

Session 20-03, a Special Meeting of the Library Advisory Board was called to order by Chair Marcia Kuszmaul at 5:39 p.m. on July 7, 2020 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska via Zoom webinar. One seat still remains vacant.

PRESENT: BOARDMEMBERS FINN, PETERSON, FAIR, VERNON, KUSZMAUL

ABSENT: BOARDMEMBER SPRINGER (excused)

STAFF: LIBRARY DIRECTOR BERRY
DEPUTY CITY CLERK TUSSEY

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chair Kuszmaul asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

FAIR/FINN MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA.

Boardmember Finn inquired on when would be the best time to discuss the vacant student representative position; Deputy City Clerk Tussey noted that the Comments of the Board would be the appropriate time.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

RECONSIDERATION

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. LAB March 3, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes

Chair Kuszmaul asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

FAIR/VERNON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM MARCH 3, 2020.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Library Director Report for April, May, & June 2020
- i. 2019 Statistical Report
 - ii. 2020 Statistical Report (laydown)

Library Director Berry provided his staff report and facilitated board discussion on the following topics:

- Closures due to COVID and library staff's efforts to provide continued services at a limited capacity. Overview of mitigation efforts that are required for people entering the library.
- Application submitted for a technology upgrade; one of the upgrades would allow the library to convert over to Radio Frequency ID (RFID) for book check-outs, getting away from magnetic strips, allowing self-checkouts, and allow customers to print items from outside of the building for curbside pickup.
- Expanding the Wi-Fi to the library parking lot and entryway/plaza; City Council found it was so important that they approved the funds to make it happen as soon as possible. Will initially be 24/7 but will see how it works; do not want people camping out in the parking lot all night.
- Loaning out laptops to help public lacking technology access.
- Commending library staff for all their extracurricular trainings, courses, and above-and-beyond efforts during COVID.

There was brief discussion on the curbside check-out process, and how Radio Frequency ID tagging works and if that will have an effect on library staff.

PUBLIC HEARING

PENDING BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Election of LAB Officers

Chair Kuszmaul noted that elections commonly occur during the April regular meeting, but they have not had a meeting since then. She opened the floor for chair nominations.

Boardmember Finn suggested nominating Ms. Kuszmaul as Chair.

VERNON/FAIR MOVED TO NOMINATE MARCIA KUSZMAUL AS CHAIR.

Ms. Kuszmaul agreed to accept the position. She gave notice that it would be for one last time as she felt the position should not be perpetual with one member but give everyone the opportunity.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Since Vice Chair Springer was absent, the board discussed postponing the Vice Chair election until the next meeting, August 4th, to allow Ms. Springer to participate in the discussion. Chair Kuszmaul noted that both she and Ms. Springer were the non-city resident members, and suggested Boardmember Finn be considered for the seat. Ms. Finn commented that she would prefer to consult with the current Vice Chair before agreeing to the nomination.

PETERSON/FAIR MOVED TO POSTPONE ELECTING A VICE CHAIR UNTIL THE AUGUST 4TH MEETING.

There was no further discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

- B. Proposal for Fine-Free Library Service
 - i. Proposal from Library Staff
 - ii. Existing Library Fines and Fees Policy – January 2017
 - iii. Revised Fines and Fees Policies – Options A, B, C, & D
 - iv. Collected Research on Fine-Free Libraries

Chair Kuszmaul introduced the item by reading the title and deferred to Library Director Berry to begin discussion.

Mr. Berry explained how the proposal request came directly from City Council; two councilmembers wished to see a formal proposal for going fine-free, thus the reason for calling a special meeting. He provided background on how other libraries across the nation have started going fine-free as a way to not penalize library patrons and what that change could look like for the Homer Public Library. He explained the pros/cons that were broken down in the proposal, shared the loss rate statistics for unreturned books, the \$15,500 financial impact it would have on the budget (about 1.7% of the library's operating budget), and presented the four revised fines and fees policy options in the proposal.

Boardmember Fair opined that overall the provided materials answered most of his questions, but had one point of clarification. If a patron has library materials out for too long, the items are considered "lost" and they have to pay for replacing it, but if the item is late, not lost (because there's a period of time that differentiates the two) and they haven't paid the replacement, is there a way to prevent them from checking out more while they have late material? Mr. Berry explained that there is a 25 book check-out limit, and once you hit that limit you cannot check out any more. Mr. Fair felt the pros definitely outweigh the cons; he understands the loss to the library revenue is significant but would be supportive of Option A: staying with the existing policy but have no overdue fees, and then at a later time finding ways to mitigate the costs of going with this system.

Boardmember Finn commented that she would like to see all the fines go away, shared her appreciation for all the materials provided, and what she had learned from what other libraries have done. She asked about the increase in printer fees, if that would be cost prohibitive/a burden to those who get copies done at the library, or if the cost offset was worth it. Mr. Berry explained that doubling the

printing rates does offset the revenue loss, but does add an additional burden to those customers who rely on those services, which is why that is just one of the options. Ms. Finn agreed that would limit the number of people who use the printing services. She then asked what it is the board has to provide at this meeting to City Council and if they would be willing to take the loss in revenue. Mr. Berry explained the need for a recommendation to Council for one of the four options or something else, to go along with the formal proposal. He was not sure what Council would approve, if they would be in favor of the loss in revenue or not.

Boardmember Vernon voiced being in favor of going fine-free. He commented about getting feedback from patrons directly on what their thoughts are, like a feedback/comment box at the library's front counter. There was discussion on ways to involve the patrons in the decision. Boardmember Peterson pointed out the public is unlikely to be against it, and the decision is really a financial one that is up to City Council. Deputy City Clerk Tussey noted that the City Council meeting itself is part of the public process and would give the public an opportunity to comment, and that there isn't much foot traffic at the library given it's closed due to COVID-19.

FAIR/FINN MOVED TO RECOMMEND THE REVISED FINES POLICY OPTION A, THE ELIMINATION OF OVERDUE FINES, TO THE HOMER CITY COUNCIL.

Chair Kuszmaul agreed with no fines, but voiced her concern that many library items/materials represent public dollars that have been spent, and that needs to be respected. She felt there should be higher replacement fines for lost or stolen items. She recommended increasing the processing fee from \$7.

Boardmember Peterson voiced her objection to that increase since it could penalize people who may have genuinely lost it (there was a flood or the dog ate it) versus people who intentionally lost it (deliberately keeps the item); it seems like kicking a person while they're already down. Ms. Peterson asked for clarification: when an item is listed as lost and that fee is applied to a person's account, how much does the library recover those costs or do they just stop using the library? Mr. Berry said the recovery rate is about 50%; they did a study and found that the big spenders/in-debtors were cards that expired in 2014/2015 who had hundreds of dollars' worth of items out and then just disappeared. The processing fee may not cover all of the expenses/staff time, but it does help offset it. Ms. Peterson felt the information provided by library staff has been presented well and asked what their opinions are. Mr. Berry said staff is all in favor of going fine free, and are also big on the spirit of community service and don't like having to penalize library users for being 2 days late on a book. Library staff has discussed the subject and mutually agreed that if they have to make budget cuts to offset the losses, they will make it happen. Mr. Berry shared his hope that City Council will agree to that loss but he may be too positive.

Boardmember Finn commended Berry for his solid response and supports Option A even more.

Boardmember Vernon agreed to no fees, but felt there should be some sort of way to offset some of those losses, like small donations at the counter. The Board agreed and clarified with staff if there was a small donation fund for the library at the front counter that didn't belong to the Friends of the Homer Library. Mr. Berry clarified that when we talk about eliminating fines, we're talking about something

that affects the City's general fund. Chair Kuszmaul pointed out that we now have the library endowment fund, so perhaps there could be a money jar at the front for small donations that could be deposited into the endowment fund.

Chair Kuszmaul proposed raising the replacement processing fee to \$10 as a way to show City Council that there's a little bit of compensation and to acknowledge that lost items are a hit to the library.

KUSZMAUL/VERNON MOVED TO AMEND THE MOTION TO RAISE THE REPLACEMENT PROCESSING FEE FROM \$7 TO \$10.

Boardmember Finn voiced her approval of doing a little something to acknowledge there is a loss of City funds, and does not feel that it should be done through increasing the copy fees.

Boardmember Fair asked for Mr. Berry's input. Mr. Berry supported the increase, adding that the fee has not changed much since 1999.

VOTE (amendment): NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

Chair Kuszmaul commented on the copy fees and it being such a core service that she'd hate to see it becoming cost-prohibitive. Mr. Berry responded that those rates have not changed very much since 1999 either; you can see the price influx over the years and it seems to have settled at where it's supposed to be. In response to further questions, Mr. Berry explained how the rate increase options were put to the staff for their opinion and they had supported Option A. He stated that eventually they will need to increase other rates to accommodate 20 years' worth of inflation.

Boardmember Fair shared that he would like to not have any other rate increases or amendments. He felt they should talk about price increases at a later time and just vote on the current proposal of going fine-free.

VOTE (main motion as amended): NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Motion carried.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

- A. Friends of the Homer Library July 2020 Newsletter
- B. LAB 2020 Calendar
- C. Boardmember Attendance at 2020 City Council Meetings

Chair Kuszmaul noted the FHL newsletter and thanked Boardmember Peterson for putting that together. At the request of Ms. Kuszmaul, Deputy City Clerk Tussey reported that no applications have been received for the vacant seat or the student representative position. Ms. Kuszmaul suggested including reviewing fees during their regular February meeting when they review library policies.

Discussion ensued on budget review and when the LAB may look at the library's budget. There was a brief discussion on the next Council meeting, if the fee recommendation will be at that meeting, and when materials will be required. Ms. Kuszmaul agreed to give the LAB report at the July 27th meeting and requested a volunteer for future ones, to which Boardmember Finn agreed to report at the August 10th or 24th meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Library Director Berry had no comments.

Deputy City Clerk Tussey thanked the board for a good meeting.

COMMENTS OF THE COUNCILMEMBER

COMMENTS OF THE CHAIR

Chair Kuszmaul thanked Ms. Tussey for all her Public Information Officer work around COVID-19.

Ms. Kuszmaul commented on their efforts to continue with endowment fund planning, and that she is working to set up potential future presentation with the head of the Homer Foundation and Terry Spigelmyer, an attorney with the foundation who has lead sessions at the library on planned giving. Yet it may be difficult to get anything going until the LAB is able to meet in person and requested the boards input on if it should wait or if they should just get the ball rolling and do the meeting/presentation via Zoom. Boardmember Finn opined that Zoom meetings are much more convenient than having to meeting outside, and doesn't want to put this initial meeting off for too long. Discussion ensued; the board mutually agreed to move forward with setting up the planned giving presentation/worksession sometime in September, even if it's via Zoom.

COMMENTS OF THE BOARD

Boardmember Fair commented that it was great to see everyone and thanked Ms. Tussey and Mr. Berry for their work. He inquired on how he can participate in the Read between the Lines Program; Ms. Peterson runs that program and agreed to send him the info.

Boardmember Vernon voiced his interest in doing the Reading between the Lines Programs as well.

Boardmember Peterson provided information on the program and how it works, and agreed to send info to those interested. She commented that it was a good meeting and she felt she had gotten a handle on this new Zoom technology.

Boardmember Finn thanked Mr. Berry and Ms. Tussey for their work. She commented on the size of the packet and how three months' worth of library reports and all the FHL newsletter shows just how busy things have been and how much has been put together during this time. Ms. Finn spoke on the Student

Representative position. Marina Greear had some recommendations and Ms. Finn requested boardmembers keep a lookout for a new LAB member. She to a book display suggestion she had for library staff regarding women's right to vote.

Chair Kuszmaul asked the group for any suggestions or recommendations to fill the vacant LAB position. Discussion ensued, including clarification that it's a city resident position, who may be interested, and the application process through the City Clerk's Office and City Council/the Mayor.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m. A regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 4, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. All meetings scheduled to be held via Zoom webinar in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska.

RACHEL TUSSEY, DEPUTY CITY CLERK I

Approved:_____