



Lewistown Public Library's Mission Statement:

“The Lewistown Public Library provides free and equal access to quality materials and services, which fulfill the educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of the entire community.”

1:35 PM Call to order -- roll call – Regular meeting of the Library Board of Trustees was called to order by Mariah Shammel. Members present: Mariah Shammel, Gayle Doney, Andrea Payne, Mary Baumstark. Library Director: Alissa Wolenetz. No staff.

Appoint Recorder of Minutes: Alissa Wolenetz

Reading of the Mission Statement: Mary.

Revisions to the Agenda:

- None.

Disposition of Minutes:

- Mary moved to approve June regular meeting minutes. Gayle 2nd. All in favor.

Comments for the Good of the Library:

- Mary enjoyed the article on the Library's UFO open-mic night in the paper.

Financial Reports:

- The Board and Alissa discussed year-end totals for revenues and expenditures.
 - Unexpected revenues included \$10,000 for the LTC grant, \$3,415 for the Media Literacy Grant, and \$3,500 for the Democracy Project.
 - Areas that were underspent included travel, training, and computer supplies.
 - Office supplies and personnel costs were higher than originally budgeted.
 - Building maintenance services came under budget, but this was primarily because of the difficulty securing a snow removal service for the Library's sidewalks, which are too narrow for most equipment. Alissa has reached out to the County about funding part of their annual contribution through in-kind services by doing snow removal and will keep the Board posted on any developments.

- Under individual claims, Gayle asked Alissa to look into duplicate charges for Democracy Project recycling bins.
- The Library has transferred its annual contribution to the City for book payments.
- Gayle moved to approve claims for June. Andrea 2nd. All in favor.

Director's Report:

Admin

Grants

- *ALA: Accessible Rural and Small Communities* | We will host a community listening session to help us prioritize funding from this grant on Thursday, July 20 at 6 PM. A medical student has generously agreed to help us process survey data for this project to help fulfill community service requirements for her rotation at CMMC.
- *Humanities Montana Media Literacy* | Our SMART Board has been installed by a professional and is wall-mounted so that it can be lifted up out of the way of little hands when not in use.

Disaster Planning | The Fergus County DES department has helped the Library draft and develop next steps for an emergency plan. We hope to run joint drills on a variety of situations this fall and perhaps put on an event during annual emergency preparedness recognition events.

Budget Season | Alissa has drafted a budget based on previous years and the current Strategic Plan draft.

State Standards | The Library has met all MSL Standards for essential service, including continuing education requirements for Board members.

Annual Plans | The Library is working on compiling annual programming and staff work plans for all areas of the Library and hope to present those at the August meeting.

Programming

Summer Reading Program | Over 250 participants registered. Prize drawings will happen on Saturday, July 22nd and results will be announced by the end of the day on Tuesday, July 25.

Youth Programming

- The free pool day was highly successful.
- Regular programming that took a break during SRP, including PreK/Kinder Storytime, Teen Writers, and LPL Writers Group, will start again at the end of July.
- Brittney has been working on the Annual Plan for the Youth Department and would like to present that at the August Board Meeting.
- She has also written a program proposal to start a 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program this fall and plans to ask FOL for funding at their July meeting.

- There has been renewed interest in a youth book club and Brittney is looking into the structure and funding of this program to encourage more participation than past iterations. She is also considering working with DBR Games to run a Dungeons & Dragons campaign for kids at the library.

Building updates

- Cathy and Alissa will meet in August to discuss the CDBG and other funding options. Mosaic Architecture has offered to do a free walk-through of the building to help us learn more about Requests for Proposals/Qualifications before then.

Other Updates

- The Board reviewed the year-end statistics. Mary suggested including annual comparisons for the next fiscal year.

Communications:

Friends of the Library: (Arlene)

- The mid-month book sales have been keeping the FOL busy.
- The regular July/Montana books sale made \$957. The mid-July sale made \$360.
- On August 18th, the FOL will have a book sale to fit in with the Hot Summer Nights program. There was some discussion of other Hot Summer Nights events, including the LAC's annual Out of the Closet frame sale.

City Commission: (Gayle)

- The City will be working on budgets for the next six weeks. Final approval will be in late August or early September.
- Chickens in City limits will be on the ballot in November.

Discussion with Public

- Ray Pryor said that, in regards to *Heartstopper*, he believes the Library has an obligation that books on the shelf do not cause sexual confusion or encourage alternative lifestyles, and he does not think that queer books are appropriate for young people.
- Ray Pryor read in the following statement for Doris McCoy into the record:

To the Lewistown Library Board of Trustees and Director:

I am writing with concern about the teen book club selection for the month of June 2023. I do not believe the choice of the graphic novel 'Heartstoppers' is appropriate for this exposure. In the first place, there are so many more worthy novels, quality literature, rather than this comic book format that

requires so little reading. I am very close to a 13-year-old, who if asked, would choose the graphic novel every time over a traditional novel. But that format does nothing to encourage the building of reading skills he sorely needs, or build attention span.

*I also object strongly to the content of the book in question. I did examine it briefly at the library, though I couldn't bring myself to 'read' more than a few pages. Both the dialogue and the illustrations are crass, with poor quality artwork, stilted conversations, and liberal foul language. I wonder if these young teens might be exposed to better quality literature, that would expand their vocabulary, increase reading speed and comprehension, broaden their understanding of history, nature, or humanity. Where are books like *Where the Red Fern Grows*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Hatchet*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, *Ender's Game*, *Matilda*, *Diary of a Young Girl*, *Harry Potter*, so many other great pieces of literature?*

I understand the youth were given a short list of books to vote on, and apparently several of them preferred this choice. But I would think that the staff responsible for the Summer Reading Program could have compiled a more appropriate list of options that would appeal to a broad audience, without encouraging our youth to absorb objectionable language and subject matter.

Please reconsider the approach to determining which books should be included on the summer reading list. It may be appropriate for the teens to have input, but the options they are given to choose from should be wholesome ones. The 13-year-old I mentioned would also choose chips and dip or doughnuts for dinner, every time, over healthy foods, but it seems wiser that an adult make the menu determinations, and see that the list of options consists of nutritious choices. Surely we should be careful what we feed our minds, as we are our bodies.

The Public Library in Baker, MT is celebrating the theme of All Together Now with books regarding Montana history, a focus on community, and a visit to the local historical museum. Couldn't Lewistown offer more 'nutritious' options to our children than graphic comic books and gender confusion?

Thank you for your consideration.

Doris McCoy

- Sheri Johnson asked if *Gender Queer* was in the Library's collections, as she has concerns about the content of the book; Alissa informed her it was not and that the Board has set a collection development policy that guides selection. Sheri had also heard that the Montana Library Association had purchased and distributed *Gender Queer* to the Montana House and was concerned; Alissa said that the MLA had not purchased or distributed the book, and that she had heard through

the grapevine that it was the Montana Federation of Public Employees who took credit for that distribution.

- Ray further commented that the ALA supports diversity, equity, and inclusion principles and he is against those.
- Several members of the Board thanked the public for their comments and outlined their own obligation to provide a variety of materials for the entire community.

Continuing Business:

- Strategic Plan Review:
 - Moved to a time when all Board members could be present.
- First review of new statement of concern policy:
 - Alissa has sent this to the City Attorney but has not yet received feedback. The process has been adapted from the Bitterroot Public Library. There were no questions from the Board.
 - The Board will continue discussion on this topic in August.
- Budget discussions
 - Alissa has a budget drafted to present at the August meeting. She would like to include funds for Kanopy (a library streaming service) and Hoopla (another streaming service that has always-available eBooks and audiobooks), as well as funds for community education. She would also like to modify some object codes and begin drawing the Board's depreciation contribution from the CMF endowments instead of the Dowler fund. There will also be increased costs for a new printer now that toner and parts for our current Kyocera are being phased out.
 - Mary suggested reallocating some of the unspent funds from the current fiscal year to subscriptions for Hoopla and Kanopy. She also suggested reallocating some of the Library's unspent travel and training funds to other areas. Gayle asked Alissa to look into the sunset date for State Aid, which traditionally funds those objects, to help the Board decide how to allocate those funds.
 - Mary suggested increased outreach for under-five music or activity programs, and suggested starting with one class per quarter for the community ed project.
 - The Board will finalize the budget at the August meeting, as it is prior to the Commission meeting for that month. Overall, there was interest in funding community ed and digital resources.
- Banned Books Week Q&A
 - The Board discussed location for the Q&A event. Suggestions included the Council on Aging, Yogo Inn, High School, and Junior High Auditorium. A decision will be made in August.
 - This year, BBW is October 1-7.
 - The Board discussed the program from last year and how to increase attendance for this year.

New Business:

- Fall hiring and staff time changes
 - Alissa recommending reducing Sue's hours as requested, increasing Drew's hours, and looking for a Fergus High School student to fill the remaining 12 hours per week. The Board was excited about the prospect of a high school student for the position.
 - The Board and Alissa discussed wages for the position, and recommended budgeting for the full cost of an LAI.
 - Gayle moved to adopt the Director's personnel recommendation, Mary 2nd. All in favor.
- Library cats
 - Mary said that she was strongly opposed to library cats, and said that immunocompromised individuals and those with allergies would be negatively impacted by introducing additional allergens to the Library. She mentioned that the Art Center has recently gone fragrance- and latex-free, and stated that the Library needs to maintain free and equal access to all, and that cats would be counter to this mission. She thought the issue should not have been publicly polled.
 - Gayle mentioned allergies and negative feedback from City Commissioners, including fears of cats; she thought they would be an unnecessary disturbance and that the polling was a little off the mark.
 - Gayle moved to stop pursuit of library cats. Mary 2nd. All in favor.
 - There was general support for a chicken poll, as that ties into civic engagement and other topical City issues.
 - The Board discussed location for the Q&A event. Suggestions included the Council on Aging, Yogo Inn, High School, and Junior High Auditorium. A decision will be made in August.
- Director's annual raise
 - Alissa requested that the Director's salary be raised to \$50,000 per year to be commensurate with other department heads for the City. (Starting salaries for other department heads are as follows: City Planner, \$45,000-\$50,000; Parks and Rec, \$55,000-\$60,000; Public Works, \$65,000-\$70,000).
 - Mary and Gayle felt this increase would bring the Director's salary into line with other positions.
 - Mary, Mariah, and Gayle mentioned recent increases in responsibility within the position, including building responsibilities and managing community conflict.
 - Gayle moved to increase the Director's salary to \$50,000 per year, effective July 1st. Mary 2nd. All in favor.

Trustee Minute

- Mary just returned from a writing residency and is enjoying *The Party Is Here*, a short story collection by Georgina Beaty, who also attended the residency. Mariah recently read *Lessons in Chemistry* and is excited for the show. Gayle has been reading Janet Evanovich's Stephanie Plum mysteries.

(3:01 p.m. Gayle moved to adjourn, Mary 2nd. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.)

NEXT REGULAR BOARD MEETING: Thursday, July 20, 2023 at 1:30PM at the Library. Respectfully Submitted: Alissa Wolenetz, Library Director.