

MAUD PRESTON PALENSKE MEMORIAL LIBRARY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, July 25, 2023
DRAFT

Call to order: Board President Ren Baldwin (City of St. Joseph) called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Other board members present: Vice President Melissa Clapper (St. Joseph Township); Secretary Rick Ast (City of St. Joseph); and Betty Mundy (St. Joseph Township), Kathy Buursma (City of St. Joseph), Mimi Elwell (St. Joseph Township), Patrice Rose, (St. Joseph Township), Barbara Thompson (City of St. Joseph); and Emily Zito-Desimone (City of St. Joseph).

Also present: Library Director Paula Stakley; Virginia Antonson of the Friends of the Library; Kevin Truman, a member of the Friends of the Library who said he also wished to talk as a private citizen; and by remote, Nicole Gibby.

Public comments: Antonson said there was no Friends' report for June, but added she had been asked to inquire about the status of the library elevator, which is out of service again.

Stakley said the elevator had "making more noises than usual" and that she had shut it down from "an abundance of caution." Antonson said she agreed with that decision, adding she had been putting carts of used books in the library, but then using the stairs rather than the elevator to retrieve the books.

Antonson also said some plants in the library garden are "wilting and close to dying" for lack of water. Stakley said she would check on the plant watering situation.

Truman asked whether the library had any long-range plans, adding he did not understand how the library and the City of St. Joseph worked together. "As an outsider and a citizen, things don't always make much sense," he added.

Baldwin and Stakley told Truman about the library's recent upgrades through the ABM project, adding there is still work that needs to be done. Clapper told Truman, "Your use of the word 'complicated' is very accurate."

Minutes: Elwell moved to approve the minutes of the June 27 board meeting, and Thompson supported the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve the June 27 board minutes.

Bills: Clapper asked about the funding for Hoopla, and Stakley said the costs are "covered by donations." The program costs about \$1,000 a month and "is very popular," she added. "It's a big hit."

The board discussed whether the cost could be lowered by setting stricter limits to use, but Clapper said the library should be cautious. "If we took it away, it would not be to our advantage," she said. "For right now, we have the money."

Elwell, supported by Zito-Desimone, moved to limit usage to five borrowings a month. Elwell said that would lower the cost to \$950 a month, and the board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Clapper moved to pay monthly bills totaling \$29,010.44, and Mundy seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve the bills.

Finance report: Zito-Desimone pointed out that the 1 percent annual fee charged by the Berrien Community Foundation “is almost what we got in dividends.” “That’s an issue we’re still looking at,” Baldwin told her.

Clapper moved to accept the financial report, and Buursma seconded the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve the financial report.

Donor Wall: Baldwin asked the board to “take a three-minute walk” to see the Library’s new Donor Wall, which is near completion. He said Rose and her husband had painted the wall and “got it prepared for the sculpture.”

Board members praised the wall’s appearance and thanked Rose for her work. The board left the meeting room at 6:50 p.m. and returned at 6:59 p.m.

Strategic planning: The board discussed a Proposal for Services from Midwest Collaborative for Library Services for help with strategic planning. Stakley said the proposed cost is \$12,600.

“I like them,” Stakley said. “They are for libraries, and know our specific needs.”

“We need somebody to help guide us along,” Clapper said.

EPS proposal: The board discussed a service proposal from EPS Security Service & Inspections, but took no action.

Stakley said the firm would monitor and answer calls from the library’s fire and burglary alarm systems, and would annually inspect the fire system. The cost would be \$1,998 a month, she said.

Board members had a number of questions, and Stakley said she “will follow up and ask.”

Hiring decisions: Stakley said she is still looking for one more library assistant, a job which currently requires a bachelor’s degree. She said she recently interviewed a candidate who seemed ideal for the job, but did not have a bachelor’s degree.

Stakley asked whether the board would agree to state a bachelor’s degree is “preferred,” but not required, for the job.

Ast moved to approve Stakley’s request, and Elwell supported the motion. The board in a unanimous vote approved the change.

Board binders: Stakley said she is in the process of going through and updating the binders issued to board members. It was suggested that board members who want the updated versions should bring in their old binders.

Statistical report: Elwell had several questions about the monthly statistical report. The report shows the library had 29 programs in June 2022, but only two in June 2023, she said.

“I want to know what happened this June,” Elwell said.

“I’m trying to figure out what would amount to 29” programs, Stakley said.

Elwell said she expects at least one or two children’s programs every week.

“I will look into that,” Stakley said.

Director’s report: Stakley in her written report thanked Rose “for all of the designing, planning, communication, scheduling, and even manual labor to get the Donor Wall installed.”

The summer reading program “continues to go well,” and “Storytime” will continue through Aug. 2, Stakley said.

To the board, Stakley said the second wifi extender has been installed in the Felland Auditorium and that she has hired an administrative assistant.

Mundy suggested the board should have “some kind of recognition” for Sue Morgan, who recently retired. “That’s a good thought,” Baldwin said.

Fund raising suggestion: Zito-Desimone said during a recent “up north” trip, she noticed the town of Thompsonville had a lot of lawn signs supporting the local library. She said each sign cost \$2 to make and were sold for \$10 each.

“That’s a terrific idea,” Thompson said. “We should look into it.”

Adjournment: Ast moved to adjourn the meeting, and Elwell supported the motion. The board voted unanimously to approve the motion, and Baldwin declared the meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary Rick Ast

Next board meeting: Tuesday, Sept. 26, 2023