CITY OF NORWALK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ATTENDANCE: Moina Noor, Chair; Alex Knopp, Laurel Peterson, Jannie Williams; Mary Mann (7:13 p.m.)

ABSENT: Patsy Brescia, Thomas Cullen

OTHERS: Sherelle Harris; Library Director; Katherine Schneider, Norwalk Poet Laureate

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Noor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL
[00:00:15]

Ms. Noor called the roll. A quorum was present.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES
[00:00:26]

A. February 13, 2025

**** MS. PETERSON MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 13, 2025 MEETING.**
**** MR. KNOPP SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 13, 2025 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED.**

NEW BUSINESS
[1:20]

A. Katherine Schneider, New Norwalk Poet Laureate

Ms. Harris introduced Ms. Schneider, the new Norwalk Poet Laureate. Ms. Harris described her as the champagne after popping a cork on a bottle that has been shaken up and said she can’t wait to see what she will bring to this new position.

Ms. Schneider greeted the Board and thanked them for the great honor. She said that she has been living in Norwalk since 2011 and had graduated from Fairfield University where she studied creative writing. She published her first book in 2019. She explained that during COVID, she and another Ridgefield author had created a livestream. Ms. Peterson had been featured on that livestream. The livestream that ran for almost three and a half years, featuring writers and poets from all over the world. She said that Norwalk was the home of so many people who are creative and their open mike is packed every month.

Ms. Schneider then spoke about some of her work, including some inter-disciplinary art projects that were done on Instagram. She said that she was looking forward to an opportunity on April 12 at the Factory Underground. She thanked the Board again for this honor.

Ms. Peterson said that she was very excited to have Ms. Schneider as Poet Laureate. The Board expressed their best wishes. Ms. Schneider said that their next open mic at Eco Evoluntion in Norwalk would be held on March 21st and invited everyone to attend.

Ms. Harris invited Ms. Peterson, who was the City's first Poet Laureate to speak. Ms. Peterson said that she was very excited to see Ms. Schneider and noted it was important to bring in more young people.

VI. REPORTS

[8:20]

A. President
1. Main Library Renovation Update

Ms. Noor said that she and Ms. Harris had met with the Mayor, Lamond Daniels, Alan Lo and Tom. Livingston. She explained that Jessica Voneshek, the former contact point for the Main Library renovation project, had been working on an RFP. Ms. Voneshek is no longer with the City of Norwalk. Ms. Noor said the meeting occurred after the Mayor announced his decision not to run for office again.

Ms. Noor gave a brief overview of the current finances and noted that there was some funding left for the design phase. Originally, there was $500,000 in the budget and $1.45 in the Economic Development account. A number of drawdowns were made including: $800,000 to purchase the Milligan lot; $40,000 for n tank removal at 3 Belden and $1.4 million from ARPA funds for the purchase of 3 Belden. There is approximately $1.1 to $1.2 million left for design purposes.

Ms. Harris displayed the spreadsheet onscreen. [13:42]

She said that she would love to hear other Board Members' thoughts. She said that Mr. Lo had indicated that they should start planning again because they didn't own the Milligan portion of the library parking lot or 3 Belden when the original plans were drawn up.

Mr. Knopp asked if the $800,000 was the final cost for the parking lot. [16:55]

Ms. Noor said that she did not think it was the final number and they had been told to expect it to be more. Mr. Knopp said that he expected and previously expressed that the parking lot would cost twice as much. He added that he had never been comfortable with the StanTech plans that were drawn for the library. He added that the BET had cut the budget earlier in the week. He also said that he felt that it was not right that the Library is being charged by the Parking Authority to line their parking lot while the lots at City Hall are paid for by the Parking Authority.

Ms. Peterson left the meeting.

Discussion followed about the financial details and the potential changes with a new administration along with updating the building plans.

Ms. Mann joined the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

Ms. Noor asked the Board if they wished to go forward with updating the building plan.

**** MR. KNOPP MOVED TO TAKE ACTION TO ENGAGE A CONSULTANT TO WORK WITH THE BOARD AND TO UPDATE THE BUILDING PLAN AND TO HELP THE BOARD REVIEW THE STRATEGIC PLAN IN ANTICIPATION OF EVENTUAL MODERNIZATION AND CONSTRUCTION**. [34:15]

Ms. Mann asked if they would have to go through Purchasing. Mr. Knopp said that other than re-engaging the former vendor to update the building plan, they would have to go through Purchasing and review bids.

A discussion followed about whether they should go through the Foundation or through the City. The City process would require going through a bidding process. Mr. Knopp said that he was opposed to using Foundation funding since it was a City project. Ms. Harris said that she could check with Purchasing about to proceed.

**** MS. MANN SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Ms. Noor said that it would be important to make the renovation of the library as a key talking point, especially with an election coming up.

Mr. Knopp said that once the City condemned the Milligan property, the City has to put in an amount of money that the property is evaluated at with the court. If the judge decides the value of the parcel is greater, then the City will have to pay it.

Ms. Noor said that she would reached out to Corporation Counsel about this.

2. Charter Revision Update
https://ecode360.com/44899109
[39:46]
Ms. Noor said that the Charter Revision Commission told them that if they wished to make recommendations, they should do it now. Currently the appointment of the Library Director is by Mayoral appointment with Common Council approval. There is no defined role for the Board right now. Ms. Noor said that they need to bring this to the Charter Revision Commission. She added that the Board should have a role in this decision because they are more involved with the Library than the Council.

**** MS. NOOR SAID THAT THEY FORWARD THEIR RECOMMENDATION TO THE CHARTER REVISION COMMITTEE THAT THE BOARD BE A PART OF THE LIBRARY DIRECTOR ALONG WITH THE MAYOR IN THE APPOINTMENT OF THE LIBRARY DIRECTOR**. [42:10]

Mr. Knopp asked for clarification on this motion. Ms. Harris said that she and the Board had created some language about this at a previous meeting and that Ms. Peterson has that language. Ms. Williams noted that Ms. Peterson had left and that there was no longer a quorum.

Mr. Knopp said that he had to leave for another meeting at 7:51 p.m.

The discussion moved to whether or not they would have to schedule a special meeting. A brief discussion followed about scheduling the Special Meeting. Ms. Harris suggested that Ms. Noor contact Ms. Peterson to draft up the motion and that they end the meeting since they could not vote on the remaining agenda items without a quorum.

3. Main Library and South Norwalk Library Walkthrough Rescheduling [47:21]

Ms. Noor said that she thought that the Library looked really great when they came to the program The sliding doors are working great. Ms. Harris said she would like to thank Neil Rennie from Guardian.

B. LIBRARY DIRECTOR

[48:48]

1. Approval of Updated Confidentiality Policy [48:55]

Ms. Harris said that there was not a quorum to vote on the policy. It had been tentatively approved by the board based on Corporation Counsel's review, Corporation Counsel approved it and it needed to be officially approved by the Board.

2. Recap of Meeting with Norwalk Parking Authority [49:30]

Ms. Noor said they would discuss this next month.

3. Library Part-Time Staff Hourly Rate Adjustment Analysis [49:54]

Ms. Noor said they would discuss this next month.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one present to comment.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to consider at this time.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Noor adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services.