



New Orleans Public Library
Board Meeting
ZOOM Teleconference
Tuesday, January 18, 2022
4:30 p.m.

NOTE REGARDING PUBLIC COMMENT:

The legal purpose of open meetings is to allow individuals to observe and participate in the deliberations of public bodies. Meetings of public bodies must be open to the public unless closed pursuant to a statutory exception, such as set forth in R.S. 42:16 – 42:18, which authorizes closed executive sessions. Public bodies must provide an opportunity for public comment prior to action on the agenda item upon which a vote is to be taken. The governing body may adopt reasonable rules and restrictions regarding the comment period. R.S. 42:14, requires each public body, except school boards, conducting a meeting that is subject to the notice requirement of R.S. 42:19(A), to allow a public comment period prior to action on an agenda item upon which a vote is to be taken.

PUBLIC COMMENT IS LIMITED TO TWO MINUTES PER INDIVIDUAL

NOTICE OF TELECONFERENCE MEETING:

This meeting is being conducted via teleconference per Executive Order 59-JBE-2020 Section 2.C, which states: “All state agencies, boards and commissions, and local political subdivisions of the state shall continue to provide for attendance at essential governmental meetings via teleconference or video conference and such attendance shall be allowed during the pendency of this emergency. All efforts shall be made to provide for observation and input by members of the public. Before any meeting conducted pursuant to this section, the state agency, boards and commission, or local political subdivision of the state shall first provide a written certification that it will otherwise be unable to operate due to quorum requirements. Such certification shall be posted at the same time and in the same manner as the agenda for the meeting. Nothing in this order shall be interpreted to waive any notice requirements.”

MINUTES

- I. **Call to Order**
 - A. Board Chair, Vonda Flentroy-Rice called the January 18, 2022 Regular Board meeting to order at 4:36 p.m.

- II. **Roll Call (4:36 p.m.)**

Board Members Present: Vonda Flentroy-Rice, Kathleen Coverick, Andrea Neighbours, Dana Henry, Daniel Tapia, Justin Ross-Hilliard, Alexis Ferrouillet
Absent: Phala Kimbrough-Mire, Raquel Dufauchard
NOPL Staff Present: Interim Executive Director, Emily Painton; Executive Secretary, Tammy Hanson; Budget Director, Michel Thompson; Marketing Director, Jane LeGros

- III. **Public Comments** (4:38 p.m.)
 - A. There were no public comments

- IV. **Action Item: Approval of Consent Agendas** (4:38 p.m.)
 - A. Approve November 9, 2021 board meeting minutes
 - B. Approve November 28, 2021 special board meeting minutes
 - C. Review Executive Committee January 11, 2022 meeting minutes
 - 1. A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Dana Henry and seconded by Vonda Flentroy-Rice. Motion carried unanimously.

- V. **Information Items** (4:39 p.m.)
 - A. Board Chair's Recognition of the Millage Campaign Contributors – (Vonda Flentroy-Rice)
 - 1. Ms. Flentroy-Rice thanked Bill Settoon for his 2 terms serving on the NOPL board. She also welcomed new board member, Dr. Alexis Ferrouillet.
 - 2. Ms. Flentroy-Rice thanked the citizens of New Orleans for their overwhelming support of the library millage that passed in December 2021, allowing the NOPL to pursue its three strategic pillars: Smart Kids, Open Doors, and a Ready Workforce. She extended a thank you to the board members, Friends of NOPL, the NOPL Foundation, and the Save Our Libraries Coalition for their support.
 - 3. Ms. Neighbours thanked Ms. Flentroy-Rice for her hard work and leadership in getting the millage passed.
 - B. NOPL Foundation Report – (Demetric Mercadel, 5 minutes)
 - 1. The Foundation is meeting later this week. They need to know who will be replacing Bill Settoon as one of the NOPL board members who serve on the Foundation Board. Ms. Mercadel looks forward to a more productive year post-trial.
 - C. Friends of NOPL – (Jennifer Kitner, 2 minutes)
 - 1. Item tabled – Friends of NOPL representative was unavailable.
 - D. Executive Director Update/Introduction of new board member Alexis Parent-Ferrouillet – (Emily Painton, 5 minutes)
 - 1. Branch construction updates: Work at the Hubble branch is complete. Termite abatement at the Alvar branch is finished, but termite damage to the public bathrooms necessitated additional work. The Mid-City branch is closed due to plumbing issues. The Nix branch remains under construction.
 - 2. Ms. Painton met with an RTA representative regarding the proposed plans to move the bus terminals surrounding the Main library. The only change to the previous proposal is that the pickup location has moved towards the Gravier Street area of Loyola Avenue so busses do not block our main entrance. RTA does have a social worker what will be at the pickup site sporadically, but that person will not be housed there. There will be a supervisor on-site 24 hours, but it is unclear where his/her office will be. RTA has an agreement with Tulane for bus drivers to utilize their public restroom. RTA does plan on installing additional lighting to make that area safer. Since our current signage is geared toward

walking traffic, we may place a banner on the side of the main building that is visible to street traffic and would not be blocked by busses.

3. We need to fill the digital literacy staff position on the strategic planning team as well as several support positions. Filling Library Associate positions is ongoing.
4. Meeting room scheduling and in-person programming is on hold until COVID numbers can stabilize. Ms. LeGros and her staff are working on creating an online scheduling program.
5. Ms. Flentroy-Rice recalled that in the previous RTA discussion, they were going to provide NOPL with a social worker. Ms. Painton responded that the social worker they were providing is geared toward their patrons and would not be on location frequently.
6. Ms. Flentroy-Rice suggested Southern University of New Orleans School of Social Work as a potential collaborator. Ms. Painton agreed and added that we previously had an intern that provided social work; however, they are required to have a mentor who is a licensed social worker. Perhaps the RTA social worker would be willing to provide this.
7. Ms. Neighbours asked if there is an official contract between the NOPL and RTA. Ms. Painton responded that she did not think there was, but perhaps we would benefit from having an MOU so details of the agreement are in writing. Ms. Neighbours also suggested sending a letter to RTA thanking them for partnering with NOPL and offering social work services and hopefully that partnership can expand. Ms. Painton stated that RTA has statistics that show which areas of the city patrons have difficulty getting to the library via public transportation.
8. Mr. Tapia asked if we were considering partnerships with other organizations such as NAMI or Unity since they have more experience with the population we are trying to reach. Ms. Painton agreed that a collaboration between these organizations and a student social worker would be beneficial, and added that we already have contacts at Odyssey House.

E. 2021 Performance Report – (Jane LeGros, 2 minutes)

1. Since the library was closed most of the fourth quarter in 2020 and we were still doing 45-minute visits, the fourth quarter numbers in 2021 are exceptional. We had more programs in 2021 with strong attendance, as most were virtual. Outdoor story times began in December.
2. The marketing department is sending out emails to new library cardholders to give them information about services the library offers.
3. Ms. Flentroy-Rice added that the Gambit offered NOPL the opportunity to tell our story and our services. Ms. LeGros responded that she and Ms. Painton have already met with the Gambit and that is forthcoming.
4. Financial Report – (Michel Thompson, 2 minutes)
5. December 2021 payments are continuing into 2022. As of last week, we have collected \$19.2 million and budgeted for \$18.8 million. Personnel costs are 87% of what was budgeted due to open positions. Other operating expenses are at 65% of what was budgeted because out of the \$7 million that has been encumbered, only \$4.9 million has been paid to vendors. Overall, we have spent approximately 80% of our budget.

6. Ms. Neighbours asked how much the payment percentage will rise when all have been processed. Ms. Thompson responded that it will depend on whether POs are posted as 2021 or 2022. Ms. Neighbours asked if a 22% budget surplus would receive public criticism and Ms. Thompson responded that because the surplus can be explained that is not likely.
7. \$1.5 million trust dollars have been spent. Any trust dollars left will go back into our operating budget.

VI. **Discussion Items**

A. Hiring Rate for Librarians (5:15 p.m.)

1. Ms. Painton explained how the \$15 minimum wage increase has affected the librarian positions. Currently, laborers make more the Library Associates, which require a college degree. The proposal is to raise those salaries \$4000-\$5000 annually. To move forward, the board needs to send a letter to Civil Service approving the proposed raises.

VII. **Action Item: Approval of Rate Increase for Librarians** (5:28 p.m.)

A. Ms. Flentroy-Rice moved that the board submit a letter to civil service approving the proposed classification pay rates. Motion was seconded by Mr. Ross-Hilliard, and the floor opened for discussion.

1. Mr. Henry stated that the annual starting salary for elementary teachers in New Orleans starts at \$48,900. Dr. Ferrouillet added that you also need a Bachelor's degree and certification. Mr. Henry feels the library salaries are \$7500 behind where they should be considering all need degrees.
2. Ms. Painton has documented salaries at other libraries with similar circulation and population to show Civil Service how NOPL salaries compare.
3. Ms. Flentroy-Rice suggested that the board's letter to Civil Service include a request to have the salary increases implemented retroactively.
4. Ms. Coverick added that the increased pay rates have already been included in this year's budget.
5. Mr. Henry stated that some professions are allotted stipends to subsidize their salaries, so perhaps the Foundation could explore the possibility of raising funds to supplement the library salaries to make them more competitive. Ms. Mercadel asked that the board should have something ready to discuss at the Foundation board meeting on Thursday.
6. Ms. Thompson questioned whether the Civil Service Department would allow employees to receive a stipend. Mr. Henry responded that there might be a way to circumvent city guidelines while staying within Civil Service rules.
7. Ms. Ferrouillet asked if it could be authorized as secondary employment. Ms. Coverick replied that we want librarians compensated without taking on additional responsibilities.
8. Mr. Henry explained that Foundation money from private donors is unrestricted and would give us more flexibility.
9. Ms. Neighbours recalls this being discussed when the Friends of NOPL wanted to give scholarships to librarians, but it was not allowed. Perhaps this can be discussed at the Board retreat.

10. Ms. Mercadel suggested the board connect with City Attorney, Melissa Quigley, regarding this issue.
11. Ms. Coverick suggested having a consultant do a salary study to support the pay increases.
12. Ms. Neighbours asked Ms. Mercadel to clarify what role Ms. Quigley would play in supporting the pay increases with Civil Service. Ms. Mercadel responded that when she worked for the French Market, Ms. Quigley was able to help them navigate getting salary adjustments.

B. The motion on the floor was put to a vote. Motion carried unanimously.

VIII. **Attachments**

- A. Board Packet

IX. **Adjournment**

- A. Mr. Henry made a motion to adjourn the January 18, 2022 regular board meeting. Motion was seconded by Ms. Coverick. Meeting adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

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