

**DOWNERS GROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES  
FEBRUARY 22, 2023, 7:30 P.M.  
KIDS PROGRAM ROOM**

**MINUTES**

1. **Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Land Acknowledgement.** President Gigani called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the room in the Pledge of Allegiance. President Gigani read aloud the Downers Grove Public Library Land Acknowledgement.
2. **Roll Call.** Members present: Trustee Carissa Dougherty, Trustee Dave Humphreys, Trustee Barnali Khuntia, Trustee Bill Nienburg, Trustee Marti Sladek, President Swapna Gigani. Absent: None.

Also present: Library Director Julie Milavec, Assistant Library Director Jen Ryjewski, Business Office Manager Katelyn Vabalaitis, Media Lab Coordinator Ed Bromiel, Access Services Manager Lucas McKeever.

3. **Welcome to Visitors.** President Gigani welcomed visitors and thanked them for their interest in the library.
4. **Approval of Minutes.**
  - a. January 25, 2023 Regular Meeting. It was moved by Khuntia and seconded by Sladek THAT the Minutes of the January 25, 2023 Regular Monthly Meeting be approved as presented. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: Nienburg.
5. **Financial Matters.**
  - a. December 2022/Year End Financial Report. Library Director Milavec presented the report. She noted that the December 2022 report includes the invoices paid in 2023 out of the 2022 budget. Revenues collected in 2022 came in at 104.2%, mainly due to higher than expected personal property replacement tax. FY 2022 ended with 93.3% of the Capital Replacement Fund expended and 98.2% of the Operating Fund expended.
  - b. January 2023 Financial Report. Library Director Milavec presented the report. She noted that this is the time where the library's fund balances tend to dip down and when the Intergovernmental Agreement with the Village of Downers Grove kicks in to cover operating expenditures until property tax payments starting arriving in June. At the end of January, the library was

8.3% through the year and expenditures were at 6.7%, which includes the fact that the library has already paid its annual insurance premiums.

- c. February 2023 Invoices. It was moved by Khuntia and seconded by Humphreys THAT the payment of February 2023 Capital Replacement Fund invoices totaling \$197,261.66, the payment of February 2023 Operating Fund invoices totaling \$113,796.89, the acceptance of February 2023 Capital Replacement Fund credit memos totaling \$112.06, the acceptance of February 2023 Operating Fund credit memos totaling \$15.55, and the ratification of January 2023 payroll totaling \$261,784.56 be approved. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Nienburg, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: None. Abstentions: None.

6. **Public Comment on Agenda Items.** President Gigani invited comment. There was none.

7. **Public Comment on Other Library Business.** President Gigani invited comment. Ilene Briner is a Downers Grove resident. Yesterday, she received an email from the Downers Grove Library and she believes all cardholders received it as well. It is titled "To the Downers Grove Community: A Message About Continued Violence, Coping, and Mental Health." It is an opinion piece coming from the library. It's clearly propaganda. The piece is unsigned. She wants to know who wrote it. Who is authorized to speak for the library? Did the Board of Trustees approve this message? The library has no authority to be disseminating opinion pieces. There's a reply button, but the replies are not public. She has to FOIA the replies in order to see them. The replies should be as public as the subject piece. She wants the Board to address this immediately. If the Board did not approve this message, a message recanting it needs to be sent. If the Board did approve it, a public reply system needs to be in place that's open for all to view and reply. If the Board did approve this piece, she would like further review and discussion of the information that was presented.

Frank Cote lives in Downers Grove and is a member of EQDG. Coincidentally, he also wanted to mention the letter about continued violence and coping. Every day, he is heartbroken reading the news of the day's mass shooting or the latest attempt of right-wing politicians to torment and persecute minorities. Lately, the LGBTQ community seems to have fallen into their crosshairs. But they are not alone in this, as every minority has been attacked in one way or another and as the library stated, we are all impacted by this. We all have a responsibility to work to create a more just and inclusive place for everyone to exist. He thanked the library for its courage in sending out this letter at this politically charged time.

Laura Hois also received the message. Why has the Downers Grove Public Library again issued a message to the Downers Grove community about tragic events in our nation and around the world that did not happen here in Downers Grove? Downers Grove Public Library has a responsibility to serve this community in a neutral manner without issuing biased opinion editorials about violence, aggression, and hate that have nothing to do with the community. The residents of Downers Grove wish to live here in peace without being forced to hear the Downers Grove Public Library's views about the violence unfortunately committed against immigrant farm workers in Half Moon Bay, Asian Americans in Monterey Park, and anti-Semitic attacks in New York and New Jersey. The library is a public facility which must not be used as a political sounding board. She respectfully but firmly declines the invitation to join the library in exploring ways in which these events can have an effect on our relationships with each other, ourselves, and society. Some members of the community do not share the library's views. They believe in God. They believe that abortion is wrong. They value life. Let everyone read their own news about world events and be free to interpret them based upon their own values and beliefs. Do your job. The library works for the community. Community members don't come into the library to impose their opinions on the Board and staff. They have not categorized the library as oppressed, oppressor, or marginalized, so don't do that to others. It's not the library's place to tell the community it is okay not to be okay. It is not okay to provide the community with a list of materials depicting violence and death. Who wrote the February 21 message? Who authorized Downers Grove Public Library to publish it on the website? The library has a statutory duty to act for the benefit of the community. Again, the Library Act calls for the library to be used for residents and taxpayers, for the benefit of the greatest number of residents and tax payers. That means all of us. It does not say the library can be used to give preference to certain groups of people. Community members have not asked the library to fight on their behalf against systemic inequities they do not believe exist. The library's awful equity consultant, RGW, attacks American history, tradition, meritocracy, and rejects equal rights under the law. RGW says the library must be DEI-centered, not neutral. Maybe you think it is okay to promote civil discourse and inclusiveness. Members of the community disagree. The library's bylaws require the library to avoid situations in which personal interests might be served and to disqualify oneself whenever the appearance of conflict of interest exists. You as Board members hold positions of public trust. You are expected by your bylaws to conduct yourselves according to the highest ethical standards and maintain truth, integrity, and honor. The Board has violated Illinois Law, its own bylaws, and its duty of public trust. To correct this, she asks the library to withdraw the inappropriate politically motivated message from Downers Grove Public Library's website.

Zoe Rei lives in Downers Grove. She unknowingly thought she would be the only one to bring up this email. She was so happy when she saw this email empathetically addressing all the trauma and challenges we are facing as a nation and as a community. She has friends and family throughout the United States and these things affect all of us here in this community, and they affect us as a whole. And not only was she grateful for the letter, she thought it was awesome and effective that staff added a list of resources. She was late to tonight's meeting because she was picking up a book from that list called **Compassionate Conversations**. There are other books from the list she's interested in but other people had already checked them out, so she looks forward to reading them once they are returned or once she gets them through SWAN. Not only is the library putting out the statement, but it's backing the statement up with actions and are helping everyone cope and grow. She, along with others, appreciate it so much. She also got really excited about the March Madness bracket and she has other books in there that she's exploring that she's never heard of and would have never found, so she appreciates all the resources and lists that everyone in the library works so hard to put together. Keep doing this amazing work; it's much appreciated and it's working.

Werner Kiuntke is a resident of Downers Grove and wanted to start by saying that he was extremely proud to receive the library's email as a public statement. It needed to be said, especially when there are issues of anti-Semitism, racism, and so forth, that are abounding all over the place in our society and culture. He thinks it's really unique, in a positive way, that this library is at the foreground of a lot of cultural discussions. This is a place where we can bring that forward like we are doing tonight. He would love to see more books on the shelves regarding African-American history, history of Native Americans, history of non-European peoples, and he would love to see discussions on that. Several months ago there was to be a discussion on racial healing. That discussion was canceled by the police department because of threats of violence which is what this memo and email indicated. We should have a discourse and we need to learn from both sides and understand one another. Therefore, he would love to see the community get involved in some of the discussions like racial healing because coming from Germany, where you had anti-Semitism, and to come to this country where you had Jim Crow, there isn't much difference. Therefore, he has spent his entire life fighting against that. He is pleased that the library is taking the stance and he thanks the Board for bringing that about. He is proud to just be here and say this is a fabulous place.

Julie Brethauer has been a Downers Grove resident for approximately 32 years and she also wanted to thank the Board for the statement. She thinks that if certain members of the community don't feel that the problems that were addressed are happening here, she doesn't think they are fully aware that just

because they haven't happened here doesn't mean they couldn't happen here. She applauds the Board for bringing awareness and making the library another channel to be a teachable moment in our community and to open eyes and hearts to others in the community who don't live the same life, and just bringing awareness. She thanks the Board and speaks in support of the statement.

John Thornton has been a patron of this library since sometime in the 70s. He played Dungeon and Dragons here, he has attended concerts here, and he's done so many things here. Throughout all of that time, this library has been a great place – a free public space – where people can come without any expectation of spending money or buying something. People can come in here and they can just exist and it's wonderful. He doesn't know if anyone has ever heard of Joshua Prince-Ramus, the architect who designed the Seattle Public Library, but he gives a wonderful presentation where he talks about what libraries are and what a massive anchor they are to an entire community. The Board and staff are doing an amazing job. The email that was sent out yesterday that he also received was wonderful. It was delightful. It was heartbreaking, but everything about it was perfect. Thank you to the library for continuing to do the work that it's doing. Thank you so much for being brave and staying on the front lines because he knows about all the threats that the library received and it's terrible. The community is here to support the Board. The community supports the library.

Robin Tryloff has been a Downers Grove resident for more than 30 years. She has a prepared statement to read. She had not planned on speaking to the email, but she is briefly going to make a point. First of all, it was just an excellent statement; it was so beautifully written. Those who've spoken tonight and said that the statement has no relevance in Downers Grove, frankly, are speaking from arrogance and dismissiveness. One of the most recent shootings happened in her hometown and it's very painful for her. She lives in Downers Grove, and has for more than 30 years, and that shooting affected her. How dare anyone say that the library's statement didn't make her feel like the library cares about her feelings? It did. Now for what she wrote. She is concerned about the ongoing and relentless attacks on the library, its staff, and certain of its patrons, especially people who are unhoused and the LGBTQ+ community. Our library staff is outstanding. They are professionals who are skilled at curating, collecting, documenting, research, literature, programming, helping patrons, critical thinking, and so much more. That is why several staff members have been recognized for their outstanding service by Library Journal. It is completely inappropriate to assail and malign them, making them feel besieged, threatened, and unsafe as they steadfastly work to serve us all. The Library Trustees are bound in good faith by the American Library Association's standards and the Downers Grove Public Library's bylaws to, "work to recognize and dismantle systemic and

individual biases, to confront inequity and oppression, to enhance diversity and inclusion, and to advance racial and social justice” and “to support to the fullest the efforts of librarians in resisting censorship of library materials by groups or individuals.” Public libraries are among America’s most democratic institutions. In fact, given the broad spectrum of programs and services we ask them to provide, they have in essence become the village square. As Andrew Carnegie, whom many consider to be the father of American public libraries, said, “There is not such a cradle of democracy upon the Earth as the free public library. A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never-failing spring in the desert.” He recognized that the freedom to read is essential to our democracy. Individuals must be sufficiently knowledgeable to make informed decisions and libraries must provide users with necessary information through a wide variety of tools from varying viewpoints. So for her, it begs the question, what motivates the individuals to spend the last six months engaging in disruptive, dangerous, and intimidating attacks on the Downers Grove Public Library? Many of them are affiliated with organizations that vilify others because of their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Prejudices that strike at the heart of our freedoms and democratic values. They are part of a wave of groups that galvanize followers to attack members and allies of the LGBTQ+ community, advocate for book bans, and protest inclusive curriculum. As they choose one target after another for their vitriol, their choice of the library for these attacks leads her to believe that their real aim is to weaken freedom and democracy as represented by the library, and threaten us via this public square that is the library. Inciting fear and panic does not fall under the protection of the First Amendment. These vile, hateful, and disruptive tactics to assault our library take a toll on library workers, library patrons, and the community members who are subjects of these attacks. She is here to support the Library Director, the rest of the staff, the members of the Board of Trustees, and all library patrons. They do not deserve the stress and disruption of service resulting from the ongoing attacks that started last fall and have continued here tonight.

Sue Ellen Cook is a Downers Grove resident for 11 years now and she’s found that she needs to support the library. She’s a mom. She has two children, adult children, who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community and the vitriol that she’s seen, and the attacks on the library, have made her want to come and show support. She appreciates the resources that are available at the library. It has helped her be a better mom, a better ally, and a better advocate. She thanks the library.

Scott Frank is a 38 year resident of Downers Grove. This is his first Library Board meeting and he’s here because he was outraged and shocked at the email that was sent out yesterday. He does not see where it is the library’s business to get

into editorials. His sentiments lie with the first and third speaker. He did some online searching on the purpose and responsibilities of the role of the Board. The Board of Library Trustees serves the residents of the Village of Downers Grove with the responsibility to determine the purpose of the library and the community, and to develop appropriate goals for services, seek adequate funding to achieve the goals of the library, to adopt written policies to govern the operation of the library, to authorize plans of expenditure, to allow implementation of the library service program, to be aware of issues in library services of legislation affecting libraries, to communicate actively with local government and the general public, and to employ a confident, qualified library administrator. He's not connecting the library statement document with the charge of the Board of Library Trustees document.

It was moved by Sladek and seconded by Humphreys THAT the Access Services Department presentation be moved up to before Agenda Item 8 New Business. Motion passed by voice vote.

#### Access Services Department Presentation

Lucas McKeever is the Access Services Manager at the library. If you are familiar with libraries but maybe not with Access Services, a lot of other institutions call it Technical Services. Anything you see on the shelves throughout the library and anything that circulates comes through Access Services first and they get it ready for circulation. While they don't have a public desk that greets the public every day, they do work very closely with their colleagues throughout the library and he likes to think of the department as an internal vendor. Once orders are placed on materials, the Access Services Department creates the "on order" records within the catalog, which allows patrons to place holds long before the materials are received. The department also works with colleagues on projects to reformat or reframe how materials are marketed within our shelves and space. When items have been loved a little too much, they end up in Access Services, where staff do their best to repair them and give them a second life. If they are beyond repair, Access works with the selectors to try and replace the items. They also handle the materials that are at the end of their life cycle. They try to be very intentional with what is done with those materials to make sure that we do the best we can to give them a second opportunity to get into the hands of a community member. Some items are set aside for the Friends of the Library book sale, some go to outreach events, and others are held to be used at the Rack at the Tracks.

Library Director Julie Milavec commented that Lucas is also the guru of the rules that control how everything in this library goes out by making sure that the item type and what it's called in the record connects to how long it should go out. There are literally hundreds of lines of code behind that catalog that Lucas maintains. Access Services touches every item that comes into the library and

every item that leaves the collection. They are the backbone of the entire library and without them, none of us would be able to find anything. Lucas also mentioned that last year, over 27,000 items were added to the catalog and over 26,000 items were withdrawn. Over 4,000 items were repaired as well. They are hard workers and do a lot with the time they have.

## 8. **New Business.**

- a. Bibliotheca Annual Service and Maintenance Agreement Renewal. The service and maintenance agreement covers the automated materials handler, the self-check units, and all of the software that controls those machines. The cost of a service call without a service agreement is extremely high, and the agreement includes parts and labor to keep the machines up and running and also includes two tune-ups a year, which are vital to keeping the machines running smoothly. There is one change to the renewal this year. The library opted to remove the credit card readers from each self-check machine, as they are only being used a few times each month, bringing in about \$100 per month. The annual cost for these in the agreement is \$4,200, which will now be saved by removing the units. Trustee Nienburg inquired about the cost per service visit versus an annual service contract.

It was moved by Nienburg THAT the vote be tabled until the Board can get a comparison on the per item costs incurred last year versus the cost of the annual contract. There was no second.

It was moved by Dougherty and seconded by Khuntia THAT the Bibliotheca Annual Service and Maintenance Agreement in the amount of \$36,569.96 be approved. Roll call: Ayes: Dougherty, Humphreys, Khuntia, Sladek, Gigani. Nays: Nienburg. Abstentions: None.

- b. Update to Personnel Policy, Section 3.56 Compassionate Leave. The Family Bereavement Leave Public Act 102-1050 has come into law. This provides for additional qualifying events under compassionate leave and up to 10 days of unpaid leave as specified in the Act. The library's Personnel Policy Section 3.56 has been updated to bring in all of the provisions, including offering five days of paid leave and an additional five days of unpaid leave should an employee choose to use it.

It was moved by Khuntia and seconded by Dougherty THAT the updated Personnel Policy Section 3.56 Compassionate Leave be approved as presented. Motion passed by voice vote.

- c. Strategic Planning Process. Library Director Milavec announced that the next steps of the strategic planning process will be focus groups, held in late April.



Milavec reviewed the different focus groups that the management team was considering and reminded the Board that they will have their own focus group with the opportunity to give feedback. There will also be two public forums that the community can attend, with one being in-person and one virtual. The final, big piece of the strategic planning process will occur when the consultants give the Board and staff their findings book, which will include all of the information from the focus groups, surveys, forums, and all other information collected about the library. This will be used in the strategic retreat, where a specific group of 15-25 trustees, staff, and community members will come together to make a cohesive initial plan. The Board discussed scheduling and possible conflicts for both the Board focus group and the strategic retreat.

- d. Third Party Investigator for Personnel Matter. Business Office Manager Katelyn Vabalaitis spent the last month working with Assistant Library Director Jen Ryjewski to contact legal firms that the library has no affiliation with, to gather information on the firms and find out pricing. Katelyn's recommendation was to move forward with having the firm Ancel Glink carry out the personnel investigation.

It was moved by Dougherty and seconded by Sladek THAT the remainder of the discussion be tabled until Executive Session. Motion passed by voice vote.

## 9. **Unfinished Business.**

- a. Bylaws Update. The bylaws are required to be reviewed every two years. The last time they were reviewed was October 28, 2020 but between COVID and other things coming up, the latest review has been delayed a bit. The last review had no major changes and was more a matter of bringing them up to date with the checklist in Serving Our Public 4.0. The Board discussed how to go about revising the bylaws, whether it be utilizing staff, an ad hoc committee, or workshopping during meetings.

It was moved by Nienburg and seconded by Sladek THAT by the next meeting, Trustees will make recommendations to President Gigani on groupings of topics that will be worked on by Board committees. Motion passed by voice vote.

It was moved by Nienburg and seconded by Khuntia THAT the Executive Session be moved to after Trustee Comments and Requests for Information. Motion passed by voice vote.

**10. Librarian's Report.** Library Director Julie Milavec presented her report. The salary structure re-benchmarking project has begun and Administration has received the preliminary report and structure. It will be going before the Board in a few months and the final structure will go into effect January 1, 2024. The annual report is also in the Discoveries issue that will be coming out this week. The library is at more than a million circulations again this year and there are incredible numbers as far as programming and participation go, which really shows why we are a five-star library. There is a report attached to the Librarian's Report that details legal invoices related to FOIA that was questioned last month. There were over \$15,000 in FOIA request legal bills related to drag queen bingo. The Legacy Wall exhibit may be coming to Downers Grove in June. EQDG is working to do that. That would be an exhibit like the other museum exhibits the library has hosted on the second floor. There were eight incident reports in January. There have been 11 incident reports so far in February. Two of those did not occur on library property and two were just incidents to be documented. Four of those incidents were disruptive teens. As of 4 p.m. the day of the meeting, the library had received a total of 90 responses to the latest statement, with 74 in support, 12 in opposition, and 4 were other comments.

**11. Trustee Comments and Requests for Information.**

Trustee Sladek wanted to share an experience. She went to the Coffee with the Social Workers event this month. She was curious about it and as a new trustee, wanted to check it out. It was a really nice experience. She not only met them and saw them working some library users on some issues. They were terrific with the patrons, including one unhoused person. This was on the Saturday where there was an ice storm and people were looking for shelter and things. She talked to them and talked to a couple of patrons who knew she was a trustee. She was really glad she did it and she felt good about the direction the library is going with the social workers being available for patrons. They were really able to help most of them in some way or another. Since she was talking to other patrons and those who came for services, some mentioned wanting to talk to a trustee and she thought it may be something the Board might want to consider. The Village Council does it and the Board might want to consider something that's a little less of a formal opportunity for people to interact with them.

Trustee Dougherty thanked Library Director Milavec for including the FOIA legal fees in her report. She loved the Circulation Department's goal setting for the new year and always loves reading their reports. She really appreciated the report about the free menstrual products being offered in the women's restrooms and thinks it is a really exciting opportunity. She also attended a library program, the Great Decisions conversation, and it was really great to hear community members coming together and talking in a really respectful way about potentially really contentious topics. She was really impressed by the facilitator and by the program.

Trustee Khuntia acknowledged Business Office Manager Katelyn Vabalaitis' work on the 600 individual security permissions on the new timesheets. She also commented that she loved hearing about Access Services. She did not always know what that department did and hearing about how much work that tiny department does is amazing. She also noticed the menstrual products in the restrooms and thought that was amazing. She was so proud to see the 12-page Discoveries newsletter highlighting the library's efforts and how much the library does for the community.

Trustee Sladek thanked President Gigani for all the work she put into compiling the trustees' bylaws comments into one cohesive document.

Trustee Humphreys heard the word "proud" a lot at the meeting and speaking as an individual person, he is very proud of the statement that was released. It is a statement addressed to the community, which includes library customers, library staff, and the community of Downers Grove and beyond. The library serves many people that are not in Downers Grove. He read part of the last line of the statement that helps him be very proud to be associated with a library that considers these kinds of values, "We encourage all community members to remember the humanity in all of us and to treat ourselves, and one another, with kindness, dignity, and empathy." That makes him very proud.

President Gigani thanked Children's Services Manager Allyson Renell for providing her the opportunity to meet with representatives from the Downers Grove Junior Women's Club as they presented the library with a check for \$5,000 for the library to add accessibility kits to the Children's Department. The group thanked Allyson personally for bringing attention to the needs of individuals within the community and for presenting new ideas for how to support these families in ways that may be out of reach for them on their own due to the cost of these devices. She also wanted to thank the library for releasing the statement. It is a reminder of the importance of mental health and these resources have been made available for anyone who needs it without dictating that everyone has to use it. We do not live in a bubble. While some of the referenced incidents are not local ones, incidents like these happen all around us and are not as far removed from us as we may want to believe. Her niece's school was involved in a situation with an intruder today and that is just a few suburbs away. Acknowledging the existence of these real events is important, so thank you for the statement.

## 12. **Executive Session.**

- a. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1), for discussion of the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of a specific employee. It was moved by Khuntia and seconded by Dougherty THAT the Board move into Executive Session. Motion passed by voice vote.

The Board moved into Executive Session at 9:40 p.m.

It was moved by Dougherty and seconded by Nienburg THAT the Public Session be reconvened. Motion passed by voice vote. President Gigani reconvened the Public Session at 10:07 p.m.

13. **Action for Items Discussed in Executive Session.** It was moved by Sladek and seconded by Humphreys THAT the Board circulate an outline of what their expectation is from Ancel Glink in the investigation so that they can give a more detailed proposal on how to meet the Board's expectations as well as provide the employee name to Ancel Glink so they can run their conflict check.

Trustee Nienburg amended the motion to also authorize the library to give a status update to the employee that the Board is moving forward with the investigation. The amendment was accepted by Sladek. The amended motion passed by voice vote.

14. **Adjournment.** President Gigani adjourned the meeting at 10:09 p.m.