



MEETING MINUTES
EVANSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Wednesday, October 20, 2021
Meeting of the Board
6:30 PM
Main Library, Community Meeting Room and Remote

As the result of an executive order issued by Governor J.B. Pritzker suspending in-person attendance requirements for public meetings due to COVID-19, Library Trustees, staff and guests participated in this meeting remotely.

Members Present: Tracy Fulce, Adam Goodman, Rachel Hayman, Shawn Iles, Margaret Lurie, Benjamin Schapiro, Russ Shubet, Terry Soto and Esther Wallen.

Members Absent: none

Staff Present: Elizabeth Bird, Karen Danczak Lyons, Heather Norborg, John Devaney, Tim Longo and Renee Neumeier, Lea Farah Hernandez-Solis, David Jordan, Tyler Works

Presiding Member: Tracy Fulce, President

Call to order/Declaration of Quorum: President Fulce called the meeting to order when a quorum of Trustees was established at 6:35 p.m.

Citizen Comment: Eric Tanyavutti, Deshana Newman and Silvia Rodriguez.
Good evening,

I am Deshana Newman, an Evanston resident, Black person, avid reader, teacher, and a library patron. Historically, Black citizens have been denied access to public libraries in America. This country has created systemic barriers and hurdles for Black citizens to get access to books and the services that are offered at public libraries. EPL creates an image of being a library for all citizens however it is not a safe public institution for Black residents.

On the website, there is a perfunctory statement about Black Lives Matter in response to the police murder of George Floyd. An excerpt states "As rage sweeps across the country, we recognize that white people, privileged simply by the color of their skin, have an important role to play in creating a just and equitable society for everyone. Some of us are already active in this fight for racial justice. Others have just begun. Some have not yet started. We must all fight against racism. The time to act is now." This statement is only rhetoric and ideals.

Since 2019, there has not been any change in the relationship with Black Evanston residents. The EPL has caused more harm to the Black community than improvement. The EPL building is not a safe space because of the systemic behaviors of EPL library staff. An egregious example is of the book display which allowed the blue lives matter flag to be posted in a public space. The blue lives matter flag is a symbol of white supremacy and was prominently displayed at the US Capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021. The actions of the library do not align with the Black Lives Matter statement on the website. Thus, I am going to make the conclusion that Black Lives Don't Matter to Evanston Public Library.

If Black Lives Matter, then a staff member would not allow a book display that causes harm to Black community members to be created and exhibited. Evanston Black residents deserve protection from white supremacy in public spaces. We deserve the respect to have library employees advocate for us in meetings about what is displayed in our library. Black residents deserve action and not meaningless website statements and social media posts. Black residents deserve to interact and engage with Black librarians when we visit Evanston Public Library. All in all, Black residents deserve a better experience with our public library.

I am speaking on behalf of my fellow Black Evanston residents and demanding change at EPL. Until EPL takes actions by changing the systemic racism and practices, then Evanston Public Library is part of the problem.

Thank you,
Deshana Newman
Evanston resident

Hello, I'm Silvia Rodriguez, a neighbor from the 8th ward, and a frequent user of our public library. The public library is my family's happy place, so I was angered and saddened when I learned about a harmful experience my friend's children went through, when they were reading a children's book with both racist and sexist content. I am not surprised, as this has happened to my kids as well. My biracial, Latinx, disabled kids have had more than once experienced books that had ableist content, or content that misrepresented our culture. I would like to ask our library to revise the ways in which they select books for our children: we are always told our budget is smaller than the rest of the libraries in our area, so I believe it is especially important to not spend money on books that will cause harm to our youngest patrons. Please devise a new way to select the titles you add to our collection of kids books, for our kids' sakes. If you don't have the resources, there are many local organizations that can help with vetting, such as Young, Black and Lit, Semicolon Bookstore, and even some of our remarkable and very knowledgeable school librarians. There are so many good books out there, it's a true shame to keep adding books to our libraries that inflict pain. Thank you.

Consent Agenda:

A. Approval of the Bills and Payroll and Minutes of the July 21, 2021 Board Meeting

Upon motion made by Trustee Schapiro and seconded by Trustee Goodman, the consent agenda was approved.

Public Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget: By unanimous roll call vote, the public hearing was opened and then closed with no participants.

INFORMATION/COMMUNICATIONS: Together, We are the Library

A. Public Apology (Discussion)

Lifelong Literacy and Learning Manager Heather Norborg and Innovation and Digital Learning Manager Renee Neumeier reviewed the Police Reform book display sign featuring the thin blue line flag and the elements of the library's response. They detailed how the sign was changed, the calls and in person feedback EPL staff received and the process around issuing the apology. The EDI committee, managers, Director and Library Board President read, edited and approved the public apology.

B. Book Collection

Collection Development Manager Betsy Bird spoke about a book brought to the library's attention by a member of the Collection Advisory Group of Black Evanstonians. The book

“PopularMMOs: A Hole New World” contains problematic imagery and text. Bird suggested several ways of screening the children’s books purchased for the library as well as a QR code system, suggested by Craig Stevenson, that may provide a framework for parents and caregivers to talk about book content and imagery with their children.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (Joint Task Force):

A. Joint Task Force (Update). The committee agreed that the nature of the display signage and book discussed by the Collection Advisory Group of Black Evanstonians warranted discussion. The members of the task force discussed and agreed upon an apology letter as a necessity. The Racial Equity Task Force also discussed short and long term goals, and the Library’s new initiative to invite patrons to self-identify their race, ethnicity and language spoken at home.

Library Director’s Report (written report provided in advance):

Staff Report:

A. Administrative Services Report (written report provided in advance.)

Hiring activity continues as we look to fill attrition vacancies. Interviews and application review are in progress to fill positions that include Marketing and Communications Manager, Supervising Librarian for Robert Crown, Branch and Library Assistant. The all gender restroom on the 3rd floor is now open for public use.

Board Development:

A. Illinois Library Association Annual Conference (Discussion led by Trustees that attended). Trustee Fulce, Trustee Hayman and Trustee Soto attended several virtual sessions offered by the conference. There are several sessions that are more meaningful than others but overall the conference was informative and worthwhile.

Unfinished Business:

A. Discussion of FY2022 Proposed Budget.

B. Approval of 2022 Proposed Library Expenditure Budget (ACTION). The motion to approve the 2022 Library Expenditure budget was made by Trustee Soto, seconded by Trustee Schapiro.

C. Preliminary Tax Levy Estimate. Two tax levy ordinances will be presented to the Board:

- 1) An ordinance that proposes the 2021 net levy for the Library Fund of \$7,252,000 (no increase over the 2020 property tax levy).
- 2) An ordinance that represents a .03% increase over the previous year. The proposed corporate and special purpose property taxes to be levied for tax year 2020 (fiscal year 2021) equals \$7,734,243 (net levy) which represents a .03% increase over the previous year.

New Business:

A. Services Policy Revision (FOR ACTION).

Upon motion made by Trustee Hayman and seconded by Trustee Lurie, the Services Policy Revision was approved by roll call vote.

B. Open+ (Discussion). The board discusses a proposed user agreement for the Open+ Self Service Library program that is coming soon at the Robert Crown Branch Library.

EXECUTIVE SESSION (Personnel)

The motion to move into Executive Session was made by Iles, seconded by Trustee Goodman, and approved by roll call vote.

The motion to end the Executive Session was made by Trustee Lurie, seconded by Trustee Schapiro, and approved by roll call vote.

Adjournment:

The motion to adjourn was made by Trustee Schapiro and seconded by Trustee Fulce and approved by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 11:11 p.m.

Submitted by: Terry Soto