

Library Advisory Board Minutes: February 9, 2020For Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

The Multnomah County Library Advisory Board (LAB) met virtually on Tuesday, February 9, 2021. The meeting began at 4:03 pm.

Board members present were: Clare Wilkinson, Erin Cooper, Gabby Shaffer, Jacqueline Martinez De Jesus, Lizzie Martinez, Lois Leveen, Nathan Senters, Quinn MacNichol, Rob Edmiston, Salma Sheikh, and Svetlana Karpe.

Staff members present were: Don Allgeier, director of operations; Jon Worona, director of content strategy; Katie O'Dell, programming and outreach director; Terrilyn Chun, deputy director; Vailey Oehlke, director of libraries; and Maddelyn High, director's assistant.

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

ATTENDANCE & CHECK-IN

Meeting attendees joined the virtual meeting either via video or phone, and broke into virtual breakout rooms for small group check-ins.

LAB CHAIR'S REPORT

Quinn MacNichol called attention to group meeting norms for periodic review. Meeting minutes for the January 12, 2021 meeting were then approved.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director of Libraries Vailey Oehlke noted the addition of two new staff to the library's Executive Management Team — Kirby McCurtis, who replaces Katie O'Dell (who now oversees the library's bond work) as Programming and Outreach Director, and Annie Lewis, who is filling in as Neighborhood Libraries Director.

Oehlke called attention to a couple of updates in the February Board Brief, including the work of Library Outreach services to offer a wifi-hotspot equipped van, and on library bond work, for which infrastructure and staffing is still being built. Oehlke also responded to questions about the community engagement work done by the library's reopening planning team to prioritize in-building services for BIPOC and other marginalized communities. Access to technology and support to use it (in multiple languages) has so far emerged as a priority need. The timeline for reopening library buildings for limited public access is still unknown. Currently, library and county leadership are keeping an eye on the new COVID-19 variants. Oelke reminded that library buildings are small in terms of the ability to maintain physically distancing, and any decisions

about reopening library buildings to the public will be made in consultation with the Multnomah County Chair's Office and the health department.

Director of Content Strategy Jon Worona responded to a question about the library's forthcoming website upgrade — which will involve back-end platform upgrades as well as an overhaul of the front-facing interface — sharing that the library is contracting with a user testing firm to prioritize website accessibility and user experience. Planning for this project is still in the early phase and LAB members may be asked to do a demo and provide additional feedback further down the line.

BUDGET/CBAC SESSION #2

County Economist Jeff Renfro gave an overview of the library's Fiscal Year 2022 budget forecast, based on a memo previously shared with LAB. Renfro explained that the budget is a policy document that tells the story of how Multnomah County spends money. The budget forecast for the library tells library leadership how much money is available and gives estimates for how much it will cost to provide services. Together, these two tools tell library leadership what it can afford and if reductions might be needed. Renfro noted that the forecast puts constraints around the decision making process about what services can be provided, and for both the county and the library, there will always be more good ideas than there are resources to implement them.

Renfro summarized projections related to property tax revenues (including new expected revenues from some City of Portland Urban Renewal Areas coming to an end) and expenses (which are driven in part by the library's labor contract with its union); and how these things impact library finances.

Director of Operations Don Allgeier followed, explaining which cost categories in the library's budget are more rigid (personnel and internal services, which comprise about 80% of the budget) and those which are more flexible (materials and supplies in particular).

A discussion then ensued about the increased demand for digital library materials during the pandemic, and the impact of those costs (since digital materials cost more than hard copy materials, and the library does not own the digital materials it purchases).

Allgeier closed by reminding that county budget program offers (narrative information on each department's work, what that work costs, and how work is evaluated) for Fiscal Year 2022 are expected to be released publicly on March 5, and a link will be shared with LAB.

WORKGROUP BREAKOUTS

LAB's two new workgroups (Membership and Strategy) broke out into separate virtual meetings rooms to have an initial discussion on objectives and how they would like to proceed.

The meeting adjourned from workgroup breakouts at 6:00 pm.

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