

**FREEPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
February 19th, 2025 – 6:00 pm**

I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Freeport Public Library Board of Trustees was held in the Library Boardroom on Wednesday, February 19th, 2025. Board President Mary Kaufman presided and called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Notice is hereby given that a majority of a quorum of the members of City Council of the City of Freeport may be present at the above-referenced meeting. No action on the part of the City Council will be taken.

Members Present:

Al Evon, Alan Greene, Betty Butler, Lucas Kramer, Mary Kaufman, RoseMarie Brubaker

Members Absent:

Tasha Mazique, Julie Reynolds, Renne Barr (Resigned 1/8/25)

Also present, Executive Director Ashley Huffines and Kya Eckert acting as the Recording Secretary.

II. CHANGES/CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

Date change for Approval of the January 8th* meeting minutes

III. QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC/MEDIA

None.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(Greene/Butler) Motion to approve the January 8th, 2024 meeting minutes.
6 in favor/0 opposed. Motion carries.

V. FINANCIAL REPORT

Kramer reviewed the monthly budget report for January 2025. Huffines explained the city finance department is now finalizing the 2024 budget, and closing the FY, so the final will be ready in March. Huffines made note of the Periodicals line that needs to be adjusted due to an invoice being incorrectly charged to that line instead of the Digital Services account. Kaufman noticed a large gift in the bequest lines and Huffines shared information about Lila Harnish and her passing away. Her estate was finalized and divided between 3 local non-profit organizations. The library received the sizable donation and deposited the gift into the capital account to be used to fund the much-needed restroom remodel.

Huffines reported no progress from the foundation yet, but thanks to the Harnish bequest, the gifts and requests line shows a positive variance. Brubaker asked about the Insurance Other than Employee Benefits line being under-budgeted. As this is something the finance department handles for the library, Huffines confirmed she will speak with the insurance agent about the increased charge and journal entry on the account. Exploring insurance alternatives for the library would be an option for a library district.

Kaufman asked about the fines and fees income, and Huffines explained her reasoning for underbudgeting that line, with her knowledge being that it is not an expectation that fines and fees provide the library any significant income, especially after going fine-free.

(Greene/Butler) Motion to approve the January 8th, 2024 finance reports.
6 in favor/0 opposed. Motion carries.

VI. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

No report.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Administration

Huffines shared positive feedback about going fine-free. She also spoke about movement in designing the new website, she is looking to set a launch date for next month.

Butler asked about OBOF and how the titles are picked. Huffines talked about the selection committee, as this is the first time since 2018 that there has been one. The committee is formed a year in advance to read books and procure a list of titles to choose from. Julie Reynolds from the board of trustees is on the committee, along with Becky Connors from the foundation. Butler expressed her positive feedback about the book and the buzz it has created in the community.

The Nicor deal with the city went through, meaning the library will no longer be receiving natural gas bills.

No opening date has been set for the café yet. They have a strong social media following and are marketing effectively, so once they open, they are likely to be busy. However, Huffines expressed that it could be beneficial for both the café and the library to establish an opening deadline. Kaufman suggested asking the business owners for a target date in March for at least a soft opening. Huffines plans to meet with them and encourage them to set a date.

Huffines reviewed her outreach, meetings, and current projects including participating on the steering committee for the women's enrichment program and presenting about the library's resources at Basecamp through the GFP. She is currently working on the facilities plan, staff training, and the website redesign. Marketing for the Underground Railroad Exhibit will be coming out soon!

Evon asked about communicating with patrons, and how people will know their fines have been forgiven. Circulation is currently working on sending out letters to new patrons, and Huffines will look into also sending a postcard out about fine forgiveness as well.

MANAGEMENT REPORTS

Adult Services/ Tech Services

Huffines reported over 169 attendees for adult programs in January. The library hosted the American Lecture Series, numerous crafts, and One Book One Freeport events in January and February. *Dandelion Wine* has been well-received by the community, and attendance numbers show an increase compared to previous years. Adult Librarian, Dianne Ludwig also interviewed with WIFR and Freepod last month to share information about One Book One Freeport. Huffines reviewed outreach in the community, tech help appointments, and notary statistics as well.

Youth Services

In January, Life-Sized Candy Land was a huge success! Librarian's Assistant Erin Schrader spent a considerable amount of time and effort creating the props for that event and did an excellent job! The Youth Department also received new shelving units for their storage rooms and spent two weeks organizing the space to be more accessible. Statistics show high participation in passive programs as well as teen events. Huffines announced plans for a "Home School Prom" to be held at the library after-hours in May!

Circulation

Huffines was very pleased to report circulation increased in January! The digital collection Hoopla has grown more popular over the past month, resulting in a rise in online checkouts. Brubaker inquired whether online collection users are also visiting the library to check out physical items. Huffines made a note to look into it. She confirmed all of the library's digital collections are significantly contributing to the library's circulation.

Evon asked about the Kiwanis fundraiser, and Huffines replied it was canceled due to low registration. A liaison from the foundation will collaborate with her and meet with Kiwanis next week, and Kaufman spoke about plans for a relaunch.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

2025 Staff Training Closure Dates

Historically, Huffines would present each staff training day closure to the board for approval. Instead, she proposes allotting approval for quarterly closures for staff training. These dates would allow more flexibility with the training schedule, not having to wait for board approval to close. Kaufman and Kramer voiced their authorization. Huffines confirmed they give ample notice to the public, the same as any holiday closure. When approving closures for 2026, this will come back to the board for approval.

(Butler/Greene) Motion to approve the Library Director's authority for decision for closing for quarterly training staff training closures, without needing board approval for each one.

6 in favor/0 opposed. Motion carries.

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

(Greene/Evon) Motion to enter executive session at 6:39pm.

6 in favor/0 opposed. Motion carries.

Pursuant to 5ILCS 20/2 (c) 1 the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body.

IX. ACTION OUTSIDE OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

(Greene/Butler) Motion to approve Youth Librarian Administrator, Amanda Meyers, to receive a salary and benefits increase of 5% due to a change in her job description and title effective January 1st, 2025.

6 in favor/0 opposed. Motion carries.

X. DISCUSSION

None.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

(Brubaker/Greene) Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:50pm.

6 in favor/0 opposed. Motion carries.

Submitted by Kya Eckert