



MEETING MINUTES
EVANSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Wednesday, August 19, 2020
6:30 P.M.
Remote Board Meeting

Members Present: Adam Goodman, Rachel Hayman, Ruth Hays, Denia Hester, Shawn Iles, Margaret Lurie, Vaishali Patel, Benjamin Schapiro and Terry Soto

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Karen Danczak Lyons, Jan Bojda, Teri Campbell, John Devaney, Kim Hegelund, Connie Henegan, Lea Hernandez-Solis, Tim Longo, Heather Norborg, Jill Schacter, Wynn Shawer, and Jill Skwerski

Presiding Member: Shawn Iles, President

Call to order/Declaration of Quorum- President Iles called the meeting to order when a quorum of Trustees was established at 6:38 p.m.

Citizen Comment:

Most community members either spoke in support of or opposition to closing the Central Street and Chicago/Main library branches:

- Marybeth Schroeder Supports (written statement included)
- Diane Kathryn Allen Supports
- Eleanor Revelle Opposes
- Cara Hunwick Supports
- Danielle Geracaris Supports
- Connie Conley Opposes (written statement included)
- Nichole Pinkard Supports (written statement included)
- Paul Hirsch Opposes (written statement included)
- Michele Hays Supports (written statement included)
- Colleen Egan Opposes
- Rolanda S Burris Opposes (written statement included)
- Trisha Connolly Opposes
- Richard M. Kuntz Opposes (written statement included)
- Tracy Fulce Supports (written statement included)
- Alyce Barry Supports
- Mary Rosinski Opposes (written statement included)
- Julie Farley Opposes (written statement included)
- Eric James (written statement included)
- Clare Kelly Opposes
- Juan Campoverde Supports the work of EPL
- Pat O'Conor Supports
- Linda Del Bosque Opposes

Wendy Welsh	Opposes (written statement included)
Meghan Shea	Supports (written statement included)
Theresa A Schreiber	Experienced technical difficulty
Michael Tannen	(written statement included)
Elizabeth Andrews	Supports (written statement included)
William Levine	Opposes (written statement included)
Margaret Weiss	Opposes (written statement included)
Barbara Shwom	Opposes (written statement included)
Steven V Johnson	Supports (written statement included)
Bonnie Varner	Supports (written statement included)
Fiona McCarthy	Opposes (written statement included)
Linnea Latimer	Supports
Tatiana Akamine	Opposes (written statement included)
Jason Perkins	Supports (written statement included)
Rosalie Ziomek	(written statement included)
Thomas J Hughes	Opposes (written statement included)
Trish Stieglitz	Opposes
Darlene Cannon	Opposes
Larry P Lundy	Opposed (written statement included)
Alex Leska	Opposes (written statement included)
Heather McComas	Opposes (written statement included)
Julie Kundert	Opposes (written statement included)
Angela Pisano	Opposes (written statement included)
Jared Dapier	Supports
Ben Gasbarra	Opposes

All statements that were submitted in writing are attached. Speakers who experienced technical difficulty joining the meeting or during Citizen Comment were invited to submit written statements that would be accepted and included in the minutes.

Consent Agenda:

A. Approval of the Bills and Payroll and Minutes of the July 15, 2020 Board Meeting

Upon motion made by Trustee Patel and seconded by Trustee Schapiro, the consent agenda was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion: Joint Task Force

A. A. *Evanston Library Services: Defining a new Vision*

What is needed to increase equity of service during the pandemic and beyond?

Reactions/feedback on new virtual and in-person library services?

Aspirations: What is needed for all of Evanston to emerge stronger after Covid?

Resources needed to create and sustain a path toward recovery and renewal for all?

Sustaining the "We are All in this Together" spirit?

The Board of Trustees of the Evanston Public Library and community members of the Racial Equity Task Force publicly discussed the questions reflected in the agenda. Honest observations and personal experiences were shared. The lingering question of Are we really "All in this Together" should continue to be explored.

Library Director's Report:

There was no discussion of the Library Director's report.

Staff Report:

A. Administrative Services Report

There was no discussion of the Administrative Services Report.

Board Report/Development:

Unfinished Business: None.

New Business:

A. Renewal of Lease 900 Chicago Avenue (Action)

A motion made by Trustee Schapiro and seconded by Trustee Hayman, to discontinue the lease of 900 Chicago Avenue. Each Trustee responded to public comment and explained the reasoning behind their vote. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote with direction to notify the landlord that EPL will vacate the premises on or before December 31, 2020.

B. Returning North Branch to the City of Evanston (Action)

A motion made by Trustee Patel and seconded by Trustee Hays, to permanently close the North branch located at 2026 Central Street and return the operations of the space to the City of Evanston as soon all library materials, furniture and equipment are removed. Each Trustee responded to public comment and explained the reasoning behind their vote. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

Upon motion made by President Iles and seconded by Trustee Patel, the motion to move into the Executive Session was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Executive Session:

A. Closed Session – Personnel (Library Director Evaluation and Contract)

Upon motion made by Trustee Schapiro and seconded by Trustee Hays, the motion to move out of the Executive Session was approved by roll call vote.

Adjournment:

The motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Schapiro and seconded by Trustee Hayman, and approved by roll call vote. Meeting adjourned at 9:51 p.m.

Submitted by Terry Soto/Teri Campbell



Meeting of the EPL Trustees

August 19, 2020

Written statements submitted for Public Comment

Dear Mr. Iles and Ms. Campbell:

I would like to submit a comment about the potential closure of Evanston's North Branch Library.

I represent three generations of a family who is dependent on the North Branch Library. This branch is an integral part of our community. We depend on it for books, of course, but also for internet access, air conditioning, opportunities for socializing with three generations of peers and community residents, and as a resting place while patronizing local Central Street businesses. We learn about plays, lectures, and community events there, and we run into friends, family, and neighbors there. It is the epitome of a community hub and cultural center. It is also just a few blocks away, whereas the main branch is two miles from our homes, which is impractical for walking. In our family, only one of us drives and during times of physical distancing, buses and trains are not a safe option.

I would like to respectfully add that if the City of Evanston can finance the \$53 million construction of the new Robert Crown Center, which contains a brand new library branch, then surely it can continue to foot the comparably paltry bill to keep an existing branch open.

I hope you will consider these points, which surely represent the opinions of a great many people, and make the decision to keep the charming, wonderful, and useful North Branch Library open for its community. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Very truly yours,
Sarah Hendershot

2728 Woodbine Ave.

Evanston, IL 60201

[Received August 11, 2020]

Closing the North Branch pound foolish

I read with interest your statement supporting the closing of the North Branch library. As a nearby resident who enjoys it and the businesses nearby that also benefit from it, I am puzzled by some mathematics of your comment.

Rather than expand the pie, it seems you would reduce it by allocating the funds from the north branch to what I a priority without a building farther south, which would be more expensive than retaining the existing building that the Library recently invested in remodeling. Your strategy to close it reduces the pie by inciting North library patrons like me to contribute far less to the Library Association when it solicits funds. I favor both south and north sides for the library and its branches, but to close one in the hope of expanding the other seems pound foolish and self-defeating. Has it been costed out? I hope you will reconsider and support the idea of both investing in both more equity as well as keeping what is already much appreciated and in place.

Sincerely,

Paul Hirsch
1610 Lincoln Street
[Received August 13, 2020]

To: Karen Danczak Lyons, Director, Evanston Public Library and the Evanston Public Library Board of Trustees
From: Julie Farley, Evanston, IL
Date: August 18, 2020

Re: Board meeting on August 19, 2020 – to be read publicly at meeting if possible

Dear Dir. Danczak Lyons and Board of Trustees,

My name is Julie Farley, and I am an Evanston resident and Library user.

Several years ago, I was astonished to discover how underfunded our library was when compared with other nearby public libraries and what a tiny percentage of the City's collected tax dollars goes to the Library and everything it does (about 3%). I have always considered the Library to be an Evanston treasure, available for free to our entire

population. So, I immediately decided to make a personal donation and to learn more about both the financial issues the library faced and the various projects and programs it offered, and wished to offer the Evanston community.

I knew the Library was more than just books, DVDs, research sources, great librarians, and occasional book/author discussions or movie screenings. But what I began to discover amazed me, warmed my heart, and made me even more concerned about the funding shortfalls.

EPL has an amazing number of community programs and services: in the Main EPL building, at a branch or other public locations, at family homes, offered in multiple languages, educational & nurturing, related to job searches or digital skills, just for fun, and for every age and interest group. I learned that EPL was one of the few public libraries to employ a full-time social worker, that people could get help with housing information, health insurance, taxes, wills and so much more. I learned that a large number of Evanstonians volunteer at and donate to EPL every year, but that it will never be enough to cover all they want to do.

I am aware that to keep EPL up to date, financially sound and serving our entire community with equity the Board has been facing a number of tough decisions, some involving change that will be controversial and emotional for many of us, myself included. I believe if circumstances make that change necessary, and it's planned with care, purpose, and the wish to serve and involve the whole community, it will be worthwhile in the long run for all of us.

I understand that among other things, the retention of some branch library locations is in question. That's a pretty major change. I'm sure other changes will come. These are challenging times, and even in more normal times challenging decisions must be made. We are fortunate to have the terrific new multi-purpose Robert Crown Center & Library and our still great Main Branch, and most of us are pretty mobile these days.

I love Evanston: its diversity is one of its greatest strengths. I love the Library and want to see it prosper and grow and serve us all equitably. I recognize that in a community like ours, some of us will use or need a bit more or less of that service, and serving Evanston's underserved benefits the community as a whole.

I want to let the EPL Board of Trustees (volunteers by the way), the EPL Administrators and others know that I have attended Board and other meetings, watched, and tried to learn how these folks work, evaluate, care for the total community and make decisions, and I for one respect them enough to trust that they will listen to the community's voices, consider everything thoroughly and do right by us all.

And I want to ask Evanstonians to use and help their Library: join me in making a donation if you can, come to Board meetings and EPL events, volunteer, learn more about what's offered and what's needed, stay engaged as growth and change happens, listen and add your voice. Let's support each other in what's best for our Library. As EPL reminds us – We are the Library. "We" means every person in Evanston. Thanks.

North Branch Library

Mr. Iles and Ms. Campbell,

Like many other Evanstonians, my husband and I, our children and our grandchildren love to read and read daily. We have enjoyed exploring new authors, rereading old treasures, sharing lists of beloved books with friends and family, and for many years, reading bedtime stories to the young ones. We all have memories of our favorites, as well as the excitement of discovering something brand new.

The North Branch Library has been an important part of Evanston's educational and intellectual life. Our librarians have organized book groups, recommended authors and books for us to read, read picture books to our young children and helped them move on to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Harry Potter*. The North Branch isn't merely a place with shelves of books, but a place where children learn to love reading. The Main Branch Library is excellent and certainly has many more books for us all to explore. But it doesn't have the cozy and comfortable feel of the smaller North Branch, which is where so many children first became enamored of books, and where older adults (like me), find ourselves walking out of the library with a stack of books in our arms, eager to start one of the books our librarian suggested.

Claire McCarthy Peterson
2745 Woodbine Avenue
Evanston, IL 60201
[Received August 13, 2020]

Library Branches

To Whom It May Concern:

In advance of the upcoming meeting on August 19, I wanted to share my concerns with the library board about the potential closing of both the North Branch and CAMS branch of the Evanston library. Upon hearing this news, I was saddened to think that our beloved branches may not re-open. I am in a unique position in that North Branch library has been our family's go to library for the past 11 years, and I also work at Park School on Main Street near the CAMS branch. My two children, ages 9 and 11 have grown up accessing the North Branch. We visit the library weekly for books, movies, and to spend time participating in the activities provided. My kids adore this library and

have been eagerly awaiting its re-opening since closing due to Covid. I pick up the majority of my books at this branch as well. We actively avoid the main branch of the library not because it isn't a wonderful facility but because the community feel isn't there like it is at the smaller branches, and we don't want to pay for parking. North Branch and CAMS provide me the opportunity to walk to these branches while possibly visiting local businesses along the way. Additionally, Park School has been bringing students to CAMS since it was the Mighty Twig and before that the South Branch of the library. Our students don't have a library in our school, and this IS their library. Not only do they get a chance to be read to at CAMS but they learn how to interact and behave in public, and the community gets a wonderful chance to interact with our fantastic student population.

Please reconsider closing these branches for good. Their presence in the community is one of the main reasons we are proud to call Evanston home. Our family needs North Branch, and my Park School family needs CAMS.

Sincerely,
Katie Spero
2110 Noyes St.
[Received August 13, 2020]

North Branch Library

Dear Mr. Iles and Ms. Campbell:

My daughter, Sarah Hendershot, expressed her chagrin over the possible closing of the North Branch of the Evanston Library in her recent e-mail to you so well that there is hardly anything I can add, or express so well.

The North Branch is such a magnetic, warm, vital part of this community, it would be tragic to lose it. It would leave a gigantic empty spot. We all need that library for so many reasons, just one of which is that there are many people in this area who cannot use the main library because they cannot get there - especially now in the era of Covid.

Evanston is a large city, with a large population and - certainly - sufficient income from the very high property taxes to enable the continued support of an excellent library system designed to serve the many communities over this vast area.

Where there's a will, there's a way. Please find the will and the way to keep *our* Central Street library here ni.

Sincerely,

Judith Hendershot
2622 Prairie Avenue
[Received August 14, 2020)]

My name is Connie Conley and my husband and I are Evanston residents and patrons of the North Branch of the Evanston Library and have been for over twenty years. First we want to say something about Central Street. It is like a little village where everyone cares about each other and greets each other with smiles and "hellos". Everyone is made to feel welcome. There are no empty stores. It is a vital area. We are both in our 80's but there are people of every age mingling from parents with babies, teens, students, and retirees like myself and my husband. Vital to this, besides the variety of businesses, is our wonderful and beloved North Branch Library. As we know you are aware, the use by patrons of all ages of this branch is substantial. The North Branch is the gem of the area. My husband and I depend on the North Branch. We implore you to please reopen our North Branch.. We understand there are areas that don't have what we have but taking away something that is working isn't a solution. Surely there must be other ways to solve this problem and perhaps serve other areas. We know other nearby communities have larger budgets for their libraries so maybe that's one solution. Also, Evanston is known for having a community of people who are willing to step up to the plate when asked to volunteer. Look at what happened in South Evanston with the Mighty Twig and with the money raising campaign ten years ago. Let's dream big and make it happen.

Thank You for your time.

Connie Conley, ward 7
[Submitted August 17 on public comment form]

I have long supported closure of the Evanston Public Library branches which take up a considerable amount of library infrastructure. In order to best serve all of Evanston, including unserved areas like the 8th Ward, I'd like to see the library use a more nimble approach. For instance, regular library pop-ups in existing spaces, wifi hotspots around the City, kiosks with pickup and drop-off capability, and pop-up computer rooms.

The *services* offered by the current branches what are important, and we need to find ways to continue to offer - and expand - those services without the significant infrastructure costs of maintaining a branch.

If we can bring library services where the people are, through a well-advertised regular schedule, we will make better use of the library's limited tax dollars. A more agile library can reach out and serve all the areas currently unserved by the fixed branches.

Screen reader support enabled.

Michele Hays, ward 8

[Submitted August 17 on public comment form]

Dear Alderperson Revelle and Mayor Hegarty,

I have been a Resident of Evanston and live on Central Street for over 15 years. The purpose for this email is to let you know how saddened my heart is due to the City wanting to close the Central Street North Branch Library.

Words cannot express how much the library means to not only myself but the families in the area. It was nice to see both fathers and mothers bring their children to the library and enjoy the children's section.

As a Resident I am already disturbed that we have several manicure places, eye glass places and places that sell wine and spirits. Here we lost business like Subway and our neighborhood cleaners. These two places were a definite part of our community.

We do not need another place that sells beer and wine, an eye glass place or a manicure place on Central Street. By you closing our library, you will be taking away the only positive, enjoyable and cultural resource place for families. We also have enough restaurants, for they barely allow for persons to walk down the sidewalk.

I hope you will take the time to assess the businesses on Central St and see how the majority only cater to adults.

In spite of the COVID virus our library really has a special place in our community. I went to the hearing several years ago regarding the city wanting to close our library and words cannot express how happy we were, in hearing it was not going to close. And now we have to face this trauma all over again.

Please review the budget, look deep in the pockets and find funding for our library. We cannot afford to lose it.

Thank you for your kind consideration in advance,

Rolanda S. Burris

Rolanda S. Burris, Ed.D

[Submitted August 18 on public comment form]

The Board appears to have forgotten that it achieved the power and taxing authority it now has to determine the fate of branches, in response to the community protests that arose against the City Council's plan to close South Branch. So it is with supreme irony that the present Board wants to go beyond what the City Council did, and close both North and CAMU branches, in a misguided application of "equity," which is nowhere defined as taking away resources utilized by the community, in favor of theoretical utilization, without recollection that a West Side branch closed due to underutilized. That can be tried again, but it is more expensive to build a new branch with uncertain usefulness, than to continue the current heavily used ones.

Don't do this under the cover of the current difficulties.

Richard M. Kuntz

[Submitted August 18 on public comment form]

I would like to say that my family and I would be extremely disappointed if the branch library's were closed.

Allison bertsche

[Submitted August 18 on public comment form]

It has only been on my periphery that there has been discussion of permanently closing EPL's north branch as I work full time to try to keep my family afloat during these uncertain times. This is devastating news. America is falling apart and steering frighteningly away from it's core values and strengths because of the influence of a handful of extremely wealthy folk. America CREATED libraries. Libraries are AMERICAN. Why are we closing branches of one of our very best contributions to the civilized world? Books are knowledge and experience. Right now, we need nothing more than promoting opportunities for knowledge and experience outside of social media. Libraries provide the opportunity for EVERYONE to access books regardless of social status. Libraries provide other resources that would otherwise not be available to some. We have got to try to work out social distancing so our librarians can work safely. If funding is the issue, let's reach out to Evanston to see if we want to pitch in to help. I do. I have not yet seen these efforts publicly made. We need our libraries. They are critical institutions for our communities. What can we do to prevent the north branch library from closing?

Stephanie Dufford

[Submitted August 18 on public comment form]

I support closing the CAMS and Central Street branches and assigning those resources to historically underserved neighborhoods.

Margaret Newman

[Submitted August 18 on public comment form]

For the past year I've been a member of the Evanston Public Library Racial Equity Task Force. We were charged to help EPL understand the issues faced by members of our community and to make suggestions as to how resources could be allocated in such a way to meet the needs of those who have been historically left out. While we've been working, a small but organized group focused on maintaining specific branch locations, has been dormant. Now that we have made recommendations to begin to address the Library's problematic history of resource hoarding, this group has begun to reorganize in earnest.

I've heard the Friends of the Evanston Public Library say things like "race is not the only way we address equity" and "our kids and seniors deserve a public library" and "we have to grow the pie." It seems that in their focus to ensure that they continue to enjoy all of the wonderful attributes public libraries offer, they are willing to ignore the needs of the rest of our community. They have challenged the very need for the Library's Racial Equity Task Force and made accusations about the task force, its members and the EPL Board of Trustees that were inaccurate, problematic, and inflammatory. The experience has not been friendly.

I want a public library that meets the needs of its community and I recognize that in order to do the right things for my community, I might have to make a personal sacrifice. I might have to give up resources I've enjoyed to ensure that others in my community have access. I don't want a library that is only for some of us, I want a library for all of us. Together, we are the library.

Tracy Fulce

[Submitted August 18 on public comment form]

Closing libraries is not equity-making sure that libraries are available where they have not been available is. Using the important word equity to justify taking services away diminishes the word, and the action to make the decision to close libraries in the vacuum of a pandemic is not serving the people. The public deserves to know all options and comparative costs of closing or keeping them open. What does the library need? How much does the Robert Crown library take in terms of staff hours and cost-CAMs- North Branch. Can the library, city and schools district could work to make sure that there is city wide basic internet so those who cannot afford it will have access and those who only want internet can pay what we pay not to help defer costs. How much do hotspots cost? The economic benefit of libraries to local business is proven helps keep the local dollar local. Moving services is good but when the library decides where they will be and when-the library loses the important quality and service of being a consistent place where anyone with or without a penny in their pocket can go and be welcome. That's a equity I think the library board can stand behind.

Mary Rosinski

[Submitted August 18 on public comment form]

Testimony re: library branch closings

My name is Marybeth Schroeder. I am a 29 year resident of Evanston at 2734 Asbury. I had the privilege of serving on the Evanston Public Library board from 2002 to 2008, the final two years as board president. During that period, the library did the expansive renovation of the children's room and added the innovative Loft space. I'm very proud of that work. I hold a Masters in Library Science from University of Chicago and worked in libraries and a national library association from 1981 through 1998, including several years as a part-time reader's advisor and reference librarian at Evanston Public Library.

I firmly believe that the north and south branches of the library should be closed. My primary reason is that EPL simply doesn't have the budget to effectively run branches. Since I first became involved in the library in the late 1980's, it's been apparent that EPL is funded at an insufficient level. EPL receives less than half of the per capita tax support that our peer communities provide to their libraries such as Skokie, Arlington Heights, Wilmette, and others, none of which run branches.

When residents suggest more fundraising to keep the branches open, they are not noting that EPL already does significantly more fundraising than any of its peers. And that fundraising doesn't support extras – it supports building the collection and providing basic services.

Even if we could afford branches, they are not the equitable or best way to provide library services. The north branch is less than 2 miles to the main library, in a neighborhood with access to public transportation and which is primarily higher income and white. The south branch is one mile to the main library, also in a neighborhood with good public transportation options. Parts of Evanston much farther from the library, such as southwest Evanston, have never been served by a branch library. These locations are just habits that can only provide limited service.

I don't believe we should build more branches. I believe the best way to deploy the library's resources is through outreach programming and meaningful partnerships with community-based groups, which the library has built effectively. The future of libraries is not bricks and mortar but bringing the resources to the community.

Finally, I would like to point out that all the library directors over the last 20 years have thought the branches should be closed, as have national library experts such as Joey Rodger. It's time for EPL to move into its new era and continue the good work it's done to become a better, more equitable institution.

Marybeth Schroeder

Losing a library or any space of gathering is detrimental to a community; however, Evanston's tax dollars do not provide EPL the resources to operate a library in every ward. Hence, I support EPL in focusing its precious resources on the expansion of digital resources for all residents while also intentionally hyper-focusing resources on new strategies to engage communities traditionally underserved by EPL by making use of the technology resources already in the hands of D65 and D202 youth and families. EPL's teen staff are already industry leaders in transitioning to virtual library programming, especially their youth department. EPL is a critical partner working with Northwestern's School of Education and Social Policy faculty to close the STEAM engagement and participation gaps that exist in Evanston. Over the past three years, EPL has been a lead partner in the intentional design and implementation of programming to take advantage of the D65's decision to provide every middle school youth an iPad by creating STEAM programming (e.g., the citywide Month of Code, the 5th grade Drone Coding challenge, and the Digital Divas program) that youth can engage, not only in library spaces but also in our schools, community organizations, and at home. These and other countless other program innovations by EPL's teen staff has resulted in new learning opportunities, virtually and face-to-face, for youth in communities, such as the 5th ward, previously underserved by Evanston Public Library.

Nichole D Pinkard (*pronouns: she/her/hers*)
Associate Professor, School of Education and Social Policy ([SESP](#))
Faculty Director, Office of Community Education Partnerships ([OCEP](#))
Northwestern University
nichole.pinkard@northwestern.edu

Founder
Digital Youth Network ([DYN](#))
npinkard@digitalyouthnetwork.org

Dear Evanston Public Library Board,

We face genuine challenges today. It's perhaps understandable to be stuck in the here and now of budget cuts, the realities of the inequity and the impact of the pandemic. Scarcity and zero-sum thinking are evident; even a 'us vs them' mentality has surfaced.

And yet we have an opportunity to think and act on the challenges before us in a different way. We can transcend the binary choice of 'keeping open or forcing shut' branches and services by coming together, finding compromise and thinking creatively.

With this in mind, I developed a new concept that re-envisioned what a branch could be. Building on current thinking on renewing retail space, it takes into account our current realities. More than just different types of programming, it offers a localized solution that incorporates multiple uses while meeting our unique community needs in a way that can be economically sustainable. I put it together to find win-wins and a constructive way forward. I've shared this concept with several people on this call.

It's been said that 'if you want something new, you have to stop doing something old.' So I encourage the board to consider a third way with regard to branch closures. Not re-opening now, but not permanently closing them either. But instead, creating a new path together.

I'll end with this: the EPL staff are a competent and dedicated group. As is the Board. They have taken careful decisions that have been transparent, if one takes time to look. What they need is the community's support, and what we can provide is the assistance and compromise that fits the challenging set of circumstances we face.

Thank you,

Dr. Eric James

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

Dear Members of the Library Board,

My name is Juan Campoverde Q, and until recently I was part of the Racial Equity Task Force implemented by the Library.

I have fervently supported the implementation of the RETF and will continue to support the efforts that the Library is eagerly working in this regard. Any effort towards achieving the ideals of equity, diversity, and inclusion will benefit us all.

What I would like to express is my concern that the current constitution of the Task Force, with a vast majority of members from the African-American community of Evanston, unwittingly excludes the effective participation of the other voices that contribute to the cultural and demographic diversity of our Evanston community.

It is my hope that in subsequent implementations of the RETF this circumstance can be considered. In my personal experience, the opinions and suggestion of one minority group do not necessarily resonate with all minority groups. My experience was not entirely congruent with my understanding of the stated goals of the Task Force.

Cordially,

Juan Campoverde Q.

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

I can't be with you tonight but I wanted to ask you to please keep the Main Street branch open. Robert Crown is too far away to be able to reach the residents of our part of Evanston. This branch has provided so much community service and community way beyond lending books and DVDs. It is an essential place to gather for book groups, story time, a talk with a librarian about resources for a project, a place to get kids excited about reading, a place to use WiFi for residents who do not have access anywhere else, a place for residences from marginalized groups to find acceptance through displays and books and resources about them. What a beautiful way to celebrate diversity! And last year it was extra special with the addition of Drag Queen Story time. Please don't take away all of these riches from our neighborhood. I'm happy to talk more with you about what a wonderful place this branch library has been for our neighborhood. Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Mary Beth Napier

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

Statement by Wendy Welsh – resident 7th ward

I recently watched a very moving video produced many years ago by the Evanston Public Library Friends interviewing community members of the 5th ward. Boocoo housed a book wall setup by EPLF. What was striking to me were the comments from the 5th ward community. The need for self-education, accessibility for young children whose parents don't feel it is safe for them to travel by foot or bike all the way to the main branch, the need for a

social center. Mr. Bennett Johnson said it best “the library is the glue that holds the community together”. And I totally agree. They all saw the importance of what a branch library could provide for their neighborhood.

Shawn Illes provided me the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Needs Assessment conducted by DeEtta Jones which is an assessment on how the library can meet the needs of African American and Latinx in our community. Two main themes were first the need to feel comfortable at the library. I understand that a black child from the 5th ward may feel uncomfortable and out of place entering the North Branch as would a white child from the 6th or 7th ward would entering a library in the 5th ward. Many of us would like to see that change and wish that was not the case but it is and it is something we contend with for now. Second, transportation and mobility are barriers for residents to reach the libraries. This is true Evanston does not have a public transportation system that provides a way to get to the library. When you have multiple kids it is easier to walk or push a stroller than to get them all in car seats and into the car. And our elderly community who may have stopped driving or don't feel comfortable parallel parking or get confused by the pay station prefer to walk to an easily accessible library.

What I see through all this is commonalities within the wards and the Evanston community. According to the Macmillian dictionary for advanced learners states equity is a fair and reasonable way of behaving toward people, so that everyone is treated in the same way. Merriam-Webster and iOS dictionaries have the same definition – fair and impartial. And based on the data DeEtta Jones collected the 5th ward did not ask for the Library Board of Trustees to close all branches so that they could have one. They asked to be treated the same.

The library serves everyone who lives in Evanston. And as I have said we all have similar basic needs that a branch library to fulfill. Evanston should be united in the need for social centers and broadening literacy and education. By doing so it helps our entire community.

Karen Danczak Lyons many of us were so excited and impressed by you when you came into the director position. We really felt like you supported the needs of Evanston. You recently stated in a letter to my mother-in-law that “the Library, as good stewards of the Evanston taxpayer dollar, is morally obligated to seek out and pursue the most efficient and affordable path to serving the community with equity.” Those tax payer dollars are not only accumulated as part of our property taxes but also through fund raising. The wards that are served by the north and south branches have been major contributors to the library fund raising. EPFL raised over \$200,000 for the library and was able to re-establish the south branch when the library shut it down, provided books for the book wall at Boocoo and at the old Robert Crown. The way in which the Library Board of Trustees has gone about quietly not reopening the north and south branch and then claiming it is all in the name of equity has been divisive when we need is understanding. If serving the Evanston community in an equitable manner is your goal, it seems to make sense that a network of branches would have been established and that all branches would have been modest and cost effective. The north and south branches are small and cozy they are by far not lavish, expensive establishments. So why does any ward need a library costing millions of dollars? And why not fund raise for an additional modest branch? The size and opulence of the library is not what makes it successful. In fact, a grand library can be uninviting.

So what is the real reason the library board of trustees who are appointed by the mayor are closing the north branch? Is it so the city can sell it to cover the debt incurred by Robert Crown?

I am asking you to rethink your mission. In the name of equity treat all your tax payers in the same way. Look at the needs of all your tax payers and don't discount the needs you are already meeting. Leverage the generosity of Evanstonians through fund raising to provide an equitable environment. Do not alienate your financial supporters. And please rethink closing the branches especially at a time when the need for our libraries are greater than ever. The North and the South branch libraries are loved vibrant social centers serving many children and elderly who don't drive but get there by walking.

Wendy Welsh

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

Members of the board- I am deeply disturbed by the disruptive and divisive actions of the Evanston Public Library Friends. I am a white woman in the 4th ward, with young white kids, and we do use the Main street branch as a local library. Even though this might be convenient for us in terms of location, I do not believe that the highly financially resourced and largely white population that I live in is entitled to this resource. As we know, Evanston, particularly the white population, has a history of upholding white supremacy and opportunity hoarding. I am extremely grateful and fully supportive of the work and recommendations of the Racial Equity Task Force. They are pushing back and rejecting the troublesome white supremacist history and actions in this city, and moving forward towards repairing the harm that our marginalized community has endured for way too long. I implore you as a board to be part of the evolution in Evanston that we so desperately need. Our 5th and 8th wards should be overflowing with the rich resources that already exist in this town if we started thinking about the collective potential we have here. Let us lift up the beauty and value of ALL of the amazing people in this city. Let us start now by reflecting in our actions and choices the city we strive to be instead of the city known for replicating the systems of oppression and ensuring continued marginalization in our community. We are better than that. We are ALL Evanston.

Meghan Shea

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

**MICHAEL MURPHY TANNEN 1010
ELMWOOD**

EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60202
mtannen@tannenlaw.com

August 19, 2020

Via Email Delivery

Evanston Public Library Board of Trustees
1703 Orrington Avenue

Evanston, Illinois 60201

Re: The Imminent Death of the Branch Libraries

To the Members of the EPL Board of Trustees:

By way of introduction, I served on the EPL Board of Trustees (“the Board”) between 2012 and 2017. I was the Board’s Secretary between July 2012 and July 2014 and its President between July 2014 and July 2017. Before I was on the Board, I served on EPL’s *Ad Hoc* Task Force to Explore Sustaining Funding Models for Library Governance. The work and findings of that task force paved the way for EPL’s Board to adopt the Library Fund Model so that the Board—and not the City—could be in exclusive control of EPL’s budget, its Director, and its own facilities, regardless of who owned them.

On July 15, I exhorted the Board to read the Local Library Act and the Memorandum of Understanding so that the Board would recognize that EPL has the statutory duty and contractual right to solely determine the fate of its library facilities. From all that I have been reading, including tonight’s Board packet, the Board appears poised to capitulate rashly and close two library branches that have served Evanston for decades and decades with no real plan in place to remediate the loss of two pillars of EPL’s library system. The Board appears to believe that closing branch libraries somehow achieves equity, diversity and inclusion. I disagree, and I briefly discuss equity, diversity, and inclusion later in this letter.

The Mayor, interim City Manager, and City Council have also distorted or ignored the true legal relationship between the City and EPL. I have heard them say that the City is the owner and landlord of the Main and the North Branch and EPL is a mere tenant. That is wrong as a matter of fact and law. The Local Library Act vests “exclusive control” of the use, custody, and control of library space with the library board. This well-established tenet of library governance is echoed in the Memorandum of Understanding: “The Library will determine how it chooses to use the Library Facilities for the library services it offers.”

More elementally, according to the MOU, **nothing** can happen to any space used by the library without the mutual consent of the City and EPL. What does that mean? It means that the fate of the branch libraries is in your hands. It is your vote, and your vote alone, to close these needed and beloved pillars of two communities. And let me be clear about this. Once you decide to shutter these two institutions, you must own your vote. It is infinitesimally remote that they will ever come back. I know this from experience. It took Herculean efforts of private citizen volunteers to run the Mighty Twig for two years before EPL brought CAMS back into the fold. That won't happen again.

Indeed, the agenda for tonight's meeting highlights the Board's misapprehension of its own powers and duties: "Returning North Branch to the City of Evanston" manifests the Board's disregard of its statutory obligation to be a steadfast steward of library spaces. It appears that EPL is giving away the North Branch for nothing in return. This is particularly galling since the North Branch was a pit when EPL exercised dominion over it in 2013 because, as usual, the City wilfully neglected fundamental principles of deferred maintenance and capital improvements. The Board authorized the overhaul of the North Branch. This included a new roof, HVAC, new lighting, and the removal of tons of asbestos. Under the steady hand of John Devaney, EPL's Director of Facilities, the North Branch and adjoining space which houses Lush were transformed. EPL spent hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars to achieve this metamorphosis for a building it did not own. Does EPL plan to hand over the keys to the City, allow the City to eventually sell this prime piece of real estate, and then permit the City pocket the sales proceeds?

A word about Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, the articulated reason for closing the branches. These are fuzzy terms. They mean many things to many people. These terms are hard to define harder to measure, especially in the context of a public library. EPL does not promise outcomes and EPL does not track what its patrons do, what books they read, or what programs they attend. To the contrary, EPL guards its patrons' confidentiality zealously.

But, here is what I do know about Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion :

· Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion should never be weaponized and these concepts should not be politicized as it has been in Evanston over the last three years. When that happens, healthy debate is stifled; equity assessments become slanted; and outcomes are not fact-based.¹

- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion are not achieved and have rarely if ever been achieved by tearing things down.
- I do not accept the notion that EPL needs to radically alter its *modus operandi* to promote and foster Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. EPL has always been on the cutting edge of equity, diversity, and inclusion since its inception in 1873. A century ago, EPL purchased the first bookmobile in the United States used in an urban setting. Five years ago, EPL was one of the first public libraries in the state to employ a social worker on site. A perusal of EPL's dizzying array of programs and of the partnerships EPL has forged throughout Evanston show that EPL been working on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion every day and in every way.
- Could EPL do better? Of course. Does closing branch libraries that are within a Frisbee throw of five schools and close to where many elderly people live achieve Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion? I think not. How does closing branch libraries in the middle of a pandemic—when schools are closed and internet access to many of our citizens--do equity? It doesn't.

Before I was President of the EPL Board, I was its Secretary and compiled the minutes of board meetings. Minutes are important. They are the contemporaneous history of a library's actions and of citizen's reactions. I would ask that this letter, every letter you receive tonight, and every video comment you hear tonight to be made a permanent part of EPL's Diary. I hope History proves us wrong, but I fear your vote tonight—and your future vote to permit the City to occupy the third floor of the Main—will be one of the most ominous and adverse votes any EPL Board has ever cast.

Sincerely,

Michael M. Tannen

Hello,

I was told to use this email to provide a written public comment for the library board meeting. Here it is below:

I am an Evanston resident of the 3rd ward. My local library is the Chicago/Main branch, I used it on a fairly regular basis pre-covid. While I will be disappointed and inconvenienced to see this branch close, I support the closure of this branch for the benefit of the Robert Crown library one.

Historically, libraries in Evanston have been in the wealthier areas of town, the Robert crown branch will finally provide access to the library to the west side of town.

It is the equitable thing to do and seems financially driven as well. I appreciate the library board considering making this tough decision.

Maybe the library board can consider additional services like book drops/delivery or other services allowing residents with accessibility issues to still access books.

Thank you, Sam Johnson

[Submitted August 19 via email]

Hello Library Board,

I am a resident of North Evanston, and I am writing to express how important it is to me and my family that the North Branch library remains open. We live in walking distance to the library and visit often. My older son, almost 4, visited the library at least weekly from the time he was born until COVID-19 shut it down. He knows all the librarians, and even now, 5 months into quarantine, asks regularly when he can see them again. It has been difficult for me that my younger son, almost one, hasn't been able to enjoy library activities during his babyhood like his older brother did.

I agree with the argument that resources need to be directed to underserved communities. But we should grow the library services in Evanston, not close down locations to open new ones. I believe there are many Evanstonians out there who would support, monetarily and otherwise, opening new branches in underserved communities. I know I would.

Best,

Erin O'Shea

[Submitted August 19 via email]

August 19, 2020

To the Evanston Public Library Board of Trustees:

As a lifelong library user and an Evanstonian since 1985, I wish to express my support for the closure of the north and south branch libraries.

I love libraries. True democratic institutions, they serve everyone in a community, providing information and resources to help us live, learn, work and govern. Evanston professes to love its libraries, too, but compare us to neighboring communities – Skokie, Wilmette, Northbrook, Arlington Heights, to name a few – and that love and devotion quickly becomes questionable.

All of the above-mentioned municipalities invest significantly more per capita in their libraries than does Evanston. And none of them has branches. To support our main library and branches, our underfunded Evanston library system has to do more with less, which means many library staff work part-time and without benefits, staff is stretched very thin, and more fundraising is necessary to keep the doors open than is true for our peers.

The new Robert Crown center just opened with a lovely new library branch, which is addressing the issue of access for the 2nd and 5th wards. The north and south branches, on the other hand, are each only a mile or so from the north branch. It's time to finally look at these facilities, which have been there for decades, and ask why, and for whom, they still exist.

We can't afford these branches. I urge you to close them, and work to create a world-class library for Evanston. That is something we all deserve, no matter what part of town we live in.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Andrews

711 Wesley Ave.

Evanston, IL 60202

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

I strongly support the position of the Evanston Public Library Friends. Neighborhood branches are one of the most distinctive qualities of the Evanston library system. The Friends demonstrated in the aftermath of the wrongheaded closing of the original South Branch that the support is there to maintain and extend these neighborhood services. This proved sufficient to actually restore a facility which it would have been more cost-effective to simply preserve in the first place.

Don't go down this blind alley again! The way to address the needs of the 5th Ward is to add a branch there, not close well-loved existing neighborhood resources.

William Levine

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

I am unable to zoom or phone in this evening for the board meeting. Please record my comment: This seems to be the exact wrong time to be closing library branches with the crisis causing increased unemployment and challenging situations for school age children in all neighborhoods. If the central library can effectively physically distance patrons, wouldn't it be possible at the branches? As the COVID-19 crisis evolves we will likely very much need the resources provided at our branches for helping folks regain their footing. The Crown center branch is great but is not walking distance to anyone on the east & north sides of town so a different population will seemingly get cut off. This is a horrible and disheartening evolution of services that seems to compound the growing isolation we are facing from the increasingly video focused culture that existed before and is exacerbated by quarantine .

Margaret A Weiss

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

I strongly oppose closing the branch libraries. Access to neighborhood public libraries is one of Evanston's unique strengths as a community. We may be in a time of fiscal challenge, but meeting that challenge by weakening community resources in neighborhoods is the wrong direction to go. Libraries foster reading and literacy, they offer

internet access and instruction, and they provide a safe place to study after school. Branch libraries offer our youngest citizens the opportunity to browse reading material and make choices without having to spend money to buy anything; and they offer our oldest citizens a destination within walking distance to participate in community life and find reading material that doesn't require a device to read. It may have made sense for Evanston to invest huge amounts of money for sports facilities at Robert Crown if we had enough money--but not at the expense of libraries. Many people who supported the Crown development may have felt differently if they knew it came at the cost of eliminating other valuable community resources. We should not be eliminating branches; if anything, we should be making more.

Barbara L Shwom

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

As Evanstonian behaviors and the nature of the virus refuse to bring the pandemic to an end, we need to all get comfortable with the new landscape of our community. Health concerns, operational feasibility, crushed budgets are all the guideposts for every city entity. Once that dust has cleared can we then apply the equity measurements the Library has adopted. That means things are going to change. It doesn't mean things are changing because of punitive measures. If this city could equally support four or five or six branches, it would. But there is nothing in the budget or our history of inequity that gets that to make sense, so equity takes center stage. The Crown Branch reaches a part of Evanston that has NEVER has real proximity to a Library facility. The Fifth Ward (which isn't automatically getting a branch in the current scenario) has had real proximity for five years of this city's existence. Everything is changing and everything isn't possible.

Steven V Johnson

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

I think it would be of the greatest benefit to the Evanston community to open a branch location in the 5th, 8th, or 9th ward or begin use of the bookmobile.

Bonnie Varner

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

Good evening,

I am writing today to request that the North Branch be reopened. As new residents and new parents in Evanston, we chose to live here so that our children could experience all the fullness and diversity that Evanston has to offer. We have been proud that Evanston schools are striving to support under-served students during this crisis. We support the RETF and it's desire to open a branch in the under-served 5th ward. However, we are extremely disappointed to hear that the North Branch could remain permanently closed. Coming from Chicago where we could walk to restaurants, shops, and a library, all of those factors weighed heavily in our decision to move to Evanston where we could have the same experience. We have found support for our new family in the North Branch resources and bulletin board advertising community events. My 80 yr old mother lives with us and cannot drive, but can walk with our daughter to the library. After spending time in the library, we often wander through other shops or stop for lunch; it provides a destination which results in us supporting the local businesses. There is nowhere else in walking distance to meet other families with same aged children for group events such as a story time, art class, or music class, not to mention the opportunity for our family to rent books and other media nearby. Literally in the middle of Central St., it is the community hub.

Due to COVID with lower density requirements, less EPL staff would be needed at the North Branch and therefore could be reallocated to another branch. The infrastructure is already in place and it would cost EPL to relocate the facility materials elsewhere. What is most frustrating is that our neighborhood hasn't been given the chance to raise money and support the continued operation. We ask to be given that chance; that we find a way to serve other populations without taking away sometime so vital to our community.

Thank you,

Fiona and Robert McCarthy

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

By removing the Chicago Avenue and the North Branches, you will be removing two places that are easily accessible by public transportation, serving a less privileged public. The presence of the branches also serve to enrich and attract people to two places that are full of local small shops. I can't envision how the Robert Crown one

will replace those two branches in those two ways. People that live around Robert Crown community center were already privileged by being around a community center and now have a big public library while the other two communities will lose small branches of the public library.

Tatiana Akamine

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

I am Jason Perkins, an 8th ward resident and a member of the Racial Equity Task Force. I ask that the board members invest in the public good and establish libraries in the 5th and 8th wards.

As always thank you for all that you do! We appreciate it!

Jason Perkins

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

Was this discussed at a previous meeting? Why is new business an action item? I'm asking that you consider holding off on a decision to permanently close the branch libraries. Thank you.

I'm asking that you consider holding off on a decision to permanently close the branch libraries. Thank you.

Rosalie Ziomek

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

Two questions For the Evanston Public Library Board of Trustees 8/19/2020

Dear Trustees,

1. During the weeks preceding this meeting we were given to understand that the reasons for closing the branches included:

- Floor space limits that that could not meet COVID social distancing requirements.
- Shortage of staff during a city hiring freeze.

Neither of these reasons appear to be the case:

- Multiple suburban libraries have opened their branches. Several are similar in size or smaller than North branch. Two have half the floor space.
- In the packet for this meeting the library states it is hiring.

I am concerned about this because I believe that ... of all our sources of information... the library should be among the most reliable. My question is “Why were we given this information?”

2. Since the untimely and unfortunate death of George Floyd many including residents of Evanston are asking if we should cut funding for our Police Department. This is also a divisive issue. However, the mayor has made every effort to bring forward information about the Police Department its funding and functions. Whatever decisions are made, Evanstonians will have had a chance to consider the facts the issues and the options.

With this proposed closure the board is electing to sideline approximately 17% of its current operations. The way this is being handled has itself been divisive and there is no apparent plan to go forward. Why is the board choosing to this differently than the issue with the Police Department?

Sincerely,

Thomas J Hughes (Jim)

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

I feel this a hasty rush to make a decision that requires far more discussion.

Larry P Lundy

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

I support keeping the library branches open. I live near the North Branch and have witnessed how the branch has helped elderly and disabled citizens as well as children with resources and programming. It is an invaluable community resource and closure can be avoided through fundraising and community volunteering if needed.

Alex Leska

[Submitted August 19 on public comment form]

Please keep the North Branch Library on Central Street open! It is a huge service to our neighborhood and ensures that citizens in north Evanston without transportation can access library services. This is particularly important during the pandemic, when people may have great hesitation about taking public transit.

Heather McComas

[Submitted August 20 on public comment form]

Though I have mostly used the main library and have visited and obtained books from the new Crown Branch,(not many there) I think that not having the central street branch would impact the intellectual life of many people. I often would see people reading the newspapers or magazines in there. the older (boomers on up_) like print in a book form Perhaps a branch of the senior center installed here would be a good idea. Willmette's Mallinkroyt has a similar sized area. I've joined there at times. Though the central street library area isn't large- a gathering place up north would be good. It's nasty that you are taking away resources on the night of the democratic convention. I also found it difficult to access this site before when I tried.

I've also noticed children and older people at computers. Where are people to go? the pandemic won't be forever. I guess hockey reigns in Evanston.

Julie kundert

[Submitted August 20 on public comment form]

As a resident of the 3rd ward, living near the CAMS library branch, I was surprised to read about the vote taking place to close the CAMS and North Branches without a conspicuous call for public comment. My family members are regular patrons of the CAMS branch. I also attend a fabulous book group there on a monthly basis. As a large family without access to a car, and as a person with a disability, I fear that the other library branches will be inaccessible, particularly during the winter months. The Robert Crown branch might seem close enough to those with a car, but the branch is inaccessible by bus or train from SE Evanston and is quite a long walk from our home. From my understanding, CAMS provides critical access to a myriad of library services, including, but not limited to, literacy and enrichment programs for children, adult and family programs/activities, book groups, access to books and multimedia materials, access to computers and the services of skilled library professionals.

I understand that the lease for CAMS expires at the end of the year. However, I urge you to consider the needs of the community and ensure the relocation of the “south” branch to an accessible location within our community instead of dissolving the branch entirely. There is a great deal of talk about equity within our community and within our library. I worry, however, that it truly is just “talk”. The closure of library branches will reduce equitable access to quality library services. I also am concerned about the lack of a wide call for public comment on these closures. How indeed is this lack of communication “equitable” in any way?

Thank you for allowing the time to comment.

Angela Pisano

[Submitted August 19 public comment form]
