

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
OF CINCINNATI AND HAMILTON COUNTY**

Date: April 27, 2020

Meeting: Special

Place: Virtual

**SPECIAL MEETING**

***CALL TO ORDER***

**ROLL CALL**

Trustees Present: Ms. Allen, Ms. Clemons, Mr. Hendon,  
Ms. Kohnen, Mrs. LaMacchia and Ms. Redden

Trustees Absent: None

Present: Paula Brehm-Heeger, Molly DeFosse, Staci  
Dennison, Kyla Hardin, Holbrook Sample, and  
Beth Yoke

***PUBLIC COMMENTS***

Ms. Kohnen reviewed the public comment policy. Ms. Kohnen read for 3 minutes a comment from Pat Lance regarding a ban from the Library.

***EXECUTIVE SESSION***

Ms. Kohnen moved that the Board go into Executive Session in accordance with ORC 121.22(G)(1) to consider the appointment, employment, dismissal, promotion, or compensation of public employees. Ms. LaMacchia seconded.

Voting for the motion: Ms. Allen, Ms. Clemons, Ms. Kohnen, Mr. Hendon, Mrs. LaMacchia and Ms. Redden...6 ayes. The motion carried. **(06-2020)**.

Ms. Clemons moved that the Board exit Executive Session. Ms. Kohnen seconded.

Voting for the motion: Ms. Allen, Ms. Clemons, Ms. Kohnen, Mr. Hendon, Mrs. LaMacchia and Ms. Redden...6 ayes. The motion carried. (07-2020).

## ***ACTION ITEMS***

### **HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT**

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

##### Planning for Recovery

Facing the unprecedented challenge of the coronavirus pandemic requires difficult decisions. The Library must address immediate, urgent needs, consider human impact, and support our long-term vision for our organization's and our community's recovery. The Senior Leadership Team began our planning during this time by agreeing on the following guiding principles. We must:

- Focus on the needs of our community members
- Demonstrate our care for staff and be transparent in our actions
- Be vigilant in ensuring service sustainability, using data to inform decisions that provide for budget savings now to safeguard a return to robust service when conditions allow
- Be poised to implement recovery and service restoration in a safe, agile and intentional manner
- Balance stewardship with savings across multiple budget areas to ensure impact is strategic and reasonable for both near and long-term needs, emphasizing what is essential now and positioning ourselves to adapt to what will be essential in the future
- Recognize the unprecedented challenge we face and also remain focused on the future

While the Governor's stay-at-home order and physical distancing recommendations may not be in force to the same degree during May and beyond as they have been for the past several weeks, it is clear that the coronavirus pandemic will change our operations for the foreseeable future. We will continue to work toward creating a balance between providing essential services to our community and maintaining practices designed to help keep our staff and customers safe and healthy. Our recovery plan is tiered to allow for intentional, thoughtful restoration of

services in a manner that capitalizes on opportunities and provides flexibility for adjusting as safety and health needs require.

##### Economic Impact

We have carefully reviewed the current economic outlook as well as recent actions taken by a variety of governmental units and similarly sized libraries in the state. The exact funding loss for our Library during the remainder of 2020 is unknown at this moment, with projections ranging from \$8–12 million, a projection that represents a 20–30% reduction of Public Library Fund (PLF) funding and approximately 10–15% of the budget overall.

We also know that there is considerable concern about the economic impact of the pandemic on state and local tax revenues, most notably the likely significant reduction in the PLF both for the remaining months of 2020 and as the state's bi-annual budget is developed in 2021. Approximately 51% of our Library's revenue comes from the PLF, with an additional 48% coming from local tax revenues. The remainder comes from other sources such as gift funds and fees.

In addition to a sizeable reduction in the PLF we also anticipate notable reductions in the other revenue areas as well. Addressing this anticipated shortfall is no small matter and a variety of budget savings are necessary.

### Time Sensitive Support

Opportunities to have staff use unique and limited-time support of the unemployment funds provided by the CARES legislation weighed heavily in determination of the planning. Due to its limited availability, we must act with immediacy and urgency for the benefit of both staff and the organization's long-term financial health. While other budget savings are needed, are being identified and will be addressed in the coming weeks, the time-sensitive nature of the CARES Act led us to prioritize staffing decisions.

We deeply value the work of all of our staff, as does the community. However, with typical in-person Library service unavailable for the foreseeable future, and with the CARES Act only available for a short time, we must face the brutal facts of our fiscal situation and our need to reduce spending to address a significant budget shortfall. At the same time, we must acknowledge the fact that many staff members cannot perform the full scope of their important duties, such as in-person customer service in a safe and practical manner and likely may not be able to do so for several weeks, and potentially several months. While the Library has a Reduction in Workforce Policy, because of the unique and unprecedented situation we are currently experiencing, a different plan of action is needed to navigate the needs of our staff members and the Library system through this time.

### A Path Forward

We value our staff as members of our organization and of the community. Yet we must also address critical and urgent needs. To that end, we have outlined a plan that addresses budgetary needs in a way that enables us to care for staff to the best of our ability during these unprecedented times. This decision was not taken lightly and occurred after careful research and deliberation. The plan for staffing levels and hours is as follows:

- Furlough of 106 staff members who maintain a 12-hours per week schedule as of May 3, 2020
- Reduction of hours, for 435 non-exempt staff in grades 1–6, to 25% of their regularly scheduled hours as of May 3, 2020
- At this time, we are not proposing a furlough or reduction of hours for staff in grades 7 and above

While these are not easy decisions, such actions enable the Library to maintain a relationship with and a connection to staff when possible. Because the situation is unprecedented, the future is unclear, and we want our Library to be focused on and prepared for an effective, successful recovery, furloughing staff provides us with the flexibility to bring staff back to

work quickly when the situation allows. Additionally, retaining staff members at reduced hour employment will ultimately save funds when reactivation of service is implemented. And, we have already reduced staff members' compensation for 2020 by 3% as a result of delaying a previously approved merit increase. We believe this temporary reduction in staffing levels will not impact the types and level of services the Library is currently providing to the community while our doors are temporarily closed to the public.

The CARES Act enables employees whose hours are being reduced to receive support that is above and beyond what has been available in the past. In Ohio, an employee whose hours are reduced below 50% of scheduled hours qualifies for prorated unemployment support from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), with all amounts and qualification status subject to ODJFS regulations. Additionally, the \$600 per week CARES benefit provided through July 31, 2020 for unemployed workers also applies to employees whose hours are reduced below 50%. The CARES support is not prorated, meaning workers with reduced hours would be eligible for the full \$600 CARES weekly benefit.

The CARES Act also provides for reimbursement to the Library for 50% of our related expenses for support of staff members receiving unemployment compensation. Since the Library is a reimbursing employer for unemployment (meaning we pay a portion of unemployment costs), this is an important consideration for any decisions related to reductions of hours. The following personnel budget reductions and changes will also be put in place as of May 3, 2020:

- A reduction of the Eva Jane Romaine Coombe Director's compensation by 15%
- A reduction of other Senior Leadership Team members' 2020 compensation, ranging from 5–10%
- Early retirement incentives for eligible staff that doubles the extended annual leave, if the decision to retire occurs between the time of this meeting and June 1, 2020

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### Unemployment Benefits Provided Through the State of Ohio

In Ohio, a furloughed employee can qualify for unemployment benefits. Additionally, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program (part of the CARES Act) authorizes unemployment benefits for employees who have had their hours reduced due to COVID-19. The benefits amount will be similar to traditional unemployment benefits, plus an additional \$600 per week provided through the federal CARES Act.

Currently, to be eligible for unemployment, as determined by the State of Ohio, which has authority over unemployment decisions, a person must meet the following criteria:

- have worked at least 20 weeks
- have had an average weekly wage of \$269 (before taxes or other deductions) during the base period from any number of employers

The weekly benefit is the amount the unemployed worker may be entitled to receive for one week of total unemployment. It is computed at one-half of the worker's average weekly wage during the base period. However, in no case may the weekly benefit amount exceed the State's annually established maximum levels (based on the number of allowable dependents claimed). The 2020 maximums for each dependency classification are:

#### Important Considerations for Furloughed 12-Hour per Week Staff Members

- Staff members will have continued access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Staff members who plan to return after the furlough must ensure their contact information is current in the Paycor system for the purposes of return to work communication.
- Staff members may not volunteer to perform Library work during the furlough. If unemployment is granted by the State, volunteering could jeopardize unemployment benefits.
- OPERS service credits will not accrue during the furlough.
- Holidays will not be compensated during the furlough.
- All Library Foundation, United Way, Community Shares and ArtsWave employee contributions will be suspended.
- If a staff member's wages are subject to a garnishment by court decision, the employee must inform the court of their furlough status and any unemployment benefits.

#### Important Considerations for Staff Members with Reduced Hours

- The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), not the Library, determines unemployment eligibility and the weekly benefit amount. All staff members who apply for unemployment and are approved for unemployment benefits will also be eligible to receive an additional \$600 per week from the federal CARES Act. This money is in addition to the State unemployment benefit and is available until July 31, 2020. State unemployment benefits have been extended to last beyond the normal 26 weeks to December 31, 2020. The State of Ohio has committed to retroactive payments if initial payments are delayed.
- The Library will continue to pay the full Employer benefit contribution for medical and dental premiums until at least July 31, 2020. Staff members will continue to be responsible for the Employee contribution amount for voluntary benefit premiums. Staff members who wish to change any voluntary benefit election are asked to contact Benefits Coordinator, Nichelle Smith.
- Staff members may revise or suspend Library Foundation, United Way, Community Shares or ArtsWave contributions by contacting Payroll.
- Staff members may continue to use their HSAs and FSAs. Staff members may submit changes to HSA contribution amounts in the Benefits Advisor portal and may contact Benefits Coordinator, Nichelle Smith, for changes to FSA contribution amounts.
- Should an employee's weekly pay not cover their benefit elections, Human Resources will be in contact with the employee to review options.
- Life insurance provided by the Library continues for eligible staff members.
- Staff members will earn service credit for OPERS during the period of reduced hours. Staff members earning at least \$673.08 per month will earn full-service credit and staff members earning less will earn partial service credit at a prorated

amount determined by OPERS.

- There will be no loss of previously accrued leave; however, staff members will not accrue new Sick Time and PTO while working reduced hours. Staff members may use Sick Time and PTO up to the allotted reduced hours for the week.
- Staff members and members of their household will have continued access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Staff members will be expected to work 25% of their scheduled weekly hours and will log these hours by clocking in and out on Paycor.
- Staff members may not volunteer to perform Library work during the reduced hours period. If unemployment is granted by the State, volunteering could jeopardize unemployment benefits.
- Holiday Pay will be prorated in alignment with the staff member's reduced weekly hours.
- If a staff member's wages are subject to a garnishment by court decision, the staff member must inform the court of reduced hours and unemployment benefits.

#### Determination of Positions Included or Excluded in Reduction of Hours

Positions that have core duties and responsibilities that are able to be performed at full capacity on approximately May 1, 2020, will not have a reduction of hours. Positions that have core duties and responsibilities that will not be able to be performed at full capacity on approximately May 1, 2020, will have a reduction of hours to reflect 25% of normal weekly scheduled hours. These position determinations will be reviewed every two weeks and will reflect any new information received, such as announcements from health or government officials, as well as the Library's ability to progress through recovery tiers.

#### Positions Included in Furlough (total of 106 staff members)

##### All 12 Hour per Week Grade 1 Positions

- Homework Help Aide
- Shelver

#### Positions Included in Reduction of Hours (total of 435 staff members)

Full and Part-Time Grade 1–6 Positions that have been identified as not having the ability to perform the full scope of their duties and responsibilities during this time

- Acquisitions Specialist
- Cataloging Assistant
- Copy Cataloger
- Digital Services Assistant
- EBM Technician
- Education and Homework Support Assistant - Part Time
- Events & Programs Assistant
- Events & Programs Specialist
- Fiscal Clerk
- Fiscal Specialist
- Floater
- Library Services Assistant (excludes VIC)
- Library Services Specialist (excludes VIC)

- Line Assistant Electronic Processing
- Line Assistant Physical Processing
- Material Selection & Acquisition Assistant
- Page
- Resource Sharing Assistant
- Resource Sharing Specialist
- Senior Conservation Assistant
- Senior Library Services Assistant (excludes VIC)
- Serials Assistant
- Shelver (20, 24 & 40 hours per week)
- Sorter
- Supply Clerk
- TechCenter-Makerspace Technician
- Temporary Line Assistant Electronic Processing
- Temporary Senior Library Services Assistant
- Truck Driver

Positions Excluded from Reduction of Hours (total of 45 staff members)

Full and Part-Time Grade 1–6 Positions with the ability to perform the core duties and responsibilities of their position during this time

- Education and Homework Support Assistant - Full Time
- Electrician
- Human Resources Assistant
- HVAC Technician
- Library Services Assistant (VIC)
- Library Services Specialist (VIC)
- Mail Clerk
- Maintenance Technician – Entry Level
- Maintenance Technician
- PC Support Specialist
- Public Safety Specialist
- Senior Library Services Assistant (VIC)
- TechCenter-Makerspace Senior Technician

Hours of Work for Staff Members Excluded in Reduction of Hours

All staff members who are excluded in the reduction of hours are expected to work their full hours of scheduled work each week. If scheduled hours are not worked for the week, accrued time off must be used, as Library Closed time will no longer be available. Staff members who have a need for leave that may meet the qualifications under the Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) should reach out to HR Manager, Michelle Matthews.

Budget Implications

The reduction in hours and furlough will result in a weekly savings for the Library of approximately \$167,800:

Current weekly wages, OPERS, and taxes	\$260,800
Reduced Hour Cost and Net Unemployment Cost	(\$93,000)
Net savings per week	\$167,800

The net unemployment cost includes a 50% reimbursement from the federal government of reimbursable unemployment benefits included in the CARES Act. In addition, the Eva Jane Romaine Coombe Director and the Senior Leadership Team are taking pay cuts ranging from 5–15% which will result in additional savings to the Library. These reductions, along with additional needed budget savings beyond these staff-focused reductions, will be reviewed by the Board at the May 19, 2020 Regular Meeting.

### REQUESTED ACTIONS

The following actions are requested regarding staffing

- Endorse and support the plan in this document presented by the Library's Senior Leadership Team that furloughs 106 staff members and reduces hours for 435 staff members as of May 3, 2020. The intention of the plan is to match staffing resources with anticipated demand during the phased reintroduction of Library services to the community, generate cost savings to meet the projected budget shortfall that is a result of significant loss in revenue, and minimize the financial impact on staff members as a result of benefits provided under the CARES Act.
- Temporarily establish the salary of Paula Brehm-Heeger, Eva Jane Romaine Coombe Director, at annual base salary of \$202,404.80 and, based on the fact that there are 27 pay periods in 2020, an annual rate of \$210,189.60, which reflects an approximate 15% decrease over her previous base salary.

The following actions are requested regarding extended annual leave increase

The disruptions to daily life and anticipated changes in the way we live and conduct business as a result of COVID-19 are challenging for all of us. In recognition of this and in consideration of longer served staff members and those considered high risk for contracting the virus, we anticipate some eligible staff members may consider retirement during this time. In most cases, the planning process for them may be quicker than anticipated. The Library currently grants Extended Annual Leave to retiring staff members (the Retirement Policy is attached).

Action we request:

- Approval to double the time typically granted under the Extended Annual Leave policy.
- Approval for part-time staff to be eligible for one week of pay for every 5 years of service (up to a maximum of 4 weeks of pay) at their current hourly rate and their current scheduled weekly hours.
- To qualify for the above, staff must be eligible to retire through OPERS and submit their retirement notice between April 27 and June 1, 2020, with a retirement date no later than September 30, 2020.

Ms. LaMacchia motioned to approve report including endorsing plan, set EJRC salary, and retirement incentive.



Mr. Hendon seconded.

Voting for the motion: Ms. Allen, Ms. Clemons, Mr. Hendon, Ms. Kohlen, Mrs. LaMacchia, and Ms. Redden... 6 ayes. The motion carried. **(08-2020)**.

The Special Meeting was then adjourned.

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President

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Attest: Secretary