

## **LIBRARY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

*Thursday, September 19, 2013, 5:15 pm, Local History Room, Fletcher Free Library*

*In attendance: Peg Boyle Single, Ed Adrian, Peter Ireland, Jill Krowinski, Glenn McRae, Jessica Nordhaus, Ellen MacLellan, Mary Ellen Manock, Kate Bouton, Ruby Simon.*

### **1. Agenda & Notice of Warning**

- The agenda was reviewed and approved.
- There was a brief discussion of the (attached) guidelines for effective meetings.

### **2. Approval of (June) Minutes**

- The minutes the last meeting, June 20, 2013, were approved.

### **3. Public Comment**

- no members of the public were present.

### **4. Welcoming New Members and Introductions**

- New members Glenn McRae, Jessica Nordhaus, Ellen MacLellan, & Kate Bouton were welcomed. Peg is assembling bios from each commissioner and these will be circulated and eventually posted on the web.

### **5. Election of Officers**

- Chair: Peg Boyle Single.
- Vice-Chair: Ed Adrian.
- Clerk: - tbd as there were no nominations.
- It was decided that note-taking for commission meetings would be rotated.

### **6. Vote on Changing Meeting Night to Mondays**

- Approved. The Commission will meet on the 3rd Monday of the month. Peg will submit a request to the CAO asking about whether anything else is required of us to change our meetings to Monday nights, and make sure the change is reflected on the City's web site.

### **7. Vote on Changing Format to Reflect "A Simple Rule to Eliminate Useless Meetings" and Less Reporting, and More Focus on Committees**

- It as agree to use the guidelines in "A Simple Rule to Eliminate Useless Meetings" (attached) to help format and run future meetings. The meetings would focus more on discussion, strategy and decision making. Verbal reporting would be kept to a minimum with reporters covering the highlights and time being mostly devoted to questions or discussion. Reports (Director, Staff, Friends, Committees) would be sent in advance with the agenda. Time would be offered at the beginning of the meeting for everyone to review reports before the meeting opened. The idea of meeting less and creating space for Committees to meet more was also discussed.

### **8. Selection of Committee Assignments**

- The current committee structure includes: Development; Collections Marketing/Advertising); Board Development (Diversity); With Ad-hoc committees: Diversity; Marketing/Advertising; Programs.

- There was discussion on the role and charge of each committee. With only 10 members, populating more than three committees did not seem realistic. The thinking on Marketing was assigned for now to Development; the charge for Strategic Planning and Diversity were encompassed in Board Development; the charge to the Collections Committee was expanded to include all the library's physical assets, including the building. The Committees will meet and discuss their charge and bring their ideas back to the Commission. Non-commissioners could be recruited to serve on the committees to attract additional skills and knowledge. Per the by-laws, the committees have to meet six times per year. The Strategic Planning process will help define how to best organize the Commission's work through committees and other means.
- New Committee Assignments:
  - ⇒ Development
    1. Jill Krowinski (chair)
    2. Ed Adrian
    3. Selene Colburn
  - ⇒ Board Dev/Recruitment and Strategic Planning
    1. Glenn McRae (chair)
    2. Jessica Nordhaus
    3. Ellen MacLellan
    4. Peg Boyle Single
  - ⇒ Collection/Physical Assets
    1. Mary Ellen Manock (chair) Peter Ireland
    2. Kate Bouton

## **9. Recommendations for Final Trustee Position**

- There is an open Trustees position to be filled. Discussion surfaced the need for an experienced board member with Strategic Planning, Development and Networking skills as key attributes to be sought.

## **10. Director's Comments (See attached Report)**

- Met with the Board of finance to confirm budget, since some lines were left out of the final budget approved (e.g., funding for new development position). Secured but needs Council approval.
- Serious concerns about deferred maintenance of the building; lack of clarity about budget (capital or operating) for significant repairs and upgrades. Building issues tour to be organized for the Commission.

## **11. Staff Commissioner's Comments (See attached Report)**

- Public seems generally happy with new hours.

## **12. Committee Comments**

- Committees have not been active.

## **13. Friends of the Library Comments (See Attached Report)**

- Looking still to organize a community meet and greet for Rubi.
- Ongoing books sales going steady.
- Donated \$1000 to Burlington Book Festival and \$2400 to allow staff to attend ALA.

## **14. Actions to be Taken**

- Confirm switch to Monday night meetings.
- Confirm committee members and chairs and get meetings scheduled.
- Seek out a nomination for Clerk.
- Trustees to review appointment of a new member and consult with Peg and Rubi.

## **15. 15. Adjournment**

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### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. A Simple Rule to Eliminate Useless Meetings
  2. Director's Report
  3. Friends Report
- (No Staff Report – welcomed new staff commissioner )

#### **Attachment 1: A Simple Rule to Eliminate Useless Meetings**

Ask your team to identify their biggest productivity killer and inevitably two issues will rise to the top of the list: managing their inboxes and their meeting schedules. I'll tackle the former in a future post. For now, I'd like to focus on increasing the value of meetings by sharing a practice our team has implemented to great effect.

**At LinkedIn, we have essentially eliminated the presentation.** In lieu of that, we ask that materials that would typically have been presented during a meeting be sent out to participants at least 24 hours in advance so people can familiarize themselves with the content.

Bear in mind: Just because the material has been sent doesn't mean it will be read. Taking a page out of Jeff Bezo's book, we begin each meeting by providing attendees roughly 5-10 minutes to read through the deck. If people have already read it, this gives them an opportunity to refresh their memory, identify areas they'd like to go deeper on, or just catch up on email.

If the idea of kicking off a meeting with up to 10 minutes of silence strikes you as odd, you're not alone. The first time I read about this practice it immediately conjured up images of a library or study hall, two of the last forums I would equate with meeting productivity. However, after the first few times you try it, not only won't it be awkward -- it will be welcome. This is particularly true when meetings end early with participants agreeing it was time well spent.

Once folks have completed the reading, it's time to open it up for discussion. *There is no presentation.* It's important to stay vigilant on this point as most people who prepared the materials will reflexively begin presenting. If you are concerned about appearing insensitive by not allowing individuals who worked hard on the materials to have their moment, constructively remind the group this is a new practice that is being applied to the entire company and will benefit all meeting attendees, including the artist formerly known as The Presenter.

With the presentation eliminated, the meeting can now be exclusively focused on generating a valuable discourse: Providing shared context, diving deeper on particularly cogent data and insights, and perhaps most importantly, having a meaningful debate.

If the material has been well thought out and simply and intuitively articulated, chances are the need for clarifying questions will be kept to a minimum. In these situations, you may be pleasantly surprised to see a meeting that had been scheduled for an hour is actually over after 20-30 minutes.

Of course, even the best prepared material may reach a highly contentious recommendation or conclusion. However, the good news is meeting attendees will now be able to dig into the subject matter and share their real opinions rather than waste time listening to an endless re-hashing of points they're already familiar with, or worse still find irrelevant or redundant.

In addition to eliminating presentations in favor of discussions, the following are a few additional practices I've learned along the way when it comes to running effective meetings:

**1. Define the objective of the meeting.** Asking one simple question at the onset of the meeting, "What is the objective of this meeting," can prove invaluable in terms of ensuring everyone is on the same page and focused on keeping the meeting on point, rather than allowing it to devolve down endless ratholes unrelated to the matter at hand. I've seen some companies go as far as including the meeting objective on the cover sheet of the materials.

**2. Identify who is driving.** Each meeting needs one person behind the wheel. More than one driver and it's going to be prohibitively difficult to keep the car on the road. The primary role of this point person is to ensure the conversation remains relevant, that no one person ends up dominating the discussion, and that adjunct discussions that arise during the course of the meeting are taken offline.

**3. Take the time to define semantics (and first principles).** It never ceases to amaze me how often meetings go off the rails by virtue of semantic differences. Picture a United Nations General Assembly gathering without the real-time translation headphones and you'll have the right visual. Words have power, and as such, it's worth investing time upfront to ensure everyone is on the same page in terms of what certain keywords, phrases, and concepts mean to the various constituencies around the table.

**4. Assign someone to take notes.** This should not be the equivalent of a court stenographer documenting every word uttered, but rather someone who is well versed in the meeting's objectives and who has a clear understanding of context that can capture only the most salient points. This not only avoids the classic Rashomon effect -- multiple people recalling one event in multiple ways -- but also creates a plan of record for what was discussed and agreed to. This can also be particularly valuable for invitees who weren't able to make the meeting.

**5. Summarize key action items, deliverables, and points of accountability.** Don't end the meeting without summarizing key conclusions, action items, and points of accountability for delivering on next steps. This summary is usually the first thing to suffer if the meeting has run long and people start running off to their next scheduled event. However, it's arguably the single most important thing you'll do at the meeting (and is ostensibly the reason for the meeting to begin with). Have the discipline to ensure attendees sit tight and remain focused while next steps are being discussed and agreed to.

**6. Ask what you can do better.** I like to gather feedback at the end of meetings I'm responsible for (particularly if it's a new standing meeting) by asking whether or not the attendees found it valuable and what we can do to improve it in the future. There is no better way to ensure the meeting is necessary. If it's not, either change the objective and/or format, or take it off the calendar.

## **Attachment 2: Fletcher Free Library Director's Report - Operating/Programs/Projects**

- The Fletcher Free Library recently installed video conferencing equipment from a Google Grant that was given to the Dept. of Libraries. Video conferencing services are available to the public. For now all inquiries for use should go directly to Robert Coleburn. Press coverage included Demo/press conference with the Mayor, NECN, Burlington Free Press, Charlie & Ernie radio, and VPR.
- The library director recently did a security walk through of the building with Chief Schirling and discussed new ways of managing and deterring various security issues. He found areas that the library could make minimal changes to help deter some of the inappropriate behavior.
- The library has begun its new schedule of hours as of September 3rd. The library has had a great response to the extra evening. Staff is working on incorporating new programming and most of our spaces are booked through the winter.
- We are currently reviewing our ILS contract and looking at other potential products. Robert Coleburn, Christine Webb, and the library director met with Syrsi Dynix about the library's current contract as well as their new upgrade coming up in FY15. We will be scheduling a demo within the next couple of months at a staff meeting. We will also be looking at open source models at other libraries and compare cost and services. A group of staff is scheduled to visit the Hanover library to review their current model.
- The library has made the decision to withdraw from the AmeriCorps "We All Belong Program" due to cost and not enough staffing available to meet the programs extensive training requirements. The library has been compensating various core services for several years with the AmeriCorps positions. The library staff is currently evaluating staffing structures and funds to find the best options to make up for the gap in support.
- The library director has been working with the Professional librarian staff to review current roles and responsibilities particularly after the dissolvent of the co-directorship model and a review of relevancy of current service and programs. The new staff roles and responsibilities are as follows: Robert Coleburn- Technology librarian, Robert Resnik-Outreach librarian & Marketing, Barbara Shatara- Programming/Special events & Marketing, Christine Webb-Collection development librarian. All librarians are also still responsible for covering the reference desk.
- The library has reinstated the energy efficiency grant with BED and CxAssociates that will be monitoring the new utilities monitoring system that was installed at the end of FY 12. The grant/Contract is only for one year.
- The library is having critical building issues particularly in the South side of the building. The library Director is working with CIP to address some of the concerns. The Director will be requesting board to take a tour of the damages.
- The library is partnering with "Code for BTV" to coordinate a Hackathon at the library. This event will take place at the end of October and will be coordinated as a supporting program of the U.S. Ignite initiative. Save-the-date invites are being created and will be sent out shortly.

### **Attachment 3: FRIENDS REPORTS – LIBRARY BOARD: 7/17/13 & 9/16/13**

Ellen MacLellan

#### **FRIENDS REPORT: 7/17/13**

##### **BOOK SALES:**

- June “Super Summer Sale” netted about \$1000.
- July Book Sale scheduled for 7/27 and 7/28.

**BOOK STALL:** Sales for June were slightly over \$1200.

##### **FRIENDS CONTRIBUTIONS:**

\$1000 in support of Burlington Book Festival

\$2400 for Barbara Shatará’s attendance at the ALA Conference.

**PROGRAMS:** Decision made to provide support for and collaborate with the Library’s programming efforts instead of offering a separate program series.

**COMMUNITY MEET AND GREET:** Planning underway to host this event for Rubi in the fall.

#### **FRIENDS REPORT: 9/16/13**

**BOOK SALE:** Annual Fall Sale held 9/11 – 9/15. “Donors’ Night” hosted 9/9.

#### **FRIENDS REPORT – 10/21/13**

**BOOK SALE:** September Book Sale netted nearly \$5400. A committee has been formed to look at the future of book sales. Donations of books remain steady but purchases and revenues have been declining.

Remaining books from this sale will be shipped to **Better World Books** a nonprofit organization which accepts donations of books from all over the country and arranges for sales and redistribution to support literacy efforts throughout the world.

**Meet and Greet Event:** Current plans are for the soon to be hired development person to plan this event with the assistance and support of the FRIENDS.