

Staunton Public Library
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
May 28, 2020

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Josh Howard. Also in attendance were board members Dan Swift, Mark Peterson, Cass Cannon, Randolph Bertin, Virginia Trovato and Sarah Skrobis, Library Director. The meeting was held as a teleconference.

Josh opened the meeting by reciting the City's "Presiding Officer's Introduction" which included a call to order, the calling of the roll of those present and other material related to using a teleconference which was open to the public.

Josh continued with the minutes of the previous meeting, February 20, 2020 which had been distributed to the attendees in advance of the meeting. No additions or corrections were suggested and they were accepted.

Talking Book Center report:

Dan read into the record his remarks re the current operations of the Talking Book Center as follows:

Three meetings of the TBC have been held since the last Library Advisory Board meeting, one in person and two by teleconference. The main mission of what is called TBC, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization, is to raise funds to operate the TBC Office which delivers audio library services to the blind and vision handicapped community. It is affiliated with the National Library Service for the provision of audiobooks, players and other materials. The TBC is located on the second floor of the Staunton Public Library. Its service area covers Staunton, Waynesboro, Augusta County, Lexington, Buena Vista, Rockbridge County and Bath and Highland counties. Ilia Desjardins is the full-time supervisor of the TBC Office.

During the pandemic, the TBC Office has continued most its functions since there is no need for in-person contact between the office staff and our patrons. Unfortunately, however, during the Staunton City employee downsizing – TBC staff are city employees – we lost our part-timer so that has placed additional stress on Ilia Desjardins. Ilia has, of course, had to eliminate all outside outreach events with supportive organizations.

The TBC Board has also shelved several fund-raising events until we normalize in-person contacts. That has affected our income from events outside our normal funding sources. Since our heavy revenue support comes mostly in the summer and fall, we will finish our fiscal year on June 30, 2020 in good shape, but fiscal 2021 will be a struggle as support from local municipalities will be reduced. We do have reserve funds that will kick in to keep operations going.

Dan added that a tele-meeting of the TBC Board was ongoing today as they discussed the need to implement a different form of fund raising to offset expected declines from traditional funding sources.

Friends of the Library: No representative of the friends was in attendance. Sarah briefly explained that the Friends had canceled in-person meetings and, of course, had to cancel the April book sale at the library. They did hold a Giving Tuesday campaign, but she did not know the results of that. Their next major event is the fall book sale.

Director's Report: Sarah recapped the recent changes affecting the library, its closure to the public on March 15, doing curbside service for about a week after that and then closing all but telephone and online services. On April 24 all part-time employees were laid off.

She noted that most borrowing policies had been relaxed, and no overdue books could be returned, and no fines or other fees were being collected. The full-time employees have been doing a variety of tasks – troubleshooting online problems, cleaning up databases, handling genealogy requests and so forth. The children's Storytime has switched over to an Instagram offering.

She noted that they have an approved 2021 budget that includes cuts in supply accounts, etc. They will bring back 24 part-time staff positions on a rolling basis, so that will slow down the process of getting folks back on board. Full-time employees will be furloughed for 10 days during the year as another cost-savings move.

Curbside borrowing services will be the first to return and an announcement of that process will be made in the next few days.

Sarah had emailed board members with operations summaries in advance for the months of March and April which detailed operations in more detail. She also sent the board members a draft of her Phased Restoration of Services which outlined in some detail a calendar of services and how and when they would be restored. Board member questions followed:

Board: Re the part-time staff, do they need to reapply for their jobs?

Sarah: Yes, part-timers in city jobs were laid off, not furloughed.

Board: Re fund raising for the library, how can the Board help?

Sarah: Since the library is a city department, the Library Board has an advisory function only and no fiscal responsibilities. Perhaps there is some possible involvement with the Friends since they do not have restrictions on fundraising and financially support us on projects. But the Board can be a great advocate for the library in other ways.

Board: Re the Phased Opening memo, what really restricts reopening? Finances?

Sarah: We just cannot open until the staff gets back. Most of the laid-off part-timers are circulation staff who handle most of the public interactions. We will need to juggle public

access to reduce exposure for staff. And we must have enough staff on board to handle the process of disinfecting returned materials in addition to face-to-face interactions.

Board: Is the library getting adequate health information from the Virginia Department of Health?

Sarah: I am not directly in contact with VA DofH but get direction from city officials like all departments.

Board: Who is responsible for personal protection equipment (PPE)?

Sarah: Many items are on order. Staff are wearing masks, but it is a combination of city-provided PPE and private sources.

Board: How soon will use of meeting rooms come back, even for the Advisory Board.

Sarah: We will follow the pattern the City sets out for public meetings I department and legislative sessions.

Board: How has borrowing held up without physical lending taking place?

Sarah: Digital access is the highest ever.

Library Services Update

Sarah continued the conversation on the reopening plan and said they needed to be proactive in informing the Staunton population about the staggered services. She noted that most library borrowers are familiar with the Valley library partnership and there will probably be confusion because each of the three libraries – Staunton, Augusta County and Waynesboro – will be on different schedules. Inter-library loans will not be immediate.

New Business

Sarah addressed the topic of election of officers, since the Board runs on a fiscal-year basis ending June 30. There are three positions on the Board, Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary which are filled annually, The Chair position is vacant now, as Christy Davis ended her term February 29. Dan will retire from the Board on June 30, so the Secretary position will be open also. Josh currently holds the Vice Chair position. She asked Board members to mull over their interest in serving in an officer position prior to the next meeting.

The Board meeting ended at 5:15 P.M. on a motion by Virginia, seconded by Cass and approved unanimously.

The next Library Board meeting will be June 18 at 4:30 P.M., presumably as a teleconference.

Respectfully submitted,
Daniel Swift, Secretary