MEETING MINUTES

EVANSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Wednesday, August 17, 2011
6:00 PM
Evanston Public Library, 1703 Orrington Avenue, Community Meeting Room

Members Present: Diane Allen, Lynette Murphy, Susan Newman, Benjamin Schapiro, Susan Stone

Members Absent: Sharon Arceneaux, Gail Bush, Margaret Lurie

Staff Present: Paul Gottschalk, Connie Heneghan, Todd Galvin, Beth McGuire

Presiding Member: Susan Newman, Vice-President

DECLARATION OF QUORUM
A quorum was present and Vice-President Newman called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

CITIZEN COMMENT
Citizens spoke about supporting North Branch and having branch libraries throughout Evanston; adopting a budget that restores library services; following the Open Meetings Act; and ensuring access to library services and resources throughout Evanston.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES
Trustee Schapiro pointed out two misspellings of his name in the July minutes. The Minutes of the regular Board Meeting of July 20, 2011 were approved as amended by a voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS
Secretary Harris has resigned from the Board due to a health issue in her family. Vice-President Newman informed the Board that a new Secretary will need to be appointed to serve through June of 2012.

Treasurer Allen and Trustee Schapiro will serve as a Finance Team to review the proposed budget in detail and recommend options for the Board to consider.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION
Discussion of the FY2012 Budget
Paul Gottschalk framed the discussion by asking the Board to begin a conversation about values and priorities of service. He suggested four areas or priorities that the Board needs to discuss:

1. Improving Services at the Main Library
2. Maintaining Services at North Branch
3. Improving Community Engagement throughout Evanston
4. A Minimal Increase in the Library Property Tax Levy (if any).
The Board will need to balance these priorities as a guide to determining the budget.

Trustee Stone expressed reluctance to discuss the four items in terms of guiding a decision. Her priorities may shift after she knows those of the Evanston community members that took part in the strategic planning process.

Paul Gottschalk responded the strategic planning committee had considered giving the plan to the Board earlier but it was not possible. The draft of the strategic plan will be sent to the Board on August 24th with a presentation by Miriam Pollack on August 31st.

Trustee Schapiro advised that the Board must look at budget development not just from where we are right now, but where we want to be. The Board must look at our own values and what’s best for the institution as we envision it, weighing it all with the many different voices from the community. Trustee Schapiro stated the Board was very fortunate to have people in the community come forward and say libraries are important.

Trustee Murphy advised each Trustee look at the mission and vision statement on the website. She stated whatever has been brought forth in the planning will be in direct line with the current vision and mission. Trustee Murphy stated that she was in favor of the community engagement plan especially after hearing Acting Director Williams’ report at the July Board Meeting.

Trustee Murphy said that it was important for citizens for South, East, and West Evanston to not feel disenfranchised and that everyone in Evanston should feel connected to library services. After reading Acting Director Williams’ proposal, she believed it was very thoughtful and connects with additional community agencies. Trustee Stone said that community engagement was important to her, as well.

Vice-President Newman stated she would like the new Interim Library Director to be involved in staffing decisions. Trustee Schapiro responded it was a mistake to look at the Interim Director’s role as anything other than trying to keep the Library running smoothly while the Board looks for a full time Director.

Treasurer Allen stated as a longtime Library user that she was disappointed with the collections in the Main Library. There are a lot of antiquated materials on the shelves that shouldn’t be there. The Main Library should be the center of the community and should be hopping with opportunities to learn and explore.

Trustee Schapiro stated Libraries serve many purposes. They have to serve the readers and must provide a third space with Wi-Fi and quiet reading areas. Libraries must develop new audiences and patrons. Community engagement is most important for people not reading yet – preschool age or younger. That’s where you develop future readers.

Trustee Stone agreed with Trustee Schapiro’s sentiments and stated the Library needs to work on collections, but that she did not feel angst for people who can’t find best sellers or current books. The Library should be a place of calm, escape and wonderment. Trustee Stone said she understood the North Branch is good for business,
but priorities must be made and hers is community engagement. The Library has to take its resources to people throughout the community.

Vice-President Newman said that a lot could be done by reallocating space at little cost including making better use of the lobby to make it more inviting.

Trustee Schapiro advised the North Branch question should not be a “yes or no” debate but rather, after looking at the mission statement, what can we do for the whole community and how can we equitably distribute services to the community with limited library resources? The Board must look at a way to move resources from place to place and bring the Library outside of this building which in turn might entice new patrons to come here. Think of the delivery of services beyond boundaries or walls.

Trustee Murphy stated the Board must look at services throughout entire community. She was disturbed by the pitting of North vs. South vs. West Evanston. That is not in the best interest of the community as it fractionalizes both the Board and the community. The Board must go back to the mission and vision and determine what’s best for all neighborhoods in the community.

Paul Gottschalk stated Acting Director Williams made a specific proposal to hire a person dedicated to coordinating and providing community outreach. He suggested that Acting Director Williams’ proposal be the basis of a potential budget option.

Vice-President Newman was not ready to discuss whether or not we have dedicated staff for this purpose. She said it needs more careful study and they are not in a position to say that’s the best way to do it.

Trustee Shapiro reminded the Board that the business community is a key piece – need to engage, not just seek donations. There are mutual things to do for each other at no cost.

Vice-President Newman stated no one wants to pay higher taxes, but the community wants a better Library as long as we explain why we need to raise taxes and how we will better serve the community.

Treasurer Allen stated the Board doesn’t have carte blanche to raise the levy and the Board has an obligation to the community to be very respectful of their money. The Library must deliver the best bang for their buck. The budget process includes looking at the levy – is every penny in this budget helping every person it can help? The Board should stay as close to no tax increase as possible. There is a moral obligation not to put further tax burden on anybody.

Trustee Murphy returned the conversation to the commitment to community engagement. She believed Acting Director Williams’ made a very good presentation and acknowledged what an exciting opportunity we have in our hands from this point going forward, to engage the entire community. She wondered if the Board is not going to put a full force effort into making this a strong unit of our library service, the new community engagement position needs to be part of the budget.
STAFF REPORTS

Library Director Report
Acting Director Williams submitted a written report in her absence.

Financial Statement
Gottschalk made no additional comments.

ADJOURNMENT
The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diane Allen, Treasurer,
Evanston Public Library Board of Trustees

THE NEXT LIBRARY BOARD MEETING WILL BE SEPTEMBER 31st AT 6:00 P.M. IN THE COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM OF THE MAIN LIBRARY