

**Southeast Steuben County Library
Board of Trustees – Regular Meeting
Via Zoom Interactive Platform
April 15, 2021**

Trustees Attending:

President: Barbara A. McLean
Vice President: Christine Sharkey
Treasurer: Jeffrey Scott
Secretary: Julie E. Fromer
Jamie Curtis
Barry W. Nicholson
Kate Paterson
Louise Richardson

Absent:

Gail Bardhan
Svetlana Short

Guests:

Pauline Emery, Library Director
Brad Turner, Assistant Library Director
Lori Reenan, Library Business Manager

Call to Order:

President Barbara A. McLean called the meeting to order at 4:38 p.m.

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Consent Agenda:

**Minutes of the March 18, 2021 Regular Meeting
March 2021 Financial Report**

Barbara McLean called for a motion on the Consent Agenda. On a motion by Barry W. Nicholson, seconded by Kate Paterson, trustees voted unanimously to approve all items therein.

Director's Report:

Library Director Pauline Emery said last year at this time we were in New York Pause, and now, "We have seen more than 7,400 visitors since January." More than 29,000 items have been circulated (digital checkouts not included). On April 29 the library building will be closed for electrical work including installation of an upgraded main circuit breaker. Power will be out in the library much of the day on April 29. Power to Corning City Hall will be out for up to 10 minutes. The city has backup power and is prepared for the brief outage. Everything will be turned off in the library. Staff will not be in the building. All building tenants have been notified.

Youth Coordinator Kayla Crane represented the library as a guest speaker for a local High School robotics team. The eight-member team presented an app concept

for a socially distanced scavenger hunt program. Participants discussed how this program could be implemented and made accessible in a library setting. Children's Librarian Sue McConnell conducted an "incredibly successful" Read-a-Thon, with students logging 14,655 minutes (244 hours) of reading during the two-week event. Outreach Coordinator Erica Unterman provided sewing lessons for Carder Elementary School via Zoom, with 10 attendees.

The library was looking ahead to the library levy vote on May 18. The library expects to be open to the public for its full NYS Charter requirement of 55 hours per week starting May 3, contingent on COVID-19 safety. Hours will be 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday - Friday, and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday.

Hours worked by Southeast Steuben County Library trustees will be included in future library volunteer hour tallies.

Annual Appeal:

(See 2020-21 Annual Fund Donations Final Report)

Assistant director Brad Turner reported the fund drive grand total was \$84,521, a record high. There were \$74,386 in private donations and \$10,135 in corporate matching funds.

Barbara McLean said these were "Very exiting numbers to see." Thanks were extended to Annual Campaign Co-Chairs Marcia D. Weber and Mary H. Bacalles; also to Louise Richardson and the Fund Development Committee.

Personnel & Policy Committee:

Barbara McLean indicated the Personnel & Policy Committee met this week. The anticipated return to a 55 hour per week open hours schedule was discussed. "We are happy to hear that it is looking like that will happen on May 3. Fingers crossed."

Sick Leave

There will be a change to the sick leave language in the Staff Handbook pursuant to a New York State mandate that all employees be eligible for sick leave. Previously, sick leave was available for library employees working 25 hours per week or more. "Now we are adjusting that to include all employees." There was no need for a vote on the change. Louise Richardson assisted in drafting the new language:

Part-time employees working less than 24 hours per week will receive one hour of paid sick time for every 40 hours worked and may accrue up to 40 hours annually. Up to 40 hours of accrued sick time may be rolled over into the next year. Total accrued sick time for employees who work less than 24 hours per week may not exceed 40 hours at any time.

Full-time employees working more than 24 hours per week shall accrue up to 175 days (1400 hours) of unused sick time while still in the employ of the Library. There will be no payment for unused sick time at the time of separation from employment, whether by retirement, resignation, termination or otherwise. Accumulated sick time is held in reserve during an employee's approved leave of absence, but no new leave accrues. If an employee has accumulated sick leave and then becomes part-time, working less than 25 hours per week, the employee can use the accrued sick time but will not be allowed to accumulate any more days until the total accrued time is less than 40 hours.

Fine Free

Barbara McLean noted it had been nearly two years since Fine-Free for Kids was introduced. Extending the same policy to all age groups was now under consideration.

Pauline Emery began by considering financial impacts. Fines account for only 0.7% of the library's \$1.3 million operating budget. Generally, fines have totaled \$8,000 to \$10,000 over the past four normal – non Pandemic –years. Library fines for all age groups were suspended in 2020 due to pandemic-related service restrictions.

Director Emery outlined some of the reasons behind the trend toward fine-free libraries. Fines deter access for patrons and tend to discriminate based on income. Our goal as a library is to get the items back, not to intimidate or punish. "There are people that don't come back because they have fines and they are embarrassed. Access and equality are what we are about, and not having fines exemplifies that." In the 48 libraries in Southern Tier Library System, 26 are fine free. Nine STLS libraries are child fine-free.

Discussion ensued among trustees.

If the library adopts a more extensive fine-free policy, the library will continue to contact borrowers with overdue items. Pauline noted, "We generally get our items back."

Louise Richardson said that those who fail repeatedly to return items on time will continue to be flagged.

Vice President Christine Sharkey suggested mounting a community fundraiser to make up the financial gap from being fine free. Barry Nicholson suggested a sponsor could be found to fund the gap. The Finance Committee and the Fund Development Committee will consider the fine-free extension.

Jamie Curtis said she was interested to know whether libraries that have gone fine-free tended to see increases in late returns.

Barbara McLean recalled that extending fine-free borrowing to all age groups was "an idea in the back of our minds since the child fine-free vote, and the timing seems right now." She asked that questions and concerns be gathered from trustees and the public

Discussion was to be continued in committees and at a future library board meeting.

Committee Updates:

- **Finance** – Treasurer Jeffrey Scott said the Finance Committee was looking ahead to the annual audit which starts on April 19. Business Manager Lori Reenan has done the necessary preparation and was working with Insero & Co. CPAs, LLP. "We have confidence that it will be a clean audit." The library's tax levy request has been published, with more to come out. NYS Construction Aid for Libraries has increased significantly. "We will want to submit another grant application."
- **Facilities** – Chair Kate Paterson said a Committee meeting was being set for next week to explore possibilities. The electrical work on April 29 will

close out the library's Health & Safety Grant. An imminent HVAC system repair will close out another outstanding NYS Construction Aid grant. An emergency key box, known to firefighters as a "Knox Box" has been installed.

- **PR/Advocacy** – No new report.
- **Fund Development** – Chair Louise Richardson noted the Committee will meet soon to discuss fine-free feasibility and fine-free themed fundraising opportunities.
- **Nominating** – Chair Barbara McLean noted Louise Richardson has been active in outreach for potential library trustees.
- **Personnel & Policy** – No further report.
- **Scholarship** – Chair Julie Fromer said five applications had been received so far; a "good number" of completed applications at this point in time.
- **Friends of the Library** – Friends of the Southeast Steuben County Library Liaison Julie Fromer said the organization met April 14. Its directors were excited about and in planning for the upcoming three-week sale in June at the library. Kate Paterson noted that not holding the book sale in its usual location at the East Corning Fire Hall will save time and money.

Other Business:

There was no other business.

Adjournment:

Barbara McLean adjourned the regular meeting at 5:38 p.m.

The next Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees will be held on May 20, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom interactive platform.