Library Advisory Board Minutes: December 11, 2018
For Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

The Multnomah County Library Advisory Board (LAB) met on Tuesday, December 11, 2018, at Central Library in the U.S. Bank Room. Chair Elizabeth Hawthorne called the meeting to order at 7:30 am.

Board members present were: Erin Cooper, Thomas Dwyer, Rob Edmiston, Brendan Gallagher, Elizabeth Hawthorne, Willow Kelleigh, Lois Leveen, Lizzie Martinez, Bethel Sishu, Clare Wilkinson, Brian Wilson, and Elliot Zais.

Board members excused were: Marc Alifanz, Chester Ching, Jack MacNichol, and P.K. Runkles-Pearson.

Board Members absent were: Cynthia Tseng

Staff members present were: Cindy Gibbon, director of policy and special projects; Don Allgeier, director of operations; Jeremy Graybill, marketing and online engagement director; Johnette Easter, human resources manager; Jon Worona, director of content strategy; Rita Jimenez, neighborhood libraries director; Shawn Cunningham, director of communications and strategic initiatives; Sonja Ervin, equity and inclusion manager; Terrilyn Chun, deputy director; Vailey Oehlke, director of libraries; and Maddelyn High, director’s assistant.

Also in attendance were: Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson, District 3, Multnomah County; Jeff Renfro, Office of County Management, Multnomah County; Merris Sumrall, The Library Foundation; Jackie Starr, Friends of the Library; and John Horvick, DHM.

The board approved the minutes for the November 13, 2018 meeting.

CHAIR’S REPORT
Chair Elizabeth Hawthorne announced changes to Nominating Committee leadership. Marc Alifanz will step down as committee co-chair and Rob Edmiston will assume co-chairship with Lizzie Martinez. The committee will hold its first meeting in January.

Chair Hawthorne asked for an update from the DigiCommittee. Lois Leveen reported that the committee’s last meeting was focused on features and user implications of the library’s new back-end integrated library system (ILS). The DigiCommittee will meet next on January 10, 2019 at 4:30 pm at Central Library. Director of Libraries Vailey Oehlke added that Multnomah County is currently in the midst of transitioning to a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, and the library’s migration to the new ILS will happen on the heels of the county’s ERP implementation.
LIBRARY DIRECTOR’S REPORT
Director of Libraries Vailey Oehlke highlighted the following from the Director’s Report:

● **Stephanie White brings balance to Central Library**
  ○ This feature provides insight into how the library thoughtfully manages its spaces — in particular, Central Library, which has 13,000 visitors a week — including practicing empathy and promoting prosocial behaviors.

● **Library staff recommend the best books of 2018**
  ○ MCL’s [best books list](#) (as selected by library staff) is a great tool for discovering your next read or book gift. This list is currently linked on the library’s [homepage](#).

● **Adult literacy tutors provide hope**
  ○ This feature highlights the library’s drop-in tutoring offerings for adults seeking support with reading, GED preparation, English language learning, and other skills.

Oehlke noted that this LAB meeting is Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson’s last as Multnomah County Library District liaison. Oehlke thanked Commissioner Vega Pederson for her time, commitment to, and engagement in this role. Commissioner Vega Pederson shared that she has valued the experience of liaison to the library board, and that the library has been very meaningful to her family and community. The commissioner shared that she is happy to continue to be a supporter and partner of the library going forward, and thanked the library advisory board for this opportunity, inviting LAB members to stay in touch. As of January 2019, Commissioner Lori Stegmann of District 4 will assume the role of liaison.

**CAPITAL PLANNING UPDATE**
Oehlke introduced John Horvick, vice president and political director at DHM Research, a nonpartisan public opinion policy firm. When the board of county commissioners adopted the [Framework for Future Library Spaces](#) in 2017, it directed the library to conduct due diligence on how that framework might be enacted, including funding strategies. The library is working to collect information to inform a recommendation to the board of county commissioners about whether or not to refer a bond measure to the ballot to support this capital effort. DHM Research conducted a preliminary community survey in October 2018 on how people are feeling about the library, and Oehlke invited Horvick to share topline results of the survey with LAB.

Horvick introduced the survey and its methodology, the goal of which was to assess perceptions of the library overall, and to measure support for the library. The survey was conducted online in English and had 500 respondents weighted by age, gender, education, and children in household to ensure a representative sample of Multnomah County. The sample was split on some questions in order to ask a greater variety to questions and not make the survey burdensome to complete — half the respondents received one version and the other half received another version.

Summary findings include:
- Overall, survey respondents have positive impressions of their local libraries, with 79% rating their experience as “very positive” or “somewhat positive.” When asked about their positive ratings, respondents most often point to the library’s selection of books, friendly atmosphere, and the value it offers for kids.

- Based on what they already know about the library, respondents point to free internet and computer use as the most important things that MCL does for the community other than providing books. Access to community space is also important.

- In terms of future priorities related to library space, respondents would like more room for reading and events, especially in small branches. Modern, accessible libraries are a high priority, as are more space for seating and safety improvements.

- Support for library funding exceeds concerns about the library, reflecting residents’ positive impressions.

Oehlke commented that the library has benefited in the past from a somewhat singular message about what the library is and does, and communicating relevance is increasingly important. Oehlke noted that the library advisory board has a key role in helping educate the community about the wide range of services the library currently offers, as well as what the library can be and do with new and different types of spaces. Leveen added that growing the next generation of civic-minded library supporters is an important component of this work.

Chair Hawthorne thanked Horvick for his presentation.

**THE LIBRARY FOUNDATION (TLF)**
CEO Merris Sumrall distributed The Library Foundation’s 2018 annual report, which includes stories of impact gathered from families who use the library. Sumrall also shared that the foundation received a two-year, $148,000 grant from Meyer Trust to build the library’s capacity to serve Black families. Additional funding from The Collins Foundation to strengthen the library’s early childhood work with immigrant and refugee communities is complementary. Sumrall acknowledged and thanked Early Childhood Services Manager Annie Lewis, Equity and Inclusion Manager Sonja Ervin, Neighborhood Libraries Director Aaron Bluitt, and others who partnered closely with TLF.

Oehlke thanked The Library Foundation and expressed appreciation for this opportunity to deepen the library’s impact in serving the African and African-American communities in Multnomah County. This initiative expands upon a 2011 library research grant, Preparing African-American Children for Kindergarten Readiness, which showed that African-American families do not always feel welcome and included in educational institutions and in libraries. Oehlke shared that the library is in an improved position for this work to be impactful because of the increased number of African-American library staff; the Black Cultural Library Advocates staff group; and the leadership of Ervin, Bluitt, and Lewis.

A key component of the grant-funded initiative is community action research, a methodology that
helps researchers center community stakeholders in defining and developing solutions to local problems. Community action research will engage African and African-American families to help the library understand and better address barriers and inequities related to kindergarten readiness and transition.

Ervin added that this work is an opportunity for the library to better understand how it’s serving African and African-American communities, and to build connections and relationships. It’s also a professional development opportunity for BCLA staff to learn and conduct participatory research that will provide the library with a foundation on how to do this type of work with other racially and ethnically diverse communities.

Sumrall noted that, through the end of the year, gifts to TLF will be matched on a 1:1 basis by a foundation donor.

**FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY (FOL)**

Executive Director Jackie Starr reported record sales at Friends of the Library's Fall Used Book Sale. FOL's goal was $78,000 and sales came in at over $90,000. In addition, 3,500 people attended the sale and 230 volunteers provided 1,400 hours of volunteer service. Starr thanked everyone who attended and/or supported this effort, adding that FOL's Give Twice holiday sale raised $9,000 — another record.

Chair Hawthorne adjourned the meeting at 8:37 am.

Respectfully submitted by:
Maddelyn High, director’s assistant
Multnomah County Library, Oregon