

Board members in **Attendance** were Christian Mash, Fred Fox (via Zoom), Tina Buckel (via Zoom), Karen Malecki, and Clint Bradley. Staff members present were Thomas Vose, Library Director and Nicole McCullough, Executive Assistant.

Christian Mash called the **Meeting to Order** at 4:02 pm.

The Trustees reviewed the **Meeting Minutes** from the November 14th meeting. Karen moved to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Tina. The motion passed unanimously.

The **Financial Statements** from November 2024 were reviewed by the Trustees. Nicole reported an issue with the hourly/salary line item, indicating that it appears inaccurate due to an entry error involving a new employee. Nicole suggested two options moving forward of either creating a new profile for the employee as this would accurately record their salary on the correct line item or acknowledging the error without correcting it, noting that the line items for this budget year will be skewed. While a formal vote wasn't necessary, the Board agreed that creating a new employee profile at the beginning of the calendar year was the best course of action. This would avoid impacting the employee's W-2 and tax reporting. Thomas noted that expenditures to date are approximately 40% of the projected budget indicated that we are on target as we move toward the middle of the fiscal year. Clint moved to accept the Financial Statements, seconded by Fred. The motion passed unanimously. The statements were received and filed.

The **Director's Report** was reviewed by the group. Thomas reported that he was a speaker at the MD Tech Connect symposium, where he presented on the subject of AI and its potential drawbacks. He also recorded a radio spot that will air on December 27th. Fairchance Construction has signed the contract for the Friendsville project, and a pre-conference meeting has been held. Work on the project should commence shortly. Notably, the County has waived all permitting fees for this project. Thomas is currently facing a challenge in securing a prevailing wage determination for the construction project, as required for state-funded projects. He also discussed an exciting new initiative that we hope to launch in the new year: Library Academy. This program will offer supplemental classes every other week to homeschoolers and the general public aged 12 and under. There was a wide range of activities throughout the system at the branches. Thomas also attended the Legislative Forum where he heard about Senator McKay and Delegate Hinebaugh's priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

Old Business was discussed:

- *Fine-Free Discussion*- Thomas proposed a set of changes to Policy #'s 202 and 203, specifically removing line items related to fines. Following extensive discussion with Suzanne, it was determined that fines incurred for WRML materials checked out from our library are governed by the checkout location and can therefore be waived. Since Marina and ILL materials do not belong to our library, Thomas proposed retaining the \$.20 per day late fee for these items. Thomas initially considered imposing a charge for items requested through OCLC, as shipping and receiving these requests can be costly. However, after careful consideration, he decided that educating patrons about the process could be a more effective approach, as long as it is not abused. Thomas will revise the policies to reflect the recommended changes discussed today and bring them back for a formal vote at the next meeting.
- *Planned Giving Committee*- The Planned Giving Committee did not meet recently and plans to meet in January prior to the next board meeting.
- *Policy #320: Use of AI Technology*- Thomas advised that he had not received any feedback, positive or negative, from staff or the Board regarding the proposed policy on the use of AI Technology. With no questions raised, Karen moved to adopt Policy #320: Use of AI Technology as presented, and Tina seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- *Christmas Bonuses*-The Board discussed providing Christmas bonuses to REL staff. The exact amount of last year's bonus was uncertain because it wasn't a separate budget line item. Tina moved to give all REL staff a Christmas bonus equal to the amount issued in 2023. Karen seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Additionally, Karen suggested that future budgets should include Christmas bonuses as a separate line item for better clarity and planning.
- *New Trustee Nominations*- Two individuals, Alison Sweitzer and Nancy Brady, were nominated to fill the vacancies on the Board left by departing members Linda Ashby and Diane Nye-Paugh, respectively. After confirming their acceptance to serve and obtaining the agreement of the Commissioners, Christian indicated he would send an electronic vote to formally appoint them to the Board.

New Business was discussed:

- *Grantsville Pipes*- Thomas informed the Board that the Town of Grantsville had sent a letter stating that the service lines entering that branch may contain lead. While the Grantsville Branch is relatively new, and it's believed our lines are safe, Roger tested the water as a precaution and found no lead. Tina recommended contacting the Health Department's Environmental Services to request a water test.
- *Spam Filter*- Thomas presented three quotes for renewing the spam filter service. He recommended the lowest bid, noting positive past experiences with that vendor (Bell Techlogix). Karen moved to approve the quote from Bell Techlogix, seconded by Clint, and the motion passed unanimously.
- *Policy #202: Use of Materials*- Tabled to next meeting.

Other Business was discussed:

- *Mildred Wucik Donation*- Thomas reported that the library would be receiving a \$10,000 donation from the estate of Mildred Wucik. He indicated that the donation would be allocated to either the Friendsville or Accident branch. Upon receiving the donation and with the family's consent, Thomas will draft a press release.
- *Handicapped Parking*- Community Action will be demolishing a storage building behind the Kitzmiller School and plans to convert the space into a handicapped parking spot. Thomas suggested offering to contribute towards the cost of creating the hardtop parking space, as the library would be the primary beneficiary.
- *Upcoming MD Budget*- Fred reiterated Thomas's mention of the Legislative Breakfast, warning the board of a projected state budget deficit of 2.6 billion dollars and advising them to brace themselves for potential challenges.
- *Note of Appreciation*- Christian noted that Linda Ashby and Diane Nye-Paugh should be thanked for their dedicated service on the Board of Trustees. He suggested a nice card or gift as a token of appreciation.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be held on Thursday, January 9th, 2024 at 4:00pm at the Oakland Branch.

Tina made a motion to **Adjourn the Regular Meeting** at 4:46pm, seconded by Karen. The motion carried.

Minutes taken and respectfully submitted by Nicole McCullough.