

**CITY OF NORWALK
NORWALK PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
JANUARY 22, 2009**

ATTENDANCE: Stan Siegel, President; Mohan Tracy; Charles McMullen;
Grace Vetter; Regina Krummel; Mary Mann; Jannie Williams;
Lori Torrano (7:08 p.m.)

STAFF: Les Kozerowitz; Frank Farrow

ABSENT: Mary Pugh

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Siegel called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments this evening.

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA/ACTION ITEMS

There were no additions to the agenda or action items this evening.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 11, 2008

The following correction was made to the minutes:

Page 6: Change Arthur to Otha

- ** **MR. MCMULLEN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED**
- ** **MS. MANN SECONDED**
- ** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

a. Update on Activities

Mr. Siegel reported that there is a lot going on at the Library. He said that the public was able to take part in the inauguration at the Library.

b. Expiring Terms

Mr. Siegel announced that Ms. Tracy and Ms. Krummel have been reappointed to the Library Board. Their terms will expire in 2011. Mr. Siegel said that City Hall has not heard from the First Taxing District about Ms. Vetter or Mr. McMullen's terms. Mr. Kozerowitz said that according to the City's website, Ms. Vetter's term expired on December 31, 2008 and Mr. McMullen's term expired on December 31, 2006. Mr. Siegel told Mr. McMullen that it is possible he was reappointed.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Siegel told Ms. Krummel that it would be useful for the Treasurer, in the Trustee meeting, to let the Board know how the Foundation has done and report back to the Board.

a. Investment Manager Update

There was no discussion because this is the business of the Norwalk Library Foundation.

Ms. Torrano joined the meeting at 7:08 p.m.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Kozerowitz presented the Library's newest offering. He said that play aways have been offered for about six months and are gaining in popularity.

Mr. Kozerowitz said that he sent a copy of an article from the *Wall Street Journal* that talked about how busy libraries are during hard economic times. He said that they are seeing an increase in usage.

Mr. Kozerowitz talked about the recently completed renovations. He said that the first floor renovation is 99.99% complete. He said that it was finished almost on time and to everyone's satisfaction.

This week the Library began offering photo id library cards. Mr. Kozerowitz suggested that everyone stop by and get one.

Mr. Kozerowitz said that they have gotten busier, but the budget is getting tighter. Mr. Farrow explained that the Personnel Department has taken over hiring part time staff. He said that part time job postings have to go through a five step approval process. Applicants now have to submit their applications on line. Mr. Farrow said that there are two part time positions that are being put on hold by the City Finance Director.

Mr. Kozerowitz said that when he and Mr. Farrow joined the Library they had over 30 full time positions filled. Since then that number has been significantly reduced and as a result they may have to adjust hours or services.

Mr. Siegel asked if it would help if the Board created a symposium to show how the Library serves the City. He suggested presenting it in April to the Mayor, Common Council, Finance Director and the Board of Estimate and Taxation. The objective would be to educate them.

Ms. Torrano noted that every agency is having issues and suggested trying to recruit committed volunteers. Mr. Siegel said that volunteers in a library position do not work well for the administration. He said that he does not think the Mayor truly understands the value of the Library to the City. Mr. Siegel said that he believes that people would be embarrassed if they do not attend the symposium.

Ms. Krummel asked Mr. Siegel who would talk to the attendees. Mr. Siegel suggested asking the powers that be, in the Connecticut Library world. He asked Mr. Kozerowitz what he thought about his suggestion. Mr. Kozerowitz said that it would be viewed as self serving and almost insulting to people that they do not understand the value of the Library.

Mr. Siegel said that in the scheme of all they have to do, the role of the Library is understandably miniscule. He suggested thinking of this as giving them an opportunity to be better educated about the value of the Library in our own City. He said that he is not sure they think about its value. Ms. Krummel noted that the Mayor does show up at the Library's events.

Ms. Vetter said that before they proceed with this, they need to be able to show proof that Library use is up.

Ms. Tracy said that they should state the purpose of the meeting. She asked if they were looking for funding or to educate. Mr. Siegel said that the purpose of the symposium is to educate only. He said that they all feel for the Library and spend their time there because they know what it does for the users. He said that he wants people to be invited to feel what they feel. Mr. Siegel said that they are not asking for funding. They want the people to understand how their decisions affect the Library. He added that if they decide to do this they will be representing the people they are serving.

Mr. Kozerowitz said that every time he or Mr. Farrow goes before the Planning Commission, Common Council or Board of Estimate and Taxation they try to use that as an opportunity to inform them. He said that he believes they hear their message.

Mr. Siegel said that all of the card holders are looking for the best service. He said that they would be a spokes channel for the public. He said that this is just an idea, but feels they have nothing to loose by going forward.

Ms. Williams said that it would be embarrassing if they invite some professionals from the State Library Association and no one shows up, given the elected officials busy schedules. She asked that given the bad press, if someone would question their

financials. Mr. Siegel said they are only talking about educating people. Ms. Vetter said that the normal course would be for the Finance Director to ask about financing.

Mr. Siegel said that the message he is sending is what the Norwalk Public Library really is and not asking for money. Ms. Torrano said that it not what they are going to hear. Mr. Siegel said that it would almost be like opening a new museum and inviting the public to see what it has to offer. He said that he did not think it would have a negative effect; nothing ventured, nothing gained. The Library is a beacon at this time.

Ms. Torrano suggested asking *The Hour* or the *Advocate* to do an article on the Library. Mr. Siegel said that the message wouldn't last.

Mr. Siegle said that this is something to think about. He will bring a proposal to the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Siegel said that the Friends are going through the effort to drum up new members.

Mr. Siegel said that he did not believe there were archived Library Board minutes on the City's website.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Siegel said that he attended the Norwalk Library Supervisor's meeting. He described the activities planned for Library Week in April. Mr. Siegel talked about the 2009 Big Read program which will feature the book *Tom Sawyer*.

Mr. Siegel said that he met with the Norwalk Arts Commission to discuss the Graphic Traffic box program. They are going to get ten professional artists to paint the boxes. A committee from the Library will review the drafts to be sure that they adhere to a library theme.

Ms. Tracy asked if the Library sends e-mail to its patrons. Mr. Seigel said that they send 7,800 e-mails to Library card holders if they have their e-mail address.

Ms. Williams expressed concern about staffing at the South Norwalk Library Children's Department. Mr. Siegel said that there is nothing they as a Board can do, but to let the Administration know. He said that the Administration is hampered by the total Library system. Mr. Siegel said that the Children's Department in the main Library has been exceptionally busy. He said that he does not think the Mayor, Common Council or the Board of Estimate and Taxation has a clue as to the value of what the Norwalk Library does.

Mr. Siegel said that he believes this Administration is cognizant of the need, but is hampered by funding. He said that when he makes the proposal about the symposium, he

will take into consideration to let the powers that be know how their decisions affect the citizens.

Ms. Mann asked how long it takes to go through the approval process to post a position. Mr. Farrow said that it can take 7 – 10 days, depending upon people’s schedules. Ms. Mann asked why they would not get an approval. Mr. Kozerowitz said that it would be because of funding. Ms. Mann said that they can’t allow the City to freeze a needed position. Mr. Kozerowitz said that then they would have to start cutting positions. He said that they have to be careful about using volunteers because they have collective bargaining agreements.

Ms. Mann said that NEON uses volunteers and they are outstanding, but it is a lot of effort and coordination. Mr. Siegel said that one of the challenges that Mr. Farrow has is that he has so many other things to do. It would be more doable if the Library had a volunteer manager.

Mr. Kozerowitz asked if he could contact the City Finance Director and let him know that the Board has concerns about staffing levels. Ms. Vetter said that she needed more information. Mr. Farrow said that the South Norwalk Children’s Department has a full time Librarian and one part time Library Assistant. One Library Assistant position is on hold. He said that department is very active with programs and both part time positions are needed. There is an obligation to educate the children that need the Library.

Ms. Vetter asked what other position was frozen. Mr. Farrow said that the Circulation Clerk position is on hold. He said that he has to pull people from other departments to cover that position.

Ms. Torrano asked if part time staff get benefits. Mr. Kozerowitz said that they do not get benefits.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. TORRANO MOVED TO ADJOURN**
- ** MR. MCMULLEN SECONDED**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services