

**Meeting Minutes: Regular Board Meeting: April 21, 2020**

**Call to Order:** At 7:00 pm, President Smedinghoff called the regular meeting of the River Forest Public Library Board of Trustees to order. The roll was taken:

- Trustees present: Bevan, Calabrese-Berry, Hill, Hopkinson, Long, Smedinghoff, and Stierwalt
- Also present: Sue Quinn (RFPL Director) and Joanna Bertucci (RFPL Materials and Business Services Manager)

President Smedinghoff stated that the April 21, 2020 Regular Meeting of the River Forest Public Library Board of Trustees took place by phone pursuant to the Executive Order by Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker that suspends the requirement for in-person public meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Public Comments:** None submitted.

President Smedinghoff announced that Trustee Calabrese-Berry will continue in her role as RFPL Trustee.

**Consent Agenda:**

- a. Minutes of the Special Meeting: April 1, 2020
- b. March 2020 Warrant List
- c. March 2020 Revenue and Expense reports
- d. March 31, 2020 Balance Sheet

President Smedinghoff asked if Trustees would like any items taken off the consent agenda. Trustees did not request any items be removed from the consent agenda.

Trustee Hill moved to approve the consent agenda, items a.-d. Trustee Hopkinson seconded. Trustees did not have any questions or comments about the consent agenda. A roll call vote was taken.

Roll Call Vote:

- Ayes: Bevan, Calabrese-Berry, Hill, Hopkinson, Long, Smedinghoff, and Stierwalt.

**Director's Report:**

Director Quinn announced that April 19th-25th is National Library Week and today, April 21<sup>st</sup> is National Library Worker's Day. PR/Marketing Specialist, Fran Arnold, posted a slide show of RFPL staff on Facebook and Director Quinn thanked staff for all their efforts and hard work during this time.

An addition to her written report, Director Quinn, made the following updates regarding facilities:

- Hulen Landscaping delivered and spread mulch throughout the library's landscape on Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Alarm Detection Systems will be onsite Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup> to complete our annual fire protection system inspection.
- Mortenson Roofing will be onsite this week to apply the final seal coat to the slate roof repairs that were completed in November 2019. We hope to close this project out and process a final payment by 4/30/2020.
- JA Watts will be onsite Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup> to resolve an issue with the closure on the staff breakroom door. We hope to close this project out and process a final payment by 4/30/2020.

Trustees did not have any questions about Director Quinn's written report.

Director Quinn delivered the following report.

Director Quinn explained that when the library closed on Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, it was not anticipated that RFPL would be closed for 7+ weeks. RFPL does not have Board adopted emergency closure policy. Previous emergency closures were infrequent and tied to short-term weather issues or mechanical failures. During those short-term closures staff have continued to be paid.

Director Quinn assured the Board that she has given some serious thought to the long-range plan for whether or not to continue to pay some or all library staff for some or all of their regular hours while facilities are closed and virtual library services are the primary means of serving our public. In addition, Director Quinn has been considering the scenario, that when RFPL does reopen, we will likely be looking at a reduced service model, with limited hours and programs that will presumably dictate a different level of staffing.

At this time, RFPL is considering a phased re-open scenario that would be based on a reduced in-person service model. Staff have quickly adapted to provide virtual library services and those services would continue to be provided. As conditions evolve, RFPL will have to consider the following:

1. Supporting the community by providing virtual services and programs.
  - a. Online collections have been enhanced and staff quickly modified in person program offerings to virtual platforms.
2. Prepare to reopen with safety and social distancing protocols in place.
  - a. ILA Sent a letter to Governor Pritzker communicating that even though library buildings are closed, library services continue.
3. Prepare for an economic downturn that could impact future tax revenue.
  - a. Reworking 2020-21 budget revenue and expense allocations.

While we have been working remotely, Managers have worked to ensure that all staff are engaged and working most if not all of their weekly schedule. However not all part-time staff have been working their average weekly hours from home. Part staff are working close to 50% of their scheduled hours and the whole staff is working 78% of their scheduled hours, which is on par or better than other libraries.

Director Quinn shared that just a few libraries that have laid off staff. On April 4th, River Grove trustees furloughed the Director and all of the staff except for the administrative assistant. In addition, Mount Prospect furloughed approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the staff without pay on April 7th. Forest Park and Elmwood Park libraries are taking it month to month as we are.

Director Quinn feels that if the Library continues to compensate all employees who are encouraged, not required, to work their full schedule from home, River Forest can expect additional virtual programs in the weeks to come. If we were to cut hour paid hours, we must consider some of the larger implications.

For instance, staff might elect to collect unemployment benefits, instead of accepting reduced hours. RFPL staff who are lowest paid and most negatively affected by having to telework would receive significantly more than their regular weekly paycheck from unemployment under the new CARES Act which provides for an additional \$600 weekly payment to recipients through July 31st. It also extends their benefits from 26 to 39 weeks. Director Quinn shared that over  $\frac{1}{2}$  million IL residents have filed initial claims for unemployment since March 21st. Additional applicants are expected and the final bill will come due to all U.S. taxpayers eventually.

RFPL would still owe roughly 23.5 % of employees' wages to the IL Dept of Employment Security (employees receive 47% of paycheck and CARES covers 50%) so there would be a cost savings to RFPL, but we would pass on those expenses to the Federal government, who would in turn pass that back to U.S taxpayers.

Director Quinn feels that losing 14 of the staff would have serious implications for our ability to staff the library chat regularly and our social media presence and stall planning towards the summer reading program. Losing 9 of our team might not impact virtual services, but could impair a swift reopening of RFPL as we might not have the people on hand to begin checking in and shelving materials as well as cataloging and processing new materials that have been purchased.

In order to offer all staff meaningful remote work, we have started equity, diversity, and inclusivity training through the University of North Carolina's online Project Ready program. This online curriculum is very robust. Staff are expected to spend roughly 7.5 hours a week working through the training modules and participating in small group discussions. This training is an integral part of delivering our Strategic Plan to the community.

Trustee Hill asked for more information about Director Quinn's third point regarding reduced revenues. Director Quinn explained that although River Forest was somewhat insulated from the 2009 economic down turn, property tax receipts fell slightly. Although not confirmed, the due date for the second installment of property taxes (typically due August 1<sup>st</sup>) may be delayed and Cook County may be undertaking a reassessment of all property. President Smedinghoff added that the idea of a property tax freeze was floated during the economic downturn of 2009 and could be revisited in light of the current crisis. Director Quinn feels that by September we will have better information regarding our financial position and has begun to identify ways RFPL can reduce spending to safeguard the library's finances against a possible reduction in revenues over the coming years.

- Freeze raises for the 2020-21 fiscal year were scheduled for May 1. In September 2020, we will reevaluate the budget to determine if raises may go into effect on October 1st.
- We will institute a hiring freeze, only replacing staff that are deemed essential and cannot be replaced via internal restructuring.
- We will evaluate usage of collections (both physical and digital) and limit spending to things we need and that patrons express desire for.
- Eliminating some of our large events (summer reading kick-off, concert) will result in savings from RFPL's programming budget.
- We will explore partnerships with other local organizations to provide economic resources.

Director noted that while RFPL may not be providing maximum services during the time our building is closed, we will likely be called upon to do so once we reopen. RFPL saw a marked increase in visits, circulation, and program attendance after the 2008 downturn.

While months may pass until we can resume our full range of services, we are still a trusted and valuable community resource and library staff are critical in delivering these programs and services.

Trustee Stierwalt asked for some information about how summer reading would be deployed virtually. Director Quinn responded that RFPL purchased new software several months ago (Beanstack) that can allow for the Children's program to be moved online. Additionally, staff are brainstorming ways to provide virtual programming by offering take and make crafting kits. Adult and teen/middle school summer reading programs will also be virtual.

Trustee Stierwalt asked how the library would deliver curbside pickup. Director Quinn explained that reopen plans are still in progress, but would feature a phased reopen. Phase one would be to open exterior book drops and allow patrons to return items. Returned items would be quarantined for, most likely, 3 days. Staff would check-in these items, reshelve, and begin to process holds. Phase two would involve limited curbside service, where patrons could pickup local items only as interlibrary loan will not be resuming for at least 1-3 months. Phase 3 would allow for patrons to return to the building for limited services. During all of these phases social distancing and safety protocols would be in place to protect staff and patrons. ALA and OCLC are working on crafting guidelines and recommendations to help libraries meet this challenge.

In closing her report, Director Quinn recommended that RFPL stay the course and continue to pay all staff for all scheduled hours through May 24th. This would allow RFPL add more virtual library services in the coming weeks and give all employees an opportunity to work through several modules of the Project Ready training curriculum. Once we have more information from Governor Pritzker, SWAN and RAILS, and plans for reopening are solidified, we can reconsider what levels of staffing would be required to run the library in a modified manner.

President Smedinghoff thanked Director Quinn for her report and for her constant evaluation of the changing circumstances. He agreed with Director Quinn's recommendation to continue paying staff through May 24<sup>th</sup> and stated that the Board would reassess at the May 19, 2020 Regular Meeting when hopefully more information will be available.

**Reallocation of budget line items within the Library Materials category – vote**

Director Quinn explained that in order to meeting changing needs, the current (2019-20) materials budget needs to be adjusted to allow for staff to shift funds from print, non-print, and automation budget lines to online eContent budgets. The total materials budget will remain at \$181,500.

<b>Budget Line</b>	<b>Original Amount</b>	<b>Proposed Amended Amount</b>
Books	\$76,000	\$68,000
Online Learning Tools & Database Subscriptions	\$10,000	\$9,000
Online E-Content	\$64,300	\$73,600
In-House Audio Visual (DVDs, CDs, etc.)	\$24,700	\$24,400

President Smedinghoff added that a Board vote on this issue is required, as the changes are over the Director’s limit of \$5,000 to transfer between budget lines.

Trustee Hill moved to approve the \$9,300 budget reallocation. Trustee Bevan seconded. A roll call vote was taken.

Roll Call Vote:

- Ayes: Bevan, Calabrese-Berry, Hill, Hopkinson, Long, Smedinghoff, and Stierwalt.

**President’s Report**

- President Smedinghoff reminded Trustees that the Statement of Economic Filing is due to Cook County by May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Trustee Hill commented that Amy and Dannie’s daily virtual story times are lovely and delightful.
- Trustee Calabrese-Berry thanked Director Quinn for her leadership. President Smedinghoff commented that Director Quinn has been on top of the changing situation from the beginning and has been ahead of how to handle our changing landscape.

**Adjournment**

- At 7:45 PM, Trustee Calabrese-Berry moved to adjourn the Regular Meeting. Trustee Hopkinson seconded. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alice Calabrese-Berry  
Secretary

