

Regular meeting
Bedford Public Library System Board of Trustees
September 5, 2023
Stewartsville Library, meeting room
(corrected)

Members present: Debra Bahouth, Randy Cox, Hope Cupit, Olivia Madison, Pamela Palmer, Tracey Reichard, Anna Stevens

Members not present:

Staff present: Jenny Novalis, Library Director; Julie Wyatt, Technology Librarian

Mrs. Palmer called the meeting to order at 5:07pm. Mrs. Cupit motioned to approve the agenda, Mrs. Bahouth seconded, all agreed.

Mrs. Palmer asked if there were any changes or additions to the minutes from the previous meeting. There was one change in spelling for a word in the 5th paragraph and the minutes were accepted, as amended.

No public comments

Deborah Ledbetter had been the manager at the Stewartsville Library for the past 2 years and she was responsible for many, if not all, of the recent improvements at this branch. She resigned last month to pursue a career in benefits administration and the Library has hired a new manager, Kelli Hyre, to take over but she has not started employment here yet. Mrs. Novalis provided a brief update on the recent programming efforts at the Stewartsville Library and a stats summary showing increases in several key benchmark data points from 2022 to 2023. She also discussed some targeted improvements to the collection, including in the large print section.

Mrs. Wyatt presented an annual report, highlighting several IT projects completed over the past year. She also provided updates on the IT department's efforts to improve patron services by updating much of the A/V equipment in the meeting areas, improving the range of the wireless networks, implementing a new library app, upgrading patron computers and self-checkout equipment. Other improvements included improving staff workflow for routine functions such as stats reporting, and recordkeeping. Also the IT staff have been focusing on network security, providing adequate power backups for key equipment and replacing end-of-life equipment.

The Board discussed the library's plans for the 4th quarter book/media displays. Mrs. Novalis distributed the display policy for review and a list of the planned displays through December. Of particular note are several holiday themed and back to school themed displays, as well as library card signup month and Constitution Week. A discussion regarding the upcoming national banned books week ensued, which led to discussions about historically challenged books, current challenges in the news and

how the BPLS purchases books, and accepts donations. For the few small displays staff may put up for this week, it was decided that the intent of banned books week can be portrayed in the more general context of preserving first amendment rights, and the freedom to read, rather than the negative and potentially inflammatory sounding phrase, 'banned books week'. Further discussions focused on the need for the library to provide all viewpoints and not to promote one over the other, and remain neutral. There was also discussion on how the library can help parents to make their own choices when selecting books. Discussions regarding how the library can maintain neutrality when the many presidential candidate books get released later this year and next year also ensued.

Mrs. Novalis reported that after further discussion with Bedford County finance staff regarding the financial position of the library at the end of FY23, it was suggested that most of the E-rate funding from June would be better kept in the unassigned cash reserves balance. Mrs. Novalis plans more discussions with Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Greenway to follow the County's lead in using the LGIP accounts to maximize the return on these funds. In the meantime, Mrs. Novalis suggested moving just what was needed to cover the FY24 category 2 E-rate project equipment costs into the IT fund. Mrs. Palmer asked for a motion to move \$6,957 of these E-rate funds into the IT fund. There was no further discussion. Mrs. Reichard motioned to accept the transfer, Mrs. Bahouth seconded, all agreed. The motion passed.

The end of August 2023 expense and income reports were distributed for discussion. The library is currently at 17.8% expended. Mrs. Novalis noted a few budget lines that bear watching to see if either savings can be found to avoid being overspent, or if additional funds may need to be allocated due to rising custodial and building costs. The Board decided to appoint two members to the standing committee for finance, per the library's bylaws. Those members being appointed were Debbie Bahouth and Hope Cupit. Mrs. Novalis also noted that the VA legislature finally worked out an approved budget and it has been finalized. The Senate had recommended a \$5 million increase to public libraries state aid package; the House had recommended a \$2 million increase and they were able to meet in the middle with a final increase of \$3.6 million to be added to the current allocation and then split among all public libraries in VA. The Library of VA has indicated they are working up the new allocations based on the state aid formula in the VA Code and this increase should take effect with the second quarterly state aid distributions. Mrs. Palmer asked for a motion to accept the director's report. Mrs. Cupit motioned, Mrs. Stevens seconded, all agreed.

Board Member Comments:

Mrs. Cupit thanked the staff for all the great programming that the library is doing. She also thanked those that came out to Sercap's meeting on broadband availability and accessibility last month.

No new business

Mrs. Palmer asked for a motion to adjourn. Mrs. Bahouth motioned to adjourn, Mrs. Cupit seconded, all agree. The meeting adjourned at 6:35pm

