LIBRARY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2021; 8:00 A.M.
BENNETT MARTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY
136 S. 14 STREET, LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT
Rhonda Seacrest, Lisa Hale, Lowell Berg, Donna Marvin, Dan Sloan, Jackie Ostrowicki. Absent: Joe Shaw, County Liaison Nichole Bogen. There was a quorum present.

OTHERS PRESENT
Pat Leach, Library Director; Traci Glass, Assistant Library Director; Barbara Hansen, Administrative Aide; Paul Jones, Accountant; Peter Jorgensen, Virtual Services Manager; Jocelyn Golden, Assistant City Attorney; Gail McNair, Foundation Executive Director.

CALL TO ORDER AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPEN MEETINGS ACTING
The meeting was called to order by President Dan Sloan at 8:00 a.m. The posting of the Open Meeting Act was announced.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
The agenda was posted according to the Open Meetings Act of the State of Nebraska. Berg moved to approve the agenda as posted. Second by Marvin. Roll Call Vote: Berg, Hale, Marvin, Seacrest, Sloan – aye; Ostrowicki, Shaw – absent. Motion carried 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS
No public comment.

TRUSTEE DEVELOPMENT
Assistant City Attorney Jocelyn Golden provided information relating to the Open Meetings Act and its impact on the Library Board and its actions as an Administrative Board. (Ostrowicki arrived at this time.)

Due to COVID-19, in 2020 the Governor issued an Executive Order providing a limited waiver of public meeting requirements allowing public bodies to meet via videoconferencing or other electronic means. After review by the City Attorney’s Office, it was that office’s opinion that the waiver did not apply to the City of Lincoln due to its designation as a Primary Class City and the organization of the City/County Health Department. The Library Board continued to meet in person.

The Nebraska open meetings laws are a statutory commitment to openness in government. The basic provisions include when and where meetings are to be held, public notice of meetings, posting of agenda, roll call vote requirement, publication of minutes, and the right of the public to attend. Executive sessions are allowed where the public can be excluded but the reasons for an executive session are limited to being necessary to protect the public or an interest, such as purchasing real estate, a personnel matter, or security.

As board members it is important to remember that communications are a matter of public record. Texting or emailing about Library Board business is a matter of public record even if sent from private emails. When communicating via email, be sure to include library administration so that the emails are saved in the city’s email system for record retention.
Prior to the Central Library bond issue going on the ballot, a session will be set up between the City Attorney’s Office and the Library Board to assure that everyone is aware of the requirements and what restrictions will be in place.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Berg moved to approve the minutes of the Tuesday, September 21, 2021, Library Board meeting presented. Second by Ostrowicki. Roll Call Vote: Hale, Marvin, Ostrowicki, Sloan, Berg – aye; Seacrest – abstain; Shaw – absent. Motion carried 5-0.

**STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Committee on Administration**

*Revised Naming Policy* - The Committee on Administration has reviewed the updates proposed by the Central Library Committee. As part of the Central Library project, a fundraising campaign will be undertaken by the Foundation and the policy is being updated to clarify naming opportunities. Changes to the policy include eliminating the five year waiting period for persons who are currently employed by the City of Lincoln, elected officials, or members of the Library Board; eliminating not allowing names which are difficult or cumbersome to read or write; adding a statement that the Library Board retains the authority to approve the manner in which facility names will be displayed; and adding the naming may be time limited or facilities may be renamed at the discretion of the Library Board.

Berg moved to adopt the revised policy as presented. Second by Hale. It was noted that the length of time a facility is named after a donor should be addressed in the donor agreement. Roll Call Vote: Marvin, Ostrowicki, Seacrest, Sloan, Berg, Hale – aye; Shaw – absent. Motion carried 6-0.

**Committee on Buildings and Grounds**

*Renewal of Courier Service Contract* – The committee recommended approving the renewal of the courier service contract with Mail Management Services for a one-year period at a cost not to exceed $56,000. This is the third and final renewal allowed by City Purchasing guidelines. Berg moved approval of the renewal of the contract with Mail Management Services at a cost not to exceed $56,000. Second by Seacrest. Roll Call Vote: Ostrowicki, Seacrest, Sloan, Berg, Hale, Marvin – aye; Shaw – absent. Motion carried 6-0.

*Renewal of Cleaning Contract* – The committee recommended approving the renewal of the contract with BMI Janitorial for cleaning services for a one-year term, in an amount not to exceed $128,400. This is the third and final renewal allowed by City Purchasing guidelines. Berg moved approval of the renewal of the contract with BMI Janitorial at a cost not to exceed $128,400. Second by Hale. Roll Call Vote: Seacrest, Sloan, Berg, Hale, Marvin, Ostrowicki – aye; Shaw – absent. Motion carried 6-0.

**Committee on Finance**

Marvin presented the Recap of Expenditures report for September 2021 listing claims in the amount of $948,150.98 from all funds. Marvin moved approval of the report and payment of all claims. Second by Seacrest. Roll Call Vote: Sloan, Berg, Hale, Marvin, Ostrowicki, Seacrest – aye; Shaw – absent. Motion carried 6-0.
SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS
Central Library Committee
Sloan reported that the committee is now meeting every other week rather than every week. There is still a lot of activity but with several subcommittees meeting regularly, reducing the Central Library Committee schedule helps with schedules. All Board members and have seen the preliminary schematic designs for the Central Library. It is exciting to see it take shape. The White Lotus Group is working with the City of Lincoln on the redevelopment agreement. The library has no information about the agreement at this time. Jocelyn Golden, Assistant City Attorney, reported that a redevelopment agreement is not yet ready for approval. There are a lot of issues that need to be resolved. Leach noted that the White Lotus Group will need to take its plan to the Capital Environ Commission. The library is not included in their plan, but it will show that a building is there. The library will not be seeking the commission’s approval at that time. Leach will be working with Urban Development, Law, and Planning departments soon to set up a meeting with the Central Library Committee to update the committee where they are in the process including demolition, site preparation, etc. It was noted that the City of Lincoln does have permission to demolish the building from The Capitol Environ Commission.

Berg reported that branch improvements is a big project and funding for the improvements will be included in the Central Library bond issue. A narrative has been developed for each branch and is now in executive summary. Based on that narrative concept floor plan sketches for Anderson, Gere, Bethany, and South are needed for architectural work. Proposals from two local firms have been received using the city’s process. Sinclair Hillie will be developing sketches for Gere Branch, and Clark & Enersen will develop sketches for Anderson Branch along with work for South and Bethany branches. They will also provide some graphics.

Leach and Glass have been doing research on RFID along with other system-wide upgrades such as enticing, appealing children’s spaces with developmental toys. An estimate for the cost of furniture updates, service desks, etc. is also being developed. A copy of the Executive Summary will be forwarded to the Communication Subcommittee as well as the Central Library Committee.

Leach noted that Ostrowicki, Chair of the Communications Subcommittee, has done a lot of work getting the library message out to the media. The subcommittee has a list of stories to pitch with a timeline. These media contacts are not Central Library related but are aimed to keeping the library in the news in a positive light.

Leach updated the board on the social media blitz related to the Omaha Public Library (OPL) and Heritage Services which is very engaged in work to support OPL. There seems to be a disconnect between Heritage Services, OPL, and Mayor’s office, and the redevelopment of downtown Omaha. The OPL Library Director notes that things are still very much in flux, and there is a need to get people together to have a united path forward. Leach attended one of their public forms last week. The first hour was open mic for people to speak. Most of the speakers were people under 30 seemed to be speaking against the library model suggested by Heritage Services. The bottom line is that people support the library in Omaha and need to channel their energy to what is best for Omaha and its library service.
Foundation Executive Director’s Report
McNair reported that both the 2021 book sale and spelling bee have been cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns. Sixty-four pallets of books have been shipped to Thrift Books for sale online. Donations are being accepted for next year’s sale.

The 2021 membership campaign has been completed. Receipts were down but the number of donors was up. Sixty-nine new donors have been added to the donor base. The brochures for the 2022 campaign are at the printers. Each Foundation Board member is asked to encourage five of their friends to join and become a donor with the goal to continue to increase the donor base.

McNair reported the Foundation has contracted with a national firm with experience in political polling, along with a local organization, to survey the community about the Central Library project. The final report should be available in mid-November.

One Book - One Lincoln
The library is hosting Robert Kolker, author of Hidden Valley Road, as part of the community book discussion. The discussion is being held via Zoom on Tuesday, October 26.

NEW BUSINESS
Grant Application to Humanities Nebraska
Leach requested authorization to submit a grant application to Humanities Nebraska to provide funding for the organization and digitization of the Weldon Kees papers held in the Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors. There is not a match requirement. Funding for this grant has been provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. Approval moved by Seacrest. Second by Ostrowicki. Roll Call Vote: Sloan, Berg, Hale, Marvin, Ostrowicki, Seacrest – aye; Shaw – absent. Motion carried 6-0.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT
Sloan expressed his appreciation for the work of the Central Library Communication Subcommittee as it meets one of his goals to communicate and be inclusive.

ASSISTANT LIBRARY DIRECTOR’S REPORT
Glass reported that the grant application for bookmobile funding is complete and has been submitted to the Nebraska Library Commission. We continue to work with Community Crops and its request for use of land east of Gere Branch. We have received an estimate for the cost to install a well to provide water for the gardens. That information has been passed on to Community Crops for its use when seeking funding. Glass participated in a TEDx Lincoln Human Transformation discussion with Brad Moline from ALLO Communication who shared insights on how ALLO has been bringing broadband access to rural communities to support economic growth and overall improved quality of life. Glass provided information on the digital divide and the unique groups that the library serves. Work on the Eiseley and Walt Branch parking lots will take place in November. The work at Eiseley Branch is scheduled to begin on November 8th.
DIRECTOR’S REPORT

The Nebraska Library Association annual conference was held on October 13 and 14. Virtual sessions were held on October 13 and in-person sessions were held on October 14 at the Downtown Hilton in Omaha. Leach presented sessions at the conference as well as several Lincoln City Libraries staff.

Over the past several months, staff has been working on our incident reports and best practices in terms of how incidents are reported. A review of the steps taken when calling the police has been done. We don’t call the police because a customer is breaking a library rule, but we do call the police when the individual refuses to leave. We call the police because the individual is breaking the law by trespassing.

On October 20, Leach will be attending an all-day retreat of the Mayor’s Cabinet. Directors have been asked to submit big ideas for discussion. Leach has suggested discussing how Lincoln addresses digital inclusion. Can we create a city office of digital inclusion which encompasses broadband, up to date equipment, and an understanding of how to use it? Her other idea is to expand our programs that give books to children and do home visits.

Lincoln City Libraries purged 50 accounts for lack of use and an estimated $2,000 in uncollectible fines. (Lowell Berg left the meeting at this point)

Leach provided a history of the Heritage Room service and the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association. The Heritage Room is a service of Lincoln City Libraries. Funding to staff the services comes from income from an endowment held by the Foundation for Lincoln City Libraries. The Nebraska Literary Heritage Association is a support group within the Foundation that supports the Heritage Room.

Collecting works by Nebraska authors dates to the 1940s when a librarian set aside books by Nebraska authors. This grew and became the Nebraska Authors Collection and was moved into the Treasure Room outside the Director’s office when Bennett Martin Public Library was built. When Unit III was built, a room on the third floor was designated for the collection and became the Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors.

In 1981, a tight budget resulted in the library no longer funding the Heritage Room service. The Junior League stepped in to work in the Heritage Room for a few years. In 1983 the Nebraska Literary Heritage Association (NLHA) was formed as part of the Foundation and began to raise funds to match a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. It was a remarkably active time with garden parties, house tours, etc. with many people donating to the cause. That became the endowment that is now held by the Foundation. NLHA continues as an organization within the Foundation. The annual Spelling Bee is the one fundraising event held by NLHA each year.

Currently, NLHA organizes, and hosts Writers Write inviting eight graders from across the city to learn and write with published Nebraska authors, and sponsors Lunch at the Library. During the past 10 to 15 years the emphasis has been on programming, not fundraising. The endowment needs to grow, and there needs to be a return to a fundraising function. At a certain point NLHA voted to change the name to add Jane Pope Geske to the name of the room. It is fair to say that Jane and Norman Geske were recognized art and literature leaders in Lincoln. Adding the name Jane Pope Geske to the Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors was done considering Jane’s contributions to literature, not due to a financial contribution.
The Heritage Room is a service of Lincoln City Libraries, and the curator is a parttime city employee working 20 hours per week. Currently the endowment fund covers the curator’s salary. The Heritage Room is open 15 hours per week and by appointment. The collection includes a representative sample of Nebraska authors, and its materials need to be used in the room.

In 2019 the Heritage Room unveiled the Nebraska Authors Database with the assistance of Humanities Nebraska and the University of Nebraska. There had been a database on a personal computer in the Heritage Room accessible by staff, but it is now available to anyone with an internet connection and gets about 3000 hits per month. Ames Reading Series programs, which include an interview with the author, are filmed and linked to this database. The curator has been working on a variety of projects to digitize the content in the Heritage Room.

The future of the Heritage Room as we go forward with the Central Library is full of potential. Any changes will be done in collaboration with NLHA. Planning for a new Central Library provides an opportunity to look at new service models. We can go beyond a room, perhaps to an open area like the Polley Music Library, with displays that can be enjoyed when the room not open. We may also consider a name change if the collection is not a room. The word “heritage” is also tricky because it is usually related to genealogy. The fancy furniture currently in the room will not be taken as it is not appropriate for a public setting.

We are looking at compact shelving for the collection. It will be in climate controlled space and will limit the amount of space needed. The current collection is being reviewed to assure all items are appropriate for the collection.

ADJOURNMENT
There being no further business, Hale moved the meeting adjourn at 9:25 a.m. Second by Marvin. Roll Call Vote: Hale, Marvin, Ostrowicki, Seacrest, Sloan – aye; Shaw, Berg – absent. Motion carried 5-0.