

Library Advisory Board Minutes: January 11, 2022For Multnomah County Library Advisory Board

The Multnomah County Library Advisory Board (LAB) met virtually on Tuesday, January 11, 2022. The meeting began at 5:33 pm.

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

Staff members present were: Vailey Oehlke, director of libraries; Don Allgeier, director of operations; Jon Worona, director of innovation & technology; and Maddelyn High, director's assistant.

Jeff Renfro, Office of County Management, Multnomah County was also in attendance. Two community members joined as observers: Kari Olivadotti-Peters and Deborah Sipe.

WELCOME & CHECK-IN

Meeting attendees joined the virtual meeting either via video or phone, introduced themselves, and shared what they are looking forward to in the new year and/or ideas for how to improve LAB meetings.

Meeting minutes for the November 9, 2021 meeting were approved.

UPDATES FROM LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Library Director Vailey Oehlke announced that the library's community reading program, [Everybody Reads](#), has launched for 2022. This year is the first year that a graphic novel — [Good Talk by Mirah Jacobs](#) — is the reading selection. Events are active now, culminating in an author event on March 10. Oehlke expressed thanks to The Library Foundation and Literary Arts, who make this program possible.

Oehlke also highlighted [a message](#) posted recently to the community, sharing the library's need to respond operationally to the Omicron variant surge, which, along with other county departments and organizations across our community, is affecting staff and their families and creating library staffing shortages. The library continues to prioritize services to those in our community who need them most, and library buildings will be kept open to the public as long as it is safe and healthy for staff and patrons. However, due to staffing shortages, rolling closures and reduced hours are expected. Oehlke reiterated that the situation is dynamic, without certainties, and shared the library's commitment to communicate if and when there are closures.

Oehlke also reflected on the commitment level of library staff and managers over the past several

weeks. Many library staff volunteered to support extreme weather warming shelters over the holidays, and then rolled right in to dealing with Omicron disruptions. Oehlke shared that the county has launched a significant push to get folks vaccinated and boosted, particularly our most vulnerable community members, and shared perspective that the county has risen to the challenge of Omicron from a public health perspective while we're all personally navigating it in our own lives and individual workplaces.

Lastly, Oehlke noted that capital planning work continues with many opportunities for active community engagement. No projects have broken ground yet, and the new operations center is first on the docket.

CBAC Update

Clare Wilkinson and Erin Cooper gave an update on the library's Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) process so far this year. Two CBAC meetings have been held — one focused on a budget forecast, and the other focused on how staffing and personnel costs affect the library budget (including pandemic impacts). Cooper encouraged other LAB members to review a presentation shared by Don Allgeier to learn more about personnel costs, which make up the bulk of the library's budget. Wilkinson shared that two more CBAC meetings will be held in February and March, and LAB members will then be asked to contribute and vote on a recommendation letter (which will highlight some budgetary themes for Fiscal Year 2023) at the March board meeting. The letter is due April 29, 2022. Cooper and Wilkinson are also attending Central CBAC meetings on behalf of the library's CBAC (LAB). Oehlke thanked Cooper and Wilkinson for leading this work this fiscal year, and Cooper and Wilkinson expressed gratitude to Allgeier for all of his work. LAB Chair Salma Sheikh echoed this appreciation.

UPDATES FROM LAB WORKGROUPS

LAB workgroups then provided updates to the full board.

Maddelyn High shared that a new ["About LAB" page](#) is now live on the library website, marking completion of this task by the Strategy Workgroup. This workgroup will next consider different supports and engagement opportunities for new LAB members.

Lizzie Martinez shared that the Membership Workgroup drafted a new LAB member application, and asked that other LAB members review it and share any feedback. Recruitment will begin in February, with interviews in April and a slate of recommended candidates presented in May. Martinez asked that LAB members reach out to a few folks in their circles who they think would be a good fit for LAB. LAB will have 13 open slots, and may not be able to fill them all with a single recruitment. New members will attend their first meeting in July 2022.

High summarized action items, and noted that she would follow up with scheduling polls for February workgroup meetings.

ACTION ITEMS + CLOSING

Sheikh celebrated that the library had a record-breaking 4.8 million digital checkouts in 2021 and MCL is now ranked sixth in total digital circulation for public library systems worldwide.

Observer Deborah Sipe shared appreciation for access to the library during the pandemic, noting that visits are often the highlight of her week. Oehlke noted that library leadership and staff recognize the importance of maintaining access to buildings, and thanked Sipe for sharing that feedback. Sheikh commented that library access has been particularly important during ongoing school closures, and expressed similar appreciation for access to the library.

The meeting adjourned at 6:27 pm.

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