

CALL TO ORDER

Session 23-09, a Regular Meeting of the Library Advisory Board was called to order by Chair Kate Finn at 5:30 p.m. on November 21, 2023 at the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar. Chair Finn expressed a hearty welcome to the newly appointed Student Representative McDonough.

PRESENT: BOARD MEMBERS BAILY, MCKINNEY, FAIR, ASSELIN-MARTIN, FINN, KUSZMAUL AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE MCDONOUGH

ABSENT: BOARD MEMBER CARSSOW (EXCUSED)

STAFF: LIBRARY DIRECTOR BERRY, DEPUTY CITY CLERK KRAUSE

AGENDA APPROVAL

Chair Finn read the supplemental items into the record: Reports, Memorandum from Library Director re: Attorney General's Letter to Librarians and requested a motion and second.

FAIR/MCKINNEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS UPON MATTERS ALREADY ON THE AGENDA (3 minute time limit)

RECONSIDERATION

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Unapproved Meeting Minutes for October 17, 2023

KUSZMAUL/FAIR MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 17, 2023 AS PRESENTED.

There was no discussion.

VOTE: NON OBJECTION: UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Motion carried.

VISITORS/PRESENTATIONS

STAFF & COUNCIL REPORT/COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Director's Report for November 2023
1. 2023 Statistics

2. 2022 Statistics

Library Director Berry reviewed his reports in the packet. He provided input on the following:

- Vandalism to the sidewalk
- Gate numbers on par to be the highest but since July the attendance has dropped significantly so previous years high number will be slightly under or matched
- Fish have been installed on the wall

Library Director Berry responded to questions regarding:

- The extent and content of the vandalism and if it was directed at a group or staff members
 - o Culprits were apprehended as they did the vandalism in front of the security camera
 - One culprit came and apologized and stated they would never do that again
- Revenue deposited shown on the Statistics and previous comments from Council inferring lack thereof
 - o Minimal grants received for 2023 was due to less staff time to dedicate to applying for grants in 2021-20223
 - o Application that were submitted were not awarded
 - o Staff is planning to submit more applications in the coming year due to changes in time constraints

B. State of Alaska Attorney General Letter to Librarians
Memorandum from Library Director as backup.

Library Director Berry provided a summary of the State Attorney General's letter and noted that the Library Policies are counter to his directive stated in the letter. Currently no changes have been recommended or suggested by Administration or the City Attorney and the City Manager has directed, at the advice of the City Attorney, that they take a wait and see approach.

Library Director Berry facilitated a discussion on the following:

- There was no specific incident that triggered this letter to his knowledge
 - o There are many communities all over the country, not just Alaska that are dealing with this subject
- One complaint was filed against a Librarian in Palmer, but as far as he knows there has been no movement on that.
- Referenced points made on page 2 of the Attorney General's Letter for material to be considered indecent.
 - o Stated that a reasonable person would find that the material taken as a whole lacks serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value for persons under 16 years of age which is the criteria used in selecting materials for the Homer Library.
 - o Additionally, Homer in the past year has had a very extensive discussion about what this community standards are going to be; and
 - o The third factor mentions that the materials patently offensive to the prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole and it is believed that the community has made it very clear what Homer standards are and the discussions established that
- Suggestion that the Board submit a resolution supporting the Library Director

- City Administration has determined that it would be best to take a wait and see approach
- If necessary a request for a motion of support will be submitted to the Board
- Concerns if the State General Attorney was threatening Libraries with the content of the letter
 - Referring to pages in the Letter where it states to prove the offense it would seem that the Librarian would be required to intentionally encouraged, and directed a minor to check out the material.
- Reference made to the actions of this Board during the review of the books that were being contested and they considered the material as a whole rather than specific pages
- Article in a recent Edition of the Anchorage Daily News this week that is related to this issue regarding the teaching of gender identity in schools was interesting.
- Difficult to determine exactly what the intention of the State’s Attorney General with issuing this letter and or his goal.
 - If it was informational great if not please provide an explanation
- No comment has been expressed by local representatives or legislators on this issue at this time.

Chair Finn requested all Boardmembers to submit any articles that they find in their newsfeeds and media sources as informational materials to be included in upcoming meetings to stay abreast of the topic and any actions taken by other communities in the country.

Library Director Berry also informed the Board of a recent filing of a lawsuit by the ACLU against the Matsu Borough School District.

C. Fundraising Update – Boardmember Kuszmaul

Boardmember Kuszmaul reported on the installation of the five fish and in the course of her work on this project she became aware of the name of the anonymous sponsor and informed them that due to the amount they are also able to have anything that want engraved on the fish and they decided to have “Thank You Anne Dixon” engraved on their big fish. She noted that the location of the fish on the wall can be determined by the direction they are swimming. Additionally she reported on the following:

- Having informational materials or flyer available at the front desk regarding how to donate, getting your fish on the wall, etc.
- The donation link on the website is broken since it points to a policy that does not exist
 - Staff will look into that issue

D. Legislative Update

Chair Finn reported that there was no further legislation items to report.

PUBLIC HEARING(S)

PENDING BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

A. The Big Read

Memorandum from Library Director as backup.

Chair Finn noted the list in the packet of the various events that will be conducted during the Big Read and encouraged all present to participate and attend. She express looking forward to the “Cold Millions” and already has her book.

Library Director Berry noted that the Library does have 30 copies as well as copies of “The Big Both Ways” and noted that they will host a Zoom meeting with the authors of those books. He also encouraged everyone to attend the event on January 25th with Clark Fair, entitled Historical Homer, he will be providing a presentation on the series he is writing for the Homer News. Mr. Berry stated that he believed this upcoming Big Read will have some really great stuff.

B. Homer Public Library Capital Improvement Projects
Memorandum from Library Director as backup

Library Director Berry reviewed his memorandum for the Board, requested input on any additional improvements they would like to see in regards to the project related to remodeling and facilitated discussion on the following:

- Installation of the portcullis (entrance gate)
 - o This was included in the original design and the infrastructure is constructed they just did not include the gate in the final budget.
- Siding replacement
 - o No funding source as yet but may be a mid-biennium budget request in June 2024
 - Grant will also be sought
 - o This is a first priority project over the remodel project
 - o Outdoor covered space was discussed for the western lot but determined to be too far and suggested new location was the front patio area where a gazebo or covered area could be located to host outdoor functions
- Engineering Phase of Remodel Project
 - o Existing building was built to allow for future expansion to the south and west
 - o Engineering is required first then they can have a better idea of the costs
 - o Boardmembers expressed support for the added staff office space, storage space and meeting space

C. 2024 FHL-LAB Soiree
Memorandum from Library Director as backup.

Library Director Berry reviewed the memorandum in the packet and requested the Board to support the suggested March 3, 2024 date or recommend an alternate date. He facilitated comments and discussion on the following items:

- allowing the event to be held in the Fireplace Lounge
 - o concerns regarding the food and drink impact to the carpet and furniture is why events with aspects are not allowed
 - Even with Boardmembers volunteering to perform the cleanup after the event
 - o If there are more people attending than will fit in the meeting room could it expand out to the lounge area

- Dress code for the event
 - o This is Alaska, most people dress fairly casual.
- Suggested having introduction games and activities so that it encourages attendees to interact with all present not just with known people.
 - o Reading and Library related activities suggested, but nothing specific was recommended

Library Director Berry will forward the Board’s suggestions to the FHL and reminded the Board to mark their calendars for March 3, 2024 at 1:00 p.m. He noted that the date is a Sunday and the Library is closed.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

A. LAB Annual Calendar 2023

Chair Finn noted that Boardmember Kuszmaul will be acting Chair for the December meeting as she will be traveling to India. She then noted that Boardmember Baily will be reporting at the upcoming City Council meeting and Boardmember Carsow will provide a report at the January 8th Council meeting the happenings from the December meeting.

Boardmember Kuszmaul confirmed that the items on the agenda will be review of the Strategic Plan and LAB goals.

Deputy City Clerk Krause reported that the meeting schedule will be updated for the 2024 meetings in response to questions from Boardmember Baily and Chair Finn.

- B. City Manager's Reports
CM Report for October 23, 2023 City Council Meeting
CM Report for November 13, 2023 City Council Meeting

Chair Finn expressed her appreciation for the inclusion of the City Manager’s Reports in the packet and this was agreed upon and supported by each of the Boardmembers expressing that it was very informative, made the Board feel la part of the city business and kept them apprised of other actions going on around the city. The Board expressed their appreciation to the Clerk for including the short and concise reports that contained a vast array of information.

C. City Monthly Newsletter - November 2023

Chair Finn expressed her appreciation to the Clerk for having the newsletter in the packet.

D. Welcome New Student Boardmember!

Chair Finn welcomed Student Representative McDonough, expressing she looks forward to hearing her input on topics during her time on the Board.

COMMENTS OF THE AUDIENCE (3 minute time limit)

COMMENTS OF THE CITY STAFF

Library Director Berry commented that there is a need for volunteers for the Sister City Anniversary Committee and readers participation in the Big Read.

COMMENTS OF THE MAYOR/COUNCIL MEMBERS (if Present)

COMMENTS OF THE BOARD

Chair Finn expressed her appreciation to the Clerk for including the City Manager's Reports in the packet noting they are really useful.

Student Representative McDonough had no comments.

Boardmember Asselin-Martin commented on the Giving Tuesday campaign and encouraged the members of the Board to donate to Sprout or the Library.

Boardmember McKinney welcomed Student Representative McDonough and expressed his appreciation to the Clerk for providing the City Manager's Report, it was really interesting and made him feel that the Board is a part of what's going on in the city, so Thank you.

Boardmember Baily welcomed Student Representative McDonough and commented that the Board's work may seem routine and not very exciting, but then is quite exciting. He continued by stating that the country is presently involved in a wave of efforts to limit the types of materials that can be in public libraries and if your busy schedule allows he would certainly recommend to her re-reading the Attorney General's letter that was part of the packet and the Library Director's response. Mr. Baily continued stating that this is an issue that is confronting the entire country, Palmer is not immune and Homer is very much a part of it and believed it was an issue that she and her classmates are going to have to contend with and deal with for a great many years and she is the Student Representative on the Board and believed that provided her a tremendous opportunity to really get a feel for and learn about the issues. Mr. Baily believed that she will see it time after time in the coming years.

Boardmember Kuzmaul welcomed Student Representative McDonough. She agreed with Boardmember McKinney on the addition of the City Manager's Reports expressing that it really helps the Board understand the other departments, what is going on, what other commission's may be dealing with and makes the Board feel as part of that team. She thanked the Clerk for providing the information.

Boardmember Fair welcomed Student Representative McDonough. He then asked if they will be setting up the book tree again in the Library.

Library Director Berry responded that it will be set up after the Thanksgiving holiday in the front of the Library, he believed the date was December 1st. They currently have all the tags ready. He then provided a description of what this tree will do and how the process works.

Chair Finn expressed her appreciation for the reminder of the Book Tree as it is such an important part of December, she expressed the importance of the message that Boardmember Baily spoke of and agreed that Homer is right in the middle of it with regard to censorship of items of intellectual value, so eyes open is really

good. She noted that they all access different news feeds and encouraged the Board to submit information to the Staff or the Clerk to be included as informational material in the packet. It will provide them the opportunity to discuss it or not but they will at least stay informed. Ms. Finn expressed her appreciation for Boardmember Kuszmaul work getting the fish installed and they look amazing. She reminded everyone that she will be absent from the December meeting and Boardmember Kuszmaul will chair that meeting, she will see everyone in January and extended her well wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board Chair Finn adjourned the meeting at 6:43 p.m. The next Regular Meeting is Tuesday, December 19, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. All meetings scheduled to be held in the City Hall Cowles Council Chambers located at 491 E. Pioneer Avenue, Homer, Alaska and via Zoom Webinar.

Renee Krause

RENEE KRAUSE, MMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK II

Approved: *Dec. 19, 2023*