

Library Advisory Board Minutes: July 14, 2020For Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

The Multnomah County Library Advisory Board (LAB) met on Tuesday, July 14, 2020 virtually. The meeting commenced at 8:05 am.

Board members present were: Brendan Gallagher, Clare Wilkinson, Erin Cooper, Lizzie Martinez, Lois Leveen, Quinn MacNichol, Rob Edmiston, and Svetlana Karpe.

Staff members present were: Dave Ratliff, neighborhood libraries director; Don Allgeier, director of operations; Johnette Easter, human resources manager; Jon Worona, director of content strategy; Katie O'Dell, programming and outreach director; Shawn Cunningham, director of communications and strategic initiatives; Sonja Ervin, equity and inclusion manager; Terrilyn Chun, deputy director; Vailey Oehlke, director of libraries; Maddelyn High, director's assistant, Ana Ruiz Morillo, Spanish Program Specialist Senior; Gesse-Stark Smith, Community Outreach Librarian; Kate Schwab, Central Librarian; Tamara Duncan, BCLA Community Engagement Coordinator; and Alisa Williams, library assistant (observer).

Also in attendance were: Commissioner Lori Stegmann, District 4, Multnomah County; Jeff Renfro, Office of County Management, Multnomah County; and Merris Sumrall, The Library Foundation.

WELCOME

Meeting attendees joined the virtual meeting either via video conference or phone. Lois Leveen welcomed folks, and guest presenters introduced themselves.

Meeting minutes for the June 9, 2020 meeting were then approved.

UPDATES FROM LAB COMMITTEES**Nominating Committee**

Nominating Committee Chair Lizzie Martinez reminded that recruitment is currently paused for new adult LAB members, and youth recruitment proceeded with six fully complete and eligible applications received from a diverse candidate pool. Due to the number of qualified youth candidates, the Nominating Committee proposed adding four new youth members — two would serve for the standard two-year youth term, and two high school seniors who would serve one-year terms. After a discussion on membership requirements in the LAB bylaws, which require a minimum of two youth members, current LAB members agreed on moving forward with four youth members.

Svetlana Karpe shared background information and credentials for LAB candidate Salma Sheikh.

Sheikh will be a sophomore and is a SW Portland resident. Sheikh has volunteered for the library's Summer Reading program and shared a desire to provide a unique voice as a first generation Somali woman. Karpe recommended Sheikh for appointment to the Library Advisory Board.

Clare Wilkinson shared background information and credentials for LAB candidate Gabby Shaffer. Shaffer is going into 11th grade, and is a NE Portland resident. Shaffer heard about LAB from a school librarian, and would like to help make libraries more relevant and accessible for young people and for people experiencing houselessness. Wilkinson recommended Shaffer for appointment to the Library Advisory Board.

Karpe shared background information and credentials for LAB candidate Nathan Senters. Senters is a NE Portland resident and will be a high school senior. Senters expressed interest in nonprofit work and finance, and has volunteered at the Gresham Library and Friends of the Library Used Book Sale. Karpe recommended Senters for appointment to the Library Advisory Board.

Martinez shared background information and credentials for LAB candidate Jacqueline Martinez De Jesus, who will be a high school senior. Martinez De Jesus is a Cully resident, an ongoing Summer Reading volunteer, and expressed an interest in improving the library and in providing a youth Latinx perspective.

Leveen made a motion to nominate Sheikh, Shaffer, Senters, and Martinez De Jesus to the Library Advisory board, and Martinez seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Votes were solicited virtually via email for approval of Lizzie Martinez's second term on the library advisory board, running July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2024. Reappointment was approved unanimously, with Martinez abstaining from the vote.

Nominations for new candidates will advance to the Multnomah County Library District Board for approval, along with the recommendation for term renewal for Lizzie Martinez.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT PRESENTATION

Leveen explained that library outreach staff were invited to the meeting to share their expertise and approach on engaging with community and on putting community input into valuable use.

Community Outreach Librarian Gesse-Stark Smith shared that the library does a great deal of outreach systemwide, including at community events with library staff who have cultural and/or linguistic expertise; through ongoing relationships with partner organizations; and thanks to the ability of staff with deep knowledge and rich connections in the community to build and nurture relationships. The library's philosophy extends beyond just outreach to meaningful engagement in order to receive and implement input on how the library can improve to meet folks' needs. Stark-Smith emphasized the importance of building trust (in part) by setting reasonable expectations around the scope of input an organization can take in.

Amidst a global pandemic, library staff have had to find innovative ways to connect with community members while library buildings are closed, including virtual connections and by

plugging in to the important services library partners are offering.

Spanish Program Specialist Senior Ana Ruiz Morillo, who works to create connections and collaborations within the Latino community, added that these nurtured relationships have been especially relevant in the face of COVID-19 in allowing library staff to tap into community resources and to learn what specific communities need right now at a time when normal infrastructure is very limited. Morillo shared several examples of how the library is connecting with and serving the Latino community and folks represented in other language and cultural groups.

Black Cultural Library Advocata (BCLA) Community Engagement Coordinator Tamara Duncan emphasized that creating connections and partnerships in the African American community is very important for the library, both during pre-pandemic times and in this moment. Duncan shared that Black community members help shape the work of the library's Black Cultural Library Advocate team, and by this time last year, library staff would have already connected with thousands of folks during cultural and stakeholder events. Duncan echoed that the library is learning how to reach specific communities without these platforms, and relationships and partnerships have been key to the library's ability to listen to what folks need right now. As a result, library staff developed programs around topics like mental health for adults and children, for example, and have shared information and resources about testing and PPE; food and housing insecurity; and other expressed needs.

Central Librarian Kate Schwab, whose work focuses on serving folks experiencing homelessness, underscored that community engagement is a continuum and relationships and follow-up are needed to create trust beyond a transactional level. This work takes time. Schwab shared some strategies from her own work, including building relationships between staff and patrons and sourcing program and service ideas from the community. Schwab also shared some tools and resources, including [ALA's Libraries Transforming Communities site](#), noting that libraries are the perfect organizations to help create community change.

Leveen thanked staff for their thoughtful presentation.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 am.

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