

Hillsdale Free Public Library

Board of Trustees

June 8, 2020

In attendance were: Mary DeChiara, Elizabeth DiLorenzo, Warren Harris, Al Metz, Joanne Miano, John Ruocco, Mayor, Carol Schepker, Kathleen Scordato, Barbara Wertheim

Also present: David Franz, Director of the Library, Abby Lundy, Liaison to Council

Excused: Marie Hanlon

Mr. Harris called to order a meeting of the Trustees of the Free Public Library of Hillsdale, Bergen County, New Jersey. Notice of this meeting was transmitted to the newspaper of record, filed with the Borough Clerk, and posted on the Library's website and bulletin board, in accordance with the Open Public Meeting's Law. Virtual meeting directions are appended below.

The virtual meeting was called to order at 7:37 PM. A motion to approve the open and closed meeting minutes from May 18, 2020 was made by Ms. Miano, seconded by Ms. Wertheim. Unanimous vote of approval.

Public invited to speak: Some Library staff were present, including Ms. Kathryn Ennist. Mr. Raymond Wiss, the Borough labor attorney, was also present.

President's Report: Mr. Harris: Mr. Harris elaborated upon the very difficult and stressful time that continues to exist. He expressed appreciation for the potential financial impact that the Covid-19 pandemic could have on government revenues at all levels. The Hillsdale Library budget of \$713,000 was approved by the Council, which is above the mandatory 1/3 mil that the Borough is required to provide. There remains a potential budget gap of \$119,063, down from the original budget and this gap is forcing the Library Board to make unprecedented decisions. An effort was made to pay staff, both part-time and full-time during the State shut down. The Board virtually met on May 18, 2020 and passed a motion that part-time staff would be furloughed, effective May 22, 2020 for an unlimited time. The original budget must be modified. Mr. Franz is recommending additional cuts of \$26,000 for books and media, and a reduction of public service hours. This modified budget would also eliminate the full-time Librarian position, currently held by Ms. Kathryn Ennist.

The COVID committee met twice before this meeting and discussed a job elimination and was left with no other option other than to eliminate one full-time position. This will impact the Library, but we must be mindful of the severe budget shortfall. He asked that Ms. Ennist wait to speak until she heard the full discussion.

Governor Murphy recently stated that within Phase 2 of re-opening, museums and libraries would begin re-opening sometime after July 6th. Library directors will be seeking more specificity in the coming days.

Director's Report: Mr. Franz: He thanked Mr. Harris for laying out the Library's current situation.

He reiterated, since our Mayor and Council Liaison were present in this meeting, that in the past, the Library received greater than the 1/3 mil funding from the Borough Council. The pension contributions were previously paid by the Borough until 2018 when they were shifted to a more visible line. The public will need to be informed as to the reason for the job elimination and possible re-opening around July 31st. Additional funding above the 1/3 mil may not be received. The Library has been operating on an essentially flat budget since 2008. It is an economic decision, but we cannot sustain all full-time positions. It is Mr. Franz's recommendation, to the committee, that the librarian position be eliminated. This is a very difficult decision and it will have an impact; we will be losing expertise in services for teens and will reduce the number of hours that a professional librarian will be able to service the public with reference assistance.

Ms. Kathryn Ennist read a prepared statement. She has worked at the library for almost 25 years, since she was a young teen, in a variety of capacities, until now as a full-time librarian for teens/young adults. She possesses a Master's degree in Library Information Sciences. There will no longer be outreach to the teens in the local middle schools and the job elimination will greatly limit services to teens and the community at large.

Mr. Harris stated that her comments were recognized, and that the Library is one of the jewels of our town. He reiterated her statements that libraries are important, and our library occupies a vital place. He thanked her, on behalf of the Board, for her comments and wished her a good future going forward.

Mayor Ruocco also regrets this job elimination. Only the federal government can produce revenue; the rest of the country, states and localities need balanced budgets. There is no denying we will experience loss. He spoke highly of the Library and in the past the Borough Council always gave the Library more than the 1/3 mil. Several libraries in the area are being pushed back to the 1/3 mil. Municipalities will have to make severe cost-cutting budgetary decisions. Mayor Ruocco stated the gravity of the situation, that next year will be a challenging budgetary year for the Library, the Borough and NJ State.

Mr. Harris proposed Resolution #2020-1,

Resolution No. 2020-1 Position of Librarian

Whereas the Library is faced with an uncertain level of Municipal funding beyond the mandatory minimum 1/3 mil funding provided by N.J.S.A. 40:54-8,

And whereas the Library Board has not received any assurance from the Municipality that budgeted funds beyond the mandatory minimum will be transmitted to the Library Board until the end of the 2020 budget year, if at all,

Now therefor be it resolved that the position of Librarian be eliminated effective 19 June 2020, for reasons of economy.

He asked for a motion to approve. Ms. Wertheim made a motion to approve, Ms. Miano seconded. A roll call vote was taken: 9 yeas, 0 nays. The resolution was unanimously adopted.

Budget:

Mr. Franz said that we have two major areas in the budget that are under direct control, collection development and personnel salaries. Part-time staff remain furloughed. It is unknown when libraries will re-open to the public. Three full-time employees will remain to operate the library and provide curbside service when permitted.

Mr. Franz described two options for the budget.

June budget revision Option A: Keep part-time employees on furlough until August 3, 2020 when the Library would re-open with a collection development allowance of \$63,000, a reduction of 31% for collection development.

June budget revision Option B: If part-time staff came back on July 6, 2020, that would further reduce the collection allowance to \$52,490, a difference of approximately \$10,000.

All other funding remains the same in both budget options. Mr. Franz has tried to accommodate the loss of revenue going forward. (Woodcliff Lake did reach out to the Library this week about a voucher to receive digital services for a resident). Ms. Scordato asked about curbside pick-up and an anticipated date. The remaining full-time staff would have to answer phones, handle the book return and quarantining and curbside pick-up. Mr. Metz asked about the adoption of a new program (\$400) 'meeScan'. He stated that it would not be prudent to adopt a modified budget and then approve a new program. He asked if it can be absorbed, and yes it can, in the NJ State Aid line, \$3,000 for things that arise during the year.

Mr. Harris read the second resolution: Resolution #2020-2 The Hillsdale Free Public Library's Budget

Whereas, the Library is faced with an uncertain level of Municipal funding beyond the mandatory minimum 1/3 mil funding provided by N.J.S.A. 40:54-8,

And whereas, the Library Board has not received any assurance from the Municipality that budgeted funds beyond the mandatory minimum will be transmitted to the Library Board until the end of the 2020 budget year, if at all,

Now therefore, be it resolved, that the Library Board adopts the revised operating budget revision A, dated 8 June 2020, the Library Board requests that the Director transmit the necessary revisions to the Municipality, and further requests the required quarterly distributions within the attached schedule.

A motion was made to approve the Library amended budget, Option A. Ms. DeChiara made a motion to approve, seconded by Ms. Wertheim. A roll call vote was taken: 9 yeas, 0 nays. The resolution was unanimously adopted.

Mr. Franz previously distributed a communication plan, via email, to the Board, and the intent is to transmit it to the Library website for the general public about re-opening, actions taken this evening and COVID-19 precautions. Mr. Metz asked if this communiqué will be contextualized for the general public and Mr. Franz stated yes. Mr. Harris suggested that it be slightly modified. Mayor Ruocco stated that the report does not state that the Borough also faces competing demands on its budget and in the past, the Library was always funded above the 1/3 mil. Ms. DeChiara asked if the report could be fine-tuned. Mr. Metz stated that the report should state two broad areas, austerity provisions put in place and what will be available to the general public. Mr. Harris suggested that Mr. Franz revise it and distribute it to Board members prior to the next meeting.

Mr. Franz asked that the Library Board carefully examine the proposed plans for re-opening. The Board will have to consider temporary policies and it is hoped that there will be clearer guidance after this coming Friday's Library Directors' meeting with Governor Murphy. The document he distributed was based on all available committees, CDC guidelines and the BCCLS consortia. Mask wearing, building occupancy rules, an unattended child policy revision, study room and meeting room policies, in light of social distancing guidelines, all need to be considered. Mr. Harris asked that Mr. Franz keep Board members apprised.

Treasurer's Report: Mr. Metz: The budget reflects the ongoing austerity measures that Mr. Franz is taking. Total income is down \$4,700, reflecting a drop in fines, memberships, miscellaneous and the photocopier.

Mr. Harris reiterated his best wishes to Ms. Ennist, his concerns for the health and welfare of the Board and thanked them for their participation in this evening's meeting.

The next Library Board meeting will be on July 13, 2020. Mayor Ruocco moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Miano. The meeting officially adjourned at 8:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Deirdre Danaher
Recording Secretary

Hillsdale Library Board – Monday, June 8 – 7:30 pm

Mon, Jun 8, 2020 7:30 PM – 9:30 PM (EDT)

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