

Library Advisory Board Minutes: April 9, 2019
For Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

The Multnomah County Library Advisory Board met on Tuesday, April 9, 2019, at Central Library in the U.S. Bank Room. Chair Elizabeth Hawthorne called the meeting to order at 7:33 am.

Board members present were: Bethel Sishu, Brendan Gallagher, Clare Wilkinson, Chester Ching, Cynthia Tseng, Elliot Zais, Erin Cooper, Lizzie Martinez, Lois Leveen, and Rob Edmiston.

Board members excused were: Elizabeth Hawthorne, Jack MacNichol, Marc Alifanz, Thomas Dwyer, and Willow Kelleigh.

Board members absent were: P.K. Runkles-Pearson and Brian Wilson.

Staff members present were: Cindy Gibbon, director of policy and special projects; Don Allgeier, director of operations; Javier Gutierrez, collections and technical services director; 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; Kady Ferris, electronic content librarian; and Maddelyn High, director's assistant.

Also in attendance were: Commissioner Lori Stegmann, District 4, Multnomah County; Jeff Renfro, Office of County Management, Multnomah County; Merris Sumrall, The Library Foundation; Jackie Starr, Friends of the Library; and an observer from Portland State University.

CHAIR'S REPORT

The board approved the minutes for the February 12, 2019 and March 12, 2019 meetings. Erin Cooper (chairing the meeting in Elizabeth Hawthorne's absence) invited updates from LAB committees. Lois Leveen thanked those who were able to stay after last month's meeting to interact with the library's new self check-out software. Director of Policy and Special Projects Cindy Gibbon added that LAB feedback was helpful and appreciated by staff leading implementation. Migration to the new system will begin May 13 and it will go live on May 16.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director of Libraries Vailey Oehlke highlighted the following from the Director's Report:

- Welcome Spanish GED learners
 - There has been a strong response to this program, and Oehlke expressed gratitude for state grant funding that supports it. Oehlke encouraged folks to read participant quotes demonstrating the real impacts the library has on people's lives.

- Rod Madison helps bring library materials from one neighborhood bookshelf to the next
 - Oehlke commented that the behind-the-scenes work to get holds to patrons is pretty remarkable. A big piece of that work is deliveries. Rod coordinates all of the library's drivers, who move more than the equivalent of the entire collection at Midland Library throughout MCL's system every day.
- Comment from North Portland Library patron who received great service from staff member, LeFoster
 - Oehlke praised LeFoster and encouraged folks to read patron comments included in each month's Director's Report.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE UPDATE

Lizzie Martinez shared that the Nominating Committee is in the midst of its nominating process. Recruitment flyers were passed out for folks to post at their offices or community meeting places. So far, five applications have come in, two of which are from East County residents.

Martinez asked LAB members to provide an update on how recruitment outreach has been going, and several people shared that they have reached out to contacts and followed up on East County leads, including connecting with library staff at East County locations and with other county staff.

Cooper recommended that LAB's online interest form be edited to include a question for applicants to note how they heard about the Library Advisory Board.

Martinez thanked LAB members for their thoughtful outreach, and reminded that the application deadline for new prospective members is April 30.

EQUITY GOALS DISCUSSION

Referencing LAB's prior conversations about meeting locations and LAB participation, Martinez asked LAB to consider who currently sits on the Library Advisory Board, who it reaches, and what this volunteer advisory body wants to be to the library. Martinez, Lois Leveen, and Cynthia Tseng designed an activity to generate initial discussion around these issues. Martinez asked those in attendance to consider three questions: *What do you think LAB's purpose is? In what areas do you think LAB excels? In what areas could LAB improve?* Several responses were posted to each question on large poster boards hung on the wall. Martinez then called folks back together and discussion ensued about what themes people noticed and what stood out among posted responses.

Cooper highlighted a response theme around community engagement. Leveen called attention to a comment about cultural responsiveness, noting that LAB's current white-culture-dominant structure and format may not be welcoming to everyone or value the different ways people engage. Chester Ching added that diversifying its membership is important to LAB's ability to address structural issues related to how LAB functions. In terms of LAB's role, Cooper reminded that citizen overview of the library's budget is one of LAB's primary purposes, as noted in its bylaws — although it is not LAB's only purpose. Director of Operations Don Allgeier shared that having another lens (LAB's) through which to view library issues is very valuable, and Gibbon added that community representation is an important role of the Library Advisory Board.

Friends of the Library Executive Director Jackie Starr shared that FOL, in the midst of its own board nomination process, has been considering similar issues — including the digital divide and how to remove barriers to board service for folks without email. Starr shared that reaching out to local chambers of commerce and community organizations has been fruitful.

Leveen suggested LAB take advantage of opportunities to hear from library staff on how they've engaged different communities by intentionally structuring programs in different ways. Oehlke responded that library staff have a lot of important community relationships, built over many years, and welcomed sharing more about the library's community connections.

Bethel Sishu added that she hadn't heard about the Library Advisory Board prior to applying, and believes there are others in the community who would like to provide input on library issues who may not know that LAB is one important path for such input.

Multnomah County Economist Jeff Renfro noted that many county departments have advisory boards, and county staff who work with Health Department advisory boards might be a good resource for best practices on how to engage and include folks experiencing serious barriers.

Martinez thanked everyone for their comments and thoughtful participation, and proposed that LAB form a new subcommittee focused on equity to bring forward and facilitate future discussions like this one. Martinez will share a description of the new proposed committee with LAB members who couldn't attend this meeting, and asked those interested to contact her.

LIBRARY WRITES PROJECT UPDATE

Electronic Content Librarian Kady Ferris announced that the first print book from [The Library Writers Project](#) will be released April 16. [The Gifts We Keep](#) by Katie Grindeland was originally a 2015 ebook submitted to The Library Writers Project, a program to add local self-published authors to MCL's collection. This title was one of the highest-rated books read by library staff reviewers that year, circulating over 1,000 times on [Overdrive](#). However, in talking with patrons, library staff heard that some patrons were missing out on accessing titles in this special collection due to the digital divide or a preference for printed books. The library has since partnered with Ooligan Press (a teaching press at Oregon State University) to make books from this collection available in print. MCL staff brought forward some of the most highly-rated Library Writers Project submissions, along with circulation data, for consideration by Ooligan. From those titles, *The Gifts We Keep* was selected for publication. The book is the first of an annual series the library hopes to put out with Ooligan Press.

Copies of *The Gifts We Keep* were provided to LAB members, and Ferris encouraged folks to read and share the book. Copies will be displayed in library locations, and available for purchase in local bookstores and on Ooligan's website. Ferris invited LAB to a book launch party at Rogue Hall on April 11 at 5:00 pm. Friends of the Library Executive Director Jackie Starr added that the book's author, Katie Grindeland, will be the featured speaker at the Friends' annual meeting.

Oehlke thanked Ferris and other library staff for facilitating the process to bring this book and The Library Writers Project to fruition.

THE LIBRARY FOUNDATION (TLF)

Merris Sumrall reported that TLF is starting its spring appeal process, which is focused on raising

funds for children's books. The Foundation is also wrapping up procurement of prizes for Summer Reading participants — so far, 43,000 prizes valued at close to \$500,000 have been donated from 63 businesses.

Cooper asked how TLF determines how many prizes are needed, and Sumrall responded that the Foundation works closely with the library's Summer Reading team to determine how many prizes and what types of prizes are needed (according to what is most relevant and appealing to youth patrons). This process has been refined over time, with prizes specific to neighborhood library locations now available for easier distribution to readers. TLF also works with library staff to determine what prizes work well for programs providing services outside of library locations.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY (FOL)

Starr shared that FOL is gearing up for its Spring Used Book Sale, which starts April 26, and invited everyone to attend. This effort engages about 250 volunteers, and [volunteer opportunities](#) are still available. Starr also shared that the Friends are in the midst of board member recruitment. The deadline for [application](#) is April 14.

GOOD & WELFARE

Leveen shared that she attended a screening of the documentary [Kiki](#) at Hollywood Theatre (a program offered in partnership with the library). Leveen noted that the event was an important experience for people in the room, including queer and trans youth and their families. Library staff offered resources for youth and families at a resource table as part of this event.

Clare Wilkinson announced that she is a member of the county's [Early Learning Multnomah](#) task force, a group that is considering service delivery and locations in East County, and wanted to draw the library's attention to this effort. Oehlke noted that the library is in conversation with many efforts across the county, and is involved in this effort, as well.

Chair Hawthorne adjourned the meeting at 8:37 am.

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