Dover Public Library Advisory Commission

March 21, 2023 11:00 AM, 2nd Floor Conference Room

Minutes

Attending: Zach Carter, Chair; Jill Street; Teresa Whalen; Council Liaison Fred Neil; City Manager David Hugg; Library Director Brian Sylvester; Library Administrative Assistant Karen DeMarco

Guest: Jaclyn Hale

Call to order: Zach Carter called the meeting to order at 11:01 AM. Commission members introduced one another.

By unanimous consent due to the length of time since the last meeting, the minutes of January 21, 2020 were placed on file rather than approved.

Old Business

A. Statistics – Brian presented a series of charts showing the impact of the pandemic on circulation, electronic material circulation, visitors, and computer use. All statistics except electronic material circulation were severely impacted by the pandemic. The statistics of January 2023 were also reviewed. Brian also reviewed the county reciprocal borrowing agreement. Under the agreement, all libraries in Kent County receive funds from the Levy Court based on circulation to residents of the unincorporated part of Kent County. Each transaction results in a payment of $2.65. The funds come from a tax that is assessed only to property owners in the unincorporated parts of Kent County. During the pandemic, funding from Reciprocal Borrowing went down substantially, but the tax revenue did not, resulting in a surplus distribution to each library of $275,000. With this revenue added back in, the library averaged $200,000 in revenue from reciprocal borrowing from 2020 to 2022.

B. Staffing status – Brian showed a spreadsheet that showed all the changes to personnel since the last meeting. The Library has eliminated two part time librarian I positions and replaced them with part time library assistant positions. A full time library assistant was promoted to librarian I in youth services. A Librarian II position was changed to manage Circulation Services rather than Adult Services. There are three vacancies: library assistant PT in adult services, library page, and passport clerk.

C. Security in Library – Brian presented a report. Security services are provided by Sunstates Security. In calendar year 2023, there have been 13 written incident reports, with 8 persons banned for one year, 2 banned for 30 days, and 17 persons asked to leave the facility for the rest of the day. Councilor Neil requested a summary of feedback the library has received from the public regarding safety.

D. Council on Libraries report – COL met on March 2nd. ALA Fly in (formerly Library Legislative Day) in DC was held on March 8th and 9th. An initiative is underway to get a paid school librarian in each school in DE. There are 9 construction projects funded in the governor's budget, including new building construction for Duck Creek (Smyrna) and Harrington. A discussion on going fine-free statewide has been tabled since August 2022.

E. The Friends of Dover Library report – The Friends approved a project to purchase a new desk for the Adult Services department at a project cost of $12,000. The Friends received funds from the David and Rayzella Spector Trust in the amount of $36,034.50, some of which is earmarked for furniture and will go toward this project. They purchased a Memorial Brick in recognition of Bob Wetherall. As of September 2022, the Friends have 34 members and the bookshop had raised $21,866.

F. Dover Library Foundation Report – The Foundation Board met on Feb. 23rd. They adopted a change to the bylaws to make James Flood an honorary member in recognition of his years of service to the library. Their checking account has $33,259, savings has $5420, and the endowment totals $240,665.

New Business

A. Election of Officers – On motion made by Fred Neil and seconded by Jill Street, the board approved carrying the 2020 board slate forward to July 2023, at which time new officers will be elected. Discussion followed on the status of Jill Street's term. Brian will follow up with the city clerk's office.

B. Re-Brand – Brian presented a slideshow on the library's re-brand project. The new branding was developed by LobsterPhone, a design company in California.

C. Solar Feasibility Study / Energize Delaware grant – Brian reported that grant funding has been made available for libraries in Delaware to look at solar programs. The library has reached out to Affinity Energy for a quote on doing a feasibility study, with the intent of applying for the grant to

fund the study. David Hugg noted that a parking lot canopy system may not be feasible in the library parking lot due to the geothermal wells. He added that EV charging stations will be added to the parking lot.

D. Kent County LAC report: Library Tax Districts – Brian presented an overview. Currently, Milford is supported financially by a Library Tax District that mirrors the Milford School District. Their tax rate is $0.0775 per $100 of assessed value. The town of Harrington and the Duck Creek Library (a proposed new independent library serving the Smyrna area) have asked the Levy Court to establish library tax districts for their areas, but at a smaller tax rate of $0.049 per $100 of assessed value. The County Library Advisory Commission appears to be considering adopting tax districts across the county to replace the reciprocal borrowing agreement, with the Capital School District serving as the library tax district for Dover and the Caesar Rodney district serving as the library tax district for the Kent County Library. Analysis indicates this would result in approximately $250,000 in revenue for DPL – an increase from the recent reciprocal borrowing funds, but a decrease from pre-pandemic levels. Discussion followed on whether this would constitute double taxation for residents already paying property tax to support DPL, or for residents in the Caesar Rodney district who pay property tax to Dover but would be paying a library tax to support the county library in Camden. Zach Carter suggested that commission members reach out to their counterparts in the county to express these concerns. Fred requested that all information on the subject be shared with Dave Hugg to be shared out with the full city council as necessary. The next meeting of the County Library Advisory Board will be April 13th, which Brian will both attend and share the invitation for.

Other – The next meeting of the Dover Library Advisory Commission will be May 16, 2023, at 11 AM.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00.