CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 13, 2023

ATTENDANCE: Moina Noor, Chair; Ralph Bloom, Patsy Brescia, Alex Knopp, Mary Mann, Laurel Peterson, Haroldo Williams, Jannie Williams

STAFF: Sherelle Harris, Norwalk Public Library Executive Director; Jessica Vonachek, Chief of Economic Development, and Alan Lo, Building and Facilities Manager

This meeting was held via teleconference.

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Noor called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- **June 8, 2023**

**** MR. BLOOM MOVED THE MINUTES OF JUNE 8, 2023 MEETING MINUTES.**

The following corrections were noted:

Page 1, please change the following from:

2. **APPROVAL OF MAY 11, 2023 MEETING AND JUNE 1, 2023 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**** MS. MANN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MAY 11, 2023 MINUTES AS PRESENTED**
**** MOTION PASSED WITH TWO (2) ABSTENTIONS (MR. CULLEN AND MR. KNOPP)**

TO:

2. **APPROVAL OF MAY 11, 2023 MEETING AND JUNE 1, 2023 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**** MS. MANN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MAY 11, 2023 MINUTES AS PRESENTED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Page 4, under Electric Car Charging Station at SONO Library, please change the following from:

> **** MR. KNOPP MOVED TO APPROVE THE ELECTRIC CAR CHARGING STATION AT THE SONO LIBRARY.**

TO:

> **** MR. KNOPP MOVED TO APPROVE A DUAL ELECTRIC CAR CHARGING STATION AT THE SONO LIBRARY.**

Mr. Knopp went on to say that regarding the presentation, the summary was very incomplete and it should be removed or expanded. He said that Ms. LaValle had spoken for 30 minutes. Discussion followed about attaching the slide presentation to the minutes. Concerns were expressed that the minutes were incomplete because they don't portrait the presentation accurately.

Following a discussion, it was decided to table the June minutes at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No one was present from the public to address the Board.

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda at this time.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- **Main Library Renovation Update from Jessica Vonachek, Chief of Economic Development, and Alan Lo, Building and Facilities Manager**

Ms. Noor introduced Ms. Vonachek, who then spoke about the expansion of the Belden Street Library. She thanked the Board for their patience as they have developed the plan and noted that the Board Members had visited the Westport Library and the New Canaan Library among others.

Ms. Vonachek said that the Common Council had acquired 3 Belden Avenue, which is known as the Redevelopment Agency. The First Taxing District has been working with the Library on this project. There has not been a closing date set at this time. She spoke about how Mr. Lo and the City Staff had stepped forward to help with the expansion development.

Ms. Vonachek gave a brief overview of the finances available. Not all of the details are currently available.

Mr. Lo greeted the Board Members. He said that he was involved in City construction projects, such as the Police Headquarters, Fire Headquarters, a number of schools and various other on-going major projects including the Maritime Center and the Lockwood Mathews Mansion.

Mr. Lo spoke about the process of developing a project and explained that he often coordinates the communications for projects between the developer and the Purchasing Department. He said that the Board will lead the way in terms of developing what they want for the project, while Mr. Lo manages the account and the details like the internal building controls and other similar issues. His staff is looking to start the RFP process in a few months.

Ms. Brescia said that they had compiled a survey report from an outside specialty firm a few years ago before COVID. It needs to be updated. Mr. Lo said that it should be incorporated into the RFP. It will be important to have the entire project handled by one company. The first step is to issue the RFP. The Board will have to review the RFP before it is issued. The staff will also develop a project schedule and determine the funding for the project.

Discussion followed about the details of the funding, conceptual design and initiating the process.

Mr. Knopp had concerns about the fact that the architect would be hired before determining the type of uses that the Library wishes to promote. Mr. Lo said that by having the architect early in the process, it allows the architect to provide suggestions and obtain a clear, first hand understanding of what the Board needs and wants. He also reminded everyone that the building was a historic Cargnie building. Discussion followed.

Ms. Brescia said that they would most likely start the process by the end of the year. Mr. Bloom spoke about the timeline. Ms. Noor said that they usually take the month of August off and then they can schedule a longer Board meeting to discuss their visions in September. Mr. Lo said that the next few months, he would be reviewed the information and start discussion with the Library Board. This will also help with choosing the best firm for the project.

Ms. Noor thanked Mr. Lo and Ms. Vonachek for their input.

- **Webster Lot Parking**

Ms. Noor said that she had sent the Board Members an exchange that she had with Mr. Bidoli and Jim Travers about possibly acquiring some designated parking spaces for the Library. She was told that the number of public parking spaces would remain the same. The additional spaces will be for the development.

Ms. Brescia said that the City is required to provide parking spaces for the SoNo Library and if they are taking the five or 10 spaces on site, then they are required to replace the spaces. Mr.

Knopp noted that the City owns Webster Lot and a redevelopment project that displaces low income tenants or parking spaces for the library is unacceptable. Ms. Harris said that they were asking for a total of 25 additional spaces.

Ms. Brescia said that she had attended one of the meeting about this and it was wrong that they were doing this. She said that it was important to be proactive. Ms. Noor said that she would find out what the next steps would be. Several of the Board Members said that they would be willing to have a Special Meeting. Mr. Knopp said that it would be important to let the Chairman of the Redevelopment Commission know about this.

- **Governance Memo**

Ms. Brescia said that there was still a major discrepancy between the City and the Board regarding this issue. She said that the focus was on expanding the library and Ms. Brescia had many objections to the content of the letter.

Mr. Knopp said that he felt the letter was appropriate. He spoke about the earlier discussions and noted that the Board had followed the procedure that was laid out for them by the administration some time ago.

Ms. Williams said that the Board had a hybrid system and that it means they were working with the City as a partner.

Ms. Brescia said that she had not suggested that there be a private meeting, but the City administration should come and discuss the issues with the Board. The letter should not be sent out at this time.

Ms. Noor said that as she was writing the letter, she kept returning to the efficiency study and the State statutes. She said that they had revised the letter after their meeting with Dawn. It will be important to let the City administration know the State Statutes.

Mr. Williams said that having a meeting with the administration would be good to present their perspectives before sending the letter. Then they will know what they heard from the State and why they believe their issues.

Ms. Brescia then listed her concerns with the letter including the fact that the State Statute is an appendix to the document. The City Ordinance is not, which creates the hybrid environment that was being discussed.

Discussion followed about who would be included in a meeting between the City administration and the Library Board regarding this issues. Ms. Noor said that it would be important for the Board Members to be clear on what State designates what the Board is due.

Ms. Noor said that she was thinking of sending the letter to the Mayor and inviting the administration to come and discuss the issues. She reminded everyone that this was their first real discussion about this memo. The memo was revised after Dawn's visit. It is important to have something in writing rather than something that is abstract

**** MS. BRESCIA MOVED TO TABLE THE LETTER UNTIL THEY CAN INVITE CITY OFFICIALS TO MEETING TO DISCUSS THE CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE CITY ORDINANCES AND THE STATE STATUTES IN CONTEXT OF THE EFFICIENCY STUDY**.

Mr. Knopp said that when he and Ms. Harris had met with the Mayor, Mr. Daniels, and Ms. King, the Mayor was quite clear that the efficiency study was not proposed by him, did not authorize it or sponsor it because it was done by an outside firm. He said that he felt that the study was incomplete and the recommendations were ineffective. Because of this, the Board's response to the efficiency study would not involve City officials. The recommendations were not from the City but from an outside firm.

Mr. Knopp stated that he did not believe that the meeting was necessarily the next step. The point was to make recommendations to the administration about what should be the case, not what is the current status. A lengthy discussion followed.

**** MS. WILLIAMS SECONDED.**
****THE MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE (5) IN FAVOR (BRESCIA, BLOOM, MANN, H. WILLIAMS, AND J. WILLIAMS); ONE (1) OPPOSED (PETERSON) AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (KNOPP**).

Mr. Knopp said that he was abstaining because he was not clear on what the discussion would entail. He asked if it would include the efficiency study.

Ms. Williams said that Dawn had been very clear about the Board's responsibilities. Dawn noted that they were did not have control of the budget and the Board would work with the City on hiring issues.

Library Director's report

1. Director's goals
Enclosures:
Libraries Without Borders assessment – Narrative
Libraries Without Borders assessment – PowerPoint

Ms. Harris then displayed a number of PowerPoint slides showing her goals. A discussion followed about the various goals and some additions were made to the list.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no addition business to consider at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no addition business to consider at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. BRESCIA MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** THERE WAS A SECOND.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

The meeting was adjourned 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services