsam said that the public art piece does not have to be done at all if the community doesn't like it.

Ms. Langsam said that it is up to the library and the board. The award has not been given yet. There is still time to bring the designs to the schools.

Janet Langsam said that there was representation on the panel from Mount Vernon; Millie Burns, Barry Mason, and Charlene Indelicato.

She said it was regrettable that the designs were not brought to Arts on Third this year.

Ms. Stewart said with the archway midway between the adult and children's section, when you look through it looks like a pathway to nowhere.

Na'im Tyson said that he would like to have a discussion on a series of workshops to introduce the project to the public.

Janet Langsam said that she wanted to make the public art piece work; on the other hand you don't want to put something here that the public does not want.

Ms. Langsam said that ArtsWestchester will put together a group and the library can put together a group.

Upon a motion by Millie Burns, seconded by Marcia Dupree the discussion of the public art piece was tabled until the full board could convene.

Scott Griffith said that he was asking again about the computers for discard.

Na'im Tyson said that they are Gates computers from a research grant and the guidelines for disposing of them have to be researched.

Clyde Herring inquired about the children's garden that was under construction on the side of the children's library.

Millie Burns said it was a project that the former director worked on.

Ms. Herring said that there was a dedication for the project and she had attended.

Leroy Lea said there were pictures of the project on the website, but they were not annotated.

Scott Griffith said that there are pictures, but he does not remember the names of the individuals.

Millie Burns asked what the genesis of Ms. Herring's question was.

Clyde Herring said that she had come to the dedication of the garden. When she saw the art project presented tonight, she questioned what happened to the project her friends had done.

She said that the garden project was not complete. There were plans for garden benches.

Millie Burns said that the plan was never approved by the board.

Shawn Dunnom said that she was told by the former director that the group had disbanded and what was there was it.

Millie Burns said that the aesthetics of the community have to be considered; also insurance has to be considered. Perhaps having the benches there would cause a security issue.

She said that the plans she saw were not approved by the board.

#### WLS TRUSTEE REPORT:

Donna Hurwitz said that a lot of people complained at PLDA that the statistics were not accurately calculated. Several directors felt that they were not accurate.

Millie Burns read an email from WLS Trustee, Chris Hansen:

*The primary work of the WLS board at this meeting had to do with the budget. The board approved public library grants to Westchester libraries totaling \$650,000. Fourteen libraries received grants ranging from \$80,000-\$12,000. The board also approved some new expenditure due to revenues exceeding our very conservative budget estimates. The bulk of the new expenditures have to do with eBook purchase and handling.*

*The board was also given the first draft of the 5 year Library System Plan. This Plan has a section devoted to the Central Library. It is still very preliminary and WLS plans to consult with everyone involved as it develops.*

*The board announced the date of the African American Literary Celebration. It will be Jan 13, 2013 at Tappan Hill in Tarrytown.*

*Finally, the 2011 statistics book is out. Please note that the next meeting is in Oct. and I will be unable to attend that one.*

#### DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

During the latter part of September and through mid-October the Library Director has been establishing relationships within the political, library and local community.

She is working with the staff to purchase new holdings and establish new practices.

In addition she is working with the custodial staff to deal with long-standing issues regarding the condition of the library.

On September 20<sup>th</sup> she attended the Public Library Director's Association (PLDA). She was welcomed to the community and made some introductory remarks. Among the issues she touched on was Mount Vernon's status as the Central Library of Westchester and the many challenges facing the library at this time.

She requested some time to learn the issues regarding the consortium and to fix some issues that fellow libraries would like to see improved. Unfortunately, the chair of the Committee on the Status of the Central Library had already been pre-determined and though she is on the committee, she will not chair it.

Ed Falcone of Yonkers Public Library took her to lunch and to a tour of his facility by the harbor in Yonkers.

In September she welcomed Representative Gary Pretlow and Joanne Mongelli of Arts Westchester to view the maquettes selected as finalists in a proposed Arts Westchester project.

The following week she met with Mayor Davis in his office. The discussion was frank and helpful. The Mayor expressed his hope that conditions in the library would improve.

During this period she also met with individuals from two security companies who would like to begin relationship with Mount Vernon Public Library.

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, Trustee Millie Burns met with Lieutenant Douglas Beale of the Mount Vernon Fire Department and accompanied him on an inspection of the facility. They later met with the library director and Lt. Beale suggested areas where we could improve and Jesse Van Lew was instructed to handle these issues immediately.

On October 5 she went to the mosque on Second Avenue, "Masjid Yusuf Shah" and spoke with Iman Abdul Azeez and expressed interest in forging a new relationship that would benefit the entire Mount Vernon community. Iman Azeez agreed to cosponsor an NEH grant that we are applying for, Muslim Journeys, a collection of resources on Muslim culture. We also hope to speak with Dr. Judith Johnson to ask her to be a co-sponsor of this grant.

We had our first Saturday on October 6, 2012 and were joined by some volunteers and residents of the Mount Vernon Animal Shelter who sat outside of the First Avenue entrance. One of the pets was adopted and the community contributed food and money to the group.

A discussion needs to be held on opening every Saturday and hopefully the results will be positive.

On October 11<sup>th</sup>, the director was treated to a lovely tour of all the neighborhoods in Mount Vernon by Friends of the Library and former employees, Ruth Shire and Shirley Garrett, who showed her every major building in the city as well as gave a detailed history of the people and events that make Mount Vernon a very tight knit and historical community. We were invited over to the current Friends' president, Charlotte Schechter's, home for tea and a discussion of events that the Friends would be interested in sponsoring for Black History Month.

It was a most enjoyable afternoon and I am impressed at the commitment and love that these dedicated volunteers have for the community and particularly, the library.

There was a second meeting with Terry Kirchner and Fran Feuerman on October 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss how we could improve our relationships with WLS and other public libraries in Westchester as well as some of the benefits we receive as a member of WLS. It was a cordial and productive meeting and she contacted Barbara Lilley to set up a meeting with her.

She also met with Kimberlee Johnson of Civil Services and clarified options for posting jobs as well as inquiring about civil service exams.

A new printer was installed in JIC and we also purchased a new DVD polisher.

We have subscribed to the online version of The Historical New York Times; a database that will enable us to have 24 hour access to the newspaper from it's beginning in 1852 until 2010. This will enable us to eliminate using two outdated resources – the paper copy of The New York Times Index, and the microfiche of that period and will save us several thousand dollars as well. The database will be on all Mount Vernon computers and available by remote access to anyone who has a Mount Vernon library card.

We have used \$42,000 of funds from WLS to purchase foreign and non-fiction books and the librarians are currently ordering new fiction and current DVDs that will be available in collections for all age groups.

We received a check for nearly \$1900 from the authors of the book, Born and Fed in Mount Vernon that was specifically designated for the children's collection and we purchased materials in English Language Arts (ELA) and DVDs.

Rebecca Newman saw Warm Up to Reading: Getting Kids Hooked on Books, a webinar that took place on October 11<sup>th</sup> and was sponsored by Booklinks. Her report included the presentations by publishers, ABDO, DK, Listening Library and Lorimar. Each publisher previewed high-interest materials for reluctant readers at the second grade level and above.

As Ms. Newman reported, ABDO offers a number of non-fiction series as well as Marvel titles and Star Wars. DK Publishing previewed their new Pocket Genius series, a new Disney Pixar encyclopedia as well as their own Star War series. Listening Libraries focused on their new fiction and non-fiction titles. Lorimar's target audience is the 10-17 year olds with an emphasis on teen issue and justice titles. It was a very constructive information session.

The children's library also continued regularly scheduled Story Time, Family Fun and Arts & Crafts. The level of attendance fluctuated to highs of forty seven and lows of six. The children in the library seemed to be engaged in their activities and the need to promote these activities remain high on the agenda.

The attendance in computer classes is rising with 105 people in September. The need for more hours is obvious and we hope to meet those needs in the future.

There are ongoing issues with maintaining the building but the custodial staff is working on multiple fronts and has painted the staff ladies room in addition to working on daily and major construction issues.

- Cleaning the grounds as the leaves continue to fall
- Cleaning the roof from leaves and other debris and keeping the gulley's free
- Negotiating for a new heating system
- Updating fire extinguishers and emergency lighting
- Working with the director and the fire department on fire drills

Na'im Tyson said a few months ago there was concern about the computer classes. He said he noticed a heavy overload from the intermediate to the beginner's class. He asked had the instructor dealt with this issue.

Donna Hurwitz said that she has not met with Ardith Jobson, but there are regulars who come to classes.

Mr. Tyson said that he is not clear how Ms. Jobson does assessments, but she would like to get as many as possible to use the computers.

Mr. Tyson asked had Terry Kirchner given a time line for the approval of the CLDA budget.

Donna Hurwitz said that he wanted it as soon as possible.

Na'im Tyson said that in the past he had asked Terry Kirchner when the absolute deadline is.

Ms. Hurwitz said that when she spoke to Terry Kirchner he expressed concern that the community room was not updated and did not match the level of other libraries.

Na'im Tyson said that Terry Kirchner should be asked for a deadline on what type of workshops he wants the library to offer.

Mr. Tyson asked what progress had been made on meeting the application deadline for Muslim Journeys.

Donna Hurwitz said that we will be ready. She just wants a Mount Vernon public school to partner with also. Ms. Hurwitz said that she would speak to Judith Johnson.

#### FINANCIAL MATTERS:

Donna Hurwitz said that basically we haven't received all of the money from the city that was calculated. Most is in the form of salaries. Staffing is at low levels.

There is a big discrepancy in salaries and benefits.

Ms. Hurwitz said that librarians are purchasing to bring the collection up to the level it should be.

#### REMARKS OF THE TRUSTEES:

Millie Burns said that she received an email from artist, Melvin Clark. Mr. Clark is one of forty-four American artists chosen to paint on top of a sculpture of Barack Obama called "Visions of our 44<sup>th</sup> President"

Ms. Burns said that she has sent a link to the board and asked should we try and get the exhibit at the library.

Millie Burns said that she is not a fan of all of them. There seems to be a range of expressions to work with.

She said that that she is working to see if we can get the exhibit at the library. She has already spoken to them and they will let her know.

Marcia Dupree said that she has received a proposal from U.S. Security Systems. The head of the company came to the library for a walk through with maintenance.

Na'im Tyson said that he is still working with the roof warranty company to get them to repair the roof.

He has asked the director to get the city attorney involved since the library roof was given by the city.

Mr. Tyson said that he is also working on completing old grievances from the former director.

Na'im Tyson said that all financial records have been input and the transition is complete.

Mr. Tyson asked had there been any other problems with the systems.

Donna Hurwitz said yes, but she and Leroy Lea had worked on them.

Mr. Tyson said that the 1023 form for the tax exempt status was completed. He said that he is still working on completing the 990's. They were sent to the accountant.

He is hoping to complete drafting the statement to go to the IRS.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

Donna Hurwitz said that she is reviewing signage and computer usage. Like other libraries, there is no censorship.

Ms. Hurwitz said that she thinks it is important to have signage saying we support the first amendment.

Donna Hurwitz said that she has looked at neighboring libraries. At other libraries, she said that they have thought about censoring for young children. There are programs that do that.

Ms. Hurwitz said that she wants to discuss what other people think about filtering for children.

Donna Hurwitz said that signage was very important.

Na'im Tyson said that a young man had come to a board meeting to complain about being told not to be in an area under construction.

Mr. Tyson asked for the next meeting could the director draft the changes with the caveat that if an area is under construction you are prohibited from being in that area.

Gary Newman said that he would recommend a blanket rule that patrons have to follow the instructions of the security guards.

Na'im Tyson said that he does not know if Donna Hurwitz wants to have two separate statements; one for the internet and a separate one for the code of conduct.

He said that they have to go on the web by the end of the year

Tamara Stewart said that Ossining Library has an interdepartmental committee that looked at drafting policy.

Ms. Stewart said even though there is a problem with filtering there should be a certain amount of monitoring by the staff.



She said it should be made clear that the policy are not only for hardwired, but for wireless laptops when people bring their own to the library. They should have to check an agreement when they sign in on to wireless.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**

Upon a motion by Millie Burns, seconded by Marcia Dupree the board moved to hold elections of officers at tonight's meeting.

Upon a motion by Millie Burns, seconded by Marcia Dupree, Na'im Tyson was elected President of the Board of Trustees.

Upon a motion by Marcia Dupree, seconded by Na'im Tyson, Millie Burns was elected Vice President of the Board of Trustees.

Winston Maharaj remains Treasurer and Marcia Dupree, will remain the Secretary of the Board of Trustees.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Upon a motion by Millie Burns, seconded by Marcia Dupree, the board meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm to discuss personnel matters.

Respectfully

Secretary