



Allendale Township Library Board
Special Meeting Agenda
February 15, 2018

Members Present: Elaine Ebeling, Leigh Rupinski, Margaret Wheeler, Barb VanderVeen, Lenore Cook, Patti Walcott

Members Absent: Carol Scholten, Lenore Cook

Also Present: Bethany Nettleton (Director), Adam Elenbaas (Supervisor)

Members of the Public Present: Sari Emmet, Sara Buist, Candi Kurmas, Joel Van Wyngarden, Kathy Zylstra, Dale Zylstra, Carrie Lipinski, Amber Ward, Rob Bristow, Gary Tidd, Christie Tidd

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes: December 21, 2017

- Approved by Margaret, Seconded by Barb

3. Public Comments

- Comment 1: Commentator has concerns about the direction of the library with the new director. Notes a change in the atmosphere and style of the library. The atmosphere was very collaborative under Rob, with a focus on the public. His wife works at the library and is very committed (they have rearranged vacations and other plans for her work) and she really loves it. However, the last few months have been very stressful. Feels his wife's spark is gone due to harsh treatment by the director to different employees. Children's librarian has quit. Rob had a team leadership style, now there is "micromanaging". Nasty texts have been sent to his Wife in the evening. Feels the library "starting to unravel". Programs aren't being posted properly "except when they involve her friends from Fruitport". "Staff here are very unhappy"
- Comment 2: Had the model collection in the foyer. All had been moved out without notification; He stopped in to talk to Beth and felt satisfied with her explanation. He came back to get his models later and they had been damaged and destroyed, missing pieces (not loose, but gone). Removed his remaining three himself prior to the meeting.
 - Bethany commented that this was not true. She commented that she knew they belonged to him and that she changes the display out for the season.
 - Commentator replied that she could have asked me to come and get them. Stated: "I feel I've been taken advantage of and abused on"

- Comment 3: Question regarding a change in policy, if the schools are closed, the library is closed. If the roads clear in the afternoon, she would bring kids to the library in the afternoon. Not sure what the connection is between the school and library. Rest of the township offices are open.
- Comment 4: The closing – it was something the kids looked forward to – movies were shown on days the school closed. Kids really looked forward to going on the snow days, “it came as quite a surprise to us” to see it closed now.
- Comment 5: Concerned about Brittany’s (children’s librarian) leaving and more changes coming. Been bringing children since they were babies. “If the right person doesn’t come in, then they are going to lose that ownership – they felt like the library was a place they could come” and participate. If the people are not as visible, then kids will not feel as if they want to be here.
- Comment 6: “This is a magical place for kids...This is a place that they look forward to”. All 3 kids are elated to visit the library. A lot of concern from adults in this community who have kids who have grown up or are growing up in this building. They are concerned that the direction of the library, the change in the marketing on Facebook, the change in the overall atmosphere “and the way things feel inside this building”. “That change is scary”. Rob was great, and no one is ever going to be Rob, but “there’s also this place where you start to get into a danger zone” – where it “becomes toxic, and when it becomes toxic that’s dangerous” and that spurs employee dissatisfaction. These things are indicative that library needs to be looked at more closely. We want this place protected as a “magical place” for kids. “This kind of stuff doesn’t happen because it’s not Rob”.
 - Side comment of support: Kids pick up on that tension.
- Comment 7: This isn’t all the director or children’s librarian – kids don’t even know who’s position is what. But everyone worked so well together. It wasn’t obvious who was who, they were all part of a team. When our kids are happy, we’re happy, and when our kids aren’t happy we don’t bring them either.
- Comment 8: Provided a graphic of the difference between a boss and a leader to illustrate that Rob provided leadership, while Bethany is being a boss.
- Response from Elaine, Board Chair: Thank you for coming and giving us the perspective of the public.
- Response from Adam, Township Supervisor: Potential to get stuff done – new Board leadership and members who want to get stuff done.
 - Little bit of a bumpy start
 - Adam has been very involved; has talked with employees, Kim and Brittany

- Concerns brought up today are not unheard and are things the Township is working on
- Will be available after the meeting to talk about any concerns
- Library Closure concern: 1st closure, Beth and Adam had 1st interaction about what to do in the case of a snow day – initial call was to call a snow day because not all staff from Allendale; heard different perspectives afterwards and felt they needed to course correct; for the following snow days, they went back to being open; Original mentality was if the schools are closed, they didn't want to encourage people to be on the road; is still a Township department; been talking at the Board level about how to handle that with employees who come from a distance
- There is a policy about this in the Library Policy Manual – closure at Director's discretion, not necessarily in conjunction with the schools
- Did have to close the library when the lines were cut earlier in the year
- Response from Bethany:
 - Lives in Kentwood
 - Hoping to move once kids' graduate
 - Tied closure to the schools because she "needed a barometer"
 - Talked to Superintendent of the Schools to see why school were closing
 - Consulted with Adam
 - Bottom line: staff needs to be safe, everyone else needs to be safe
 - Power line cut has effected everything in the library and the effect is ongoing
 - Going through growing pains in the staff
 - Trying to gather information, not trying to be a dictator
 - Have had applications for the children's librarian already
 - Children's librarian from Fruitport is covering during Brittany's vacation and when she moves on to new job at Rob Bristow's library
- Public Comment: Schools close because buses cannot make it through the snow

4. Directors Report

- Circulation activity: 19,572 items in January
- 10,320 patrons in January
- Concentrating on hiring a new children's librarian
 - Brittany's last day is the 23rd
 - Job posted for 30 days
- New library board member hiring after that
 - Apply through the township
 - Current Board will have input on who the next library board member will be
 - New HR coordinator in the township, so rerouting some of the hiring process
- Can we get a report comparing this month with last month – compare previous quarter to the same quarter last year
- Possibility of the Library moving to the fire station building if we build a new fire station

- New Master Plan for the Township – need to do something with the fire station and library (beginning phases of discussion)
- Required to update Master Plan every 5 years
- Given growth of Allendale, need to expand or build a new fire station soon (multi-year process)
- Need more space for the library
 - Library serves as a center for the community
- Community-level discussion for Master Plan and for the fire station
- No substitute to attend Lakeland Coop. meeting if Director cannot attend (used to be Brittany)
- Training for the Board through Lakeland Coop.
- Does the Library Advisory Board have a legal liability
 - Response from Adam: Need to meet the Open Meetings Act
 - Library Director calls and cancels a meeting, and is responsible to publish and notice properly
 - Written policy for how to handle Public Comment – time limit, if we require name and address, public comment addressed to Chairman or back-and-forth; if you have back-and-forth response to the Public during that time
 - Barb is the Township Board representative who votes on the Library Advisory Board as well
 - Library Advisory Board is an extension of the Board of Trustees
 - Updates to the bylaws are sent to the Township Board to ensure continuity and consistency between all boards
 - Attorney for the Township would double-check the Bylaws
- We do not have a Library Mission Statement
- Active Shooter Policies at the Library
 - Allendale’s police sergeant is one of the trainers for Ottawa County
 - Had a training for township hall staff
 - Will do a training with library and public utilities service
 - Ottawa County offers trainings from time to time for the public too – can check their website for more information

5. Old Business

- New server possibility from last meeting update: no new server, current server is still “limping along”
 - New server has to be approved by the township, will have to amend the budget
 - Should be replaced in the next couple months
 - Self-checkout is working, but there is a wire connection that isn’t working (overall not working at 100%)
- Revising the budget
 - Not been approved yet
 - New budget proposal still in process
- Didter Grant received

- Nothing has been done yet
- Been approached about new screen and new projector for the movies in the park
- Mr. Didter may supply more funds for the screen/projector for outdoors
- New chairs for the staff will not happen
- New sign on Lake Michigan Drive pointing to the Library
 - That is the State of Michigan decision
 - Adam will have more of an update later
 - Some local control as well
- Director coming up on the 90 day review
 - Adam and Elaine ask the Board to write a brief report, submit to Elaine
 - Elaine will send a compilation report to Adam
 - Because the Advisory Board does not have consistent contact and cannot evaluate day-to-day, the Board cannot use a typical scale evaluation. Board review will include perspectives, comments, and opinions.
 - Board will submit to Elaine by February 20th and Elaine will submit to Adam by the 22nd

5. New Business

- Township Board and Library Board sites have no ways to contact the Board members
 - Clickable links on the names to send an email
 - No telephone numbers
- Dates on the Township site are not accurate → Meeting dates should be: 3/1, 6/21, 9/20
- Board had previously discussed meeting more frequently
- Director has to call a meeting
 - Possibility to add to By-laws that 3 Board members could call
 - Would need agenda posted
 - Has to have 18 hr+ notice
- Bethany has given a proposed by-laws combining the 2 in the Director's Report Packet
- Barb report: Service animals
 - State law has changed now allowing service animals that come in the form of miniature horses and dogs
 - Policy in the Policy Manual will be revised
 - Manual was revised in 16-17

a. Library Board Bylaws

- Current by-laws from the 80s or 90s (undated, but written on typewriter)
- Time to revise and update
- Margaret has taken the lead on compiling the information about Board by-laws
 - Margaret has hands-out including a relative document from Texas providing information on advisory boards in general
 - Margaret has also written a draft proposal
- Only 3 library boards in our district have advisory board (vs governing boards)

- Margaret talked to Hudsonville and Zeeland Public Libraries
- 4 categories pretty typical: Mission statement of the Board, Membership, Officers, Meetings (our template is pretty typical)
- Margaret would like to propose a meeting to just work on the by-laws. An open meeting with an agenda solely of working on the by-laws.
- Draft, Proposed, and Old By-laws
 - Covering wording issues
 - Purpose section: 1st statement of the Proposed; Draft sections
 - Change “each month” to “at each meeting”
 - Most Advisory Boards function to advise and work with the Director
 - Board serves as the eyes and ears for the Director to the Community
 - DRAFT: “be an active part” change to “representation in the interview process”
 - DRAFT: Township hires not Director
 - DRAFT: strike the Lakeland Coop portion

Final Statement Proposed after this Meeting for the “Purpose” section of the By-laws:
 “The library board has been formed at the request of the Allendale charter township board to function in an advisory capacity. The Board will provide guidance to the library director and will provide a forum to discuss opportunities, challenges, and next steps. The Library Director will present a library report at each meeting consisting of the follow: Usage (books, audio/video, etc.), financial report (including budget updates, grants, gifts, etc.), programming (calendar, updates).

The Board will be consulted by the Director prior to the hiring of new Board members and changes in library policies and programming. In the event a new Director is needed the Library Board will be consulted and have representation in the interview process.”

- Proceed from March meeting with how far we can get through and see if extra meeting(s) will be necessary
- Decision to table further by-laws discussion until the next meeting, March 1

6. Public Comment

Comment 1: Researched what the Library Board should be about. Advisory Board is in the State of Michigan Constitution; Michigan Library Board Handbook (2017) is also a good resource and talks about Board’s responsibilities and responsibilities of oversight of the Director. Barb VanderVeen cannot be a voting member of the Library Board because she is part of the Township Board – it would be illegal.

Comment from Barb: Township Board had just passed a resolution to allow Barb to vote, so that will need to be fixed.

Comment from Margaret: It would have been nice to know about that kind of vote going on at the Township level. Is there a way to alert us?

Comment 2: Would like to see time in Barb's agenda to give updates to the Library Board about what goes on at the Township level

Response from Margaret: We could include a "Township Board Update" from Barb
Comment 2 continued: Everyone is always trying to do their best – for the Township, for the Library, but the checks and balances and due diligence would benefit everybody

Comment 2 continued: For contact information – do not use actual email address; work in conjunction with the Township and let a contact form be used. Have a separate email account from the Township. Email should be accessible by more than 1 person.

Response from Adam: No one can reply all! That is a violation of the Open Meetings Act

Comment 3: If you send emails to the Board through the Director, that gives Director power over the Board to censor messages. The messages need to go through the Chairperson.

Discussion:

- Beth will talk to BizStream about possibilities for a contact form
- Generic gmail is NOT professional looking
- Can use own domain name to lend legitimacy to what we're doing here
- Adam will follow up with the Township IT group about setting up a Library Board Township email account (start with Chair having access)

Re: Letter that came privately to the Library Board

- Letter lets us know what the public thinks
- We should know how community members feel

7. Adjournment

- Chair moves to adjourn, Barb supports
- Next meeting: March 1, 2018