Library Advisory Board Minutes: November 9, 2021
For Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

The Multnomah County Library Advisory Board (LAB) met virtually on Tuesday, November 9, 2021. The meeting began at 5:30 pm.

Board members present were: Clare Wilkinson, Gabby Shaffer, Nathan Senters, Rob Edmiston, and Salma Sheikh. Erin Cooper and Lizzie Martinez were unavailable.

Staff members present were: Vailey Oehlke, director of libraries; Don Allgeier, director of operations; and Maddelyn High, director’s assistant.

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

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

Meeting minutes for the September 14, 2021 meeting were approved.

BOND UPDATE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Library Capital Bond Deputy Director Katie O’Dell and Bond Community Engagement Coordinator Suzanne Chou were in attendance to provide an overview of community engagement work for the library bond.

O’Dell reminded that there are five bond projects currently in progress (Operations Center, North Portland Library, Albina Library, Midland Library, and Holgate Library). Community engagement is now in process for all of these projects, although this work looks a bit different for the Operations Center, which is not a publicly-accessible building. O’Dell shared the ethos guiding bond community engagement work to center community in decisions made about public library locations:

- Equitable
- Transparent
- Just
- Accessible
- Informed
- Flexible

O’Dell introduced Chou, noting that Chou works across all bond projects and project teams.
Chou then gave an overview of bond community engagement strategies for library capital bond projects, noting that different engagement methods can help elicit different information and some methods are better suited for some communities. The range of engagement strategies includes:

- Virtual community meetings
- Safe, socially distanced in-person public meetings
- One-on-one meetings and focus groups with community leaders and members
- Paid design opportunities for teens and community members
- Asynchronous opportunities for input (mailers, image boards, surveys, and more)

Chou shared some examples of what some of these strategies look like in practice, encouraging LAB members to look for opportunities to get involved on the library’s bond website at multcolib.org/plan/.

In response to questions, bond staff offered additional information about paid engagement opportunities, which can create opportunities for folks who might not otherwise have time or privilege to participate. The specific programs in progress are ones that the design teams on each set of projects have used before (Youth Opportunity Design Approach or YODA and Community Design Advocates), and there has been a lot of community interest. The first YODA cohort has 18 teen members, and 10-15 CDAs will be selected from an application pool of almost 90 folks.

Bond staff shared that community engagement work is particularly challenging during a pandemic, but the opportunities to learn and adapt are great. Library Director Vailey Oehlke added that the library has made an overt commitment to engagement, and thanked O’Dell and Chou for making this work real in a tough environment. O’Dell and Chou offered to visit future LAB meetings to cover other bond-related topics as LAB members are interested.

**UPDATES FROM LIBRARY DIRECTOR**

Oehlke shared that the library’s management realignment work is moving along and nearing the end of transitions (of new staff members and new work teams forming). Oehlke expressed appreciation to library staff for this incredible effort, and to Deputy Director Terrilyn Chun for her leadership of this work.

Oehlke also shared that the library has not been immune to the labor shortages and hiring challenges experienced across the country, noting that the library’s hard-working HR team is working diligently to fill vacancies, but that this work is slowgoing and has service implications for the library.

Oehlke highlighted the importance of solutions-oriented work happening now to try to address an increased level of security and safety related incidents and their impact on staff in library buildings. This increase is not unique to libraries, and is happening in all types of public spaces. Library managers are working with Local 88 union leaderships, staff, and at the county level on creative solutions around how to mitigate impacts of inappropriate public behavior while at the same time maintaining public access.
Lastly, Oehlke announced that the county’s Fiscal Year 2023 budget process is beginning, thanking LAB members in advance for giving their time to community budget advisory (CBAC) work. Oehlke also shared that Director of Operations Don Allgeier is leaving the library, after shepherding his last budget process this spring. Oehlke expressed gratitude for Allgeier’s long tenure at the library, during which he made many impactful contributions. Allgeier in turn shared that it has been a great privilege to work in this library system and with LAB, and that he is looking forward to this year’s CBAC work.

**UPDATES FROM LAB WORKGROUPS**
Membership and Strategy workgroups shared updates on work in progress, and Maddelyn High offered to follow up with an email detailing action items and requests for input.

**ACTION ITEMS + CLOSING**
The meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

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