

FINAL/APPROVED
**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF COMMERCE
LIBRARY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, September 24, 2008
2869 N. Pontiac Trail
Commerce Township, Michigan 48390**

CALL TO ORDER: Barbara Garbutt, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Barbara Garbutt, Chairperson
Jason Pernick, Vice Chairperson
Carol Keeler, Secretary
Ann Marie Kelley
Rick Sovel
Betsy LaFond
Judy Sternberg

Also present: Eric Suess
Lakeland High School Students:
Amber Noland Justin Walker
Jesse Hoisington Lauren Stark
Elizabeth Pauly Emily Jump
Kristian Montgomery Devany Spicer
Blair Sienkiewicz Caitlin Deska
Erin Earley Gabrielle Press
Rachel Hammer Allison Reber
Sarah Friend Skylar Ehlert

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Keeler, supported by LaFond, to approve the Library Board Agenda with the following corrections:

Mr. Seuss: Add New Business, 8 b. Benefits
Ms. LaFond: Add Old Business, 7 f. Privacy Policy
Ms. Kelley: Add New Business, 8 c. Children's Programming

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by LaFond, supported by Kelley, to approve the minutes for the Library Advisory Board Meeting of August 27, 2008, with the following corrections:

Page 2, 2nd bullet, correction to typo “34,000 items *went* out in July”

Page 3, 9th bullet, change “donations” to “*sales*”

Page 3, 14th bullet, confirmed that \$1800 in Flash Drives is correct (Yes.)

Page 3, Ms. Keeler discussed adding the number of members. Mr. Suess stated that this is not really a correction but can be a future addition.

Page 4, Ms. LaFond discussed fines under a nickel. Mr. Suess confirmed that figure.

Page 4, Discussion of 900 blocked members due to fines or losses. (Confirmed)

Page 5, Motion at bottom of page, correct to read as “Mr. Sovel had *abstained* his vote.”

Page 6, Motion correction to read as “travel for Ms. *Norton*”.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

CORRESPONDENCE

None

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Committee reviewed the current financial report.

Ms. Kelley inquired about the addition of the 1st column, Year-to-date for 2007. This is handy for comparison to the 2008 figures.

Mr. Suess discussed removal of the figure for State Aid. Mr. Sovel explained that this would be an adjustment made in December, or it may remain, but cannot be removed.

Ms. Kelley discussed fine revenues. Mr. Suess explained that these are derived from county fines for traffic tickets, etc. and are given to libraries, but it is hard to tell the formula per capita. Ms. Garbutt explained that the courts receive their portion of the fines prior to the libraries.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Suess discussed the following:

- Circulation of materials exceeded 30,000 again. August was 30,712.

- The record for circulation was 34,000 in July and it continues to be really high! This is similar to Royal Oak and Waterford which are larger libraries, so it is doing really well.
- Interviews of candidates approved by the Township and recommended by this Board have been conducted and selections have been made to fill 3 positions; Jonathan Barth, Dustin Brown and José Argandoña. There were so many excellent, qualified applicants that the final decisions were difficult to make. Introductions will be made at the next Township Board meeting.
- The door count was at 33.9 patrons per hour, which is consistent with past figures.
- The children's programs are underway and are very well attended. It is interesting to watch the children grow and continue through each of the programs.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Friends of the Library

Ms. Garbutt discussed the following:

- Thanks to everyone for their help with the newsletter.
- Another book sale will be held in November. Help is needed at the sale for day and evening shifts. They are also looking for inexpensive green book bags and additional donations of used books to be sold at the book sale.

b. Website

Ms. Keeler presented a report of the Patron Website Committee Comments for review, and provided the following commentary:

- There were 3 members that performed the final review of the site and they sent the report this morning.
- I reviewed it briefly and it appears to be very detailed in terms of the graphics, topics, drop-down menus, etc. It was emailed to Vanessa Precious.
- Please take time to review their suggestions in relation to the site. Next month we can have a more detailed conversation and then send the review committee our reaction.

All members were in agreement that the report appeared thorough and agreed that the item should be added to the next agenda.

c. Library Furniture

- Future design and expansion of the Library still needs to be considered and further discussed before a final recommendation can be made.

d. Library Fines

Mr. Suess presented the reports to the Committee and discussed the following:

- The excessive number of fines need to be addressed. We are inclined to work with Unique Management, located in Indiana. Most libraries use this firm for debt collection. They charge \$8.95 per record and they invoice once per month. We choose the parameters, and the standard is to pursue those accounts that are in excess of \$25.
- Unique Management guarantees that they will never charge more than they take in, so it would at least result in a break-even situation. And, chances are that you would recoup considerably more.
- They offer a “gentle nudge” type program and they have a simple step-by-step process to encourage patrons to return materials. They also offer the first 90 days as a free trial, during which they clean up the database and take action. Afterward, the situation may become much more manageable, and there is no obligation to continue the service after the free trial period ends.

Open discussion ensued debating the positives and negatives of utilizing a debt collection service, including the benefits of the free trial, the costs associated with the service after the free trial, and the manner of communication between the agency and the patrons.

Unique Management would work with the Library to customize their correspondence. It would appear on Library letterhead. They also pride themselves upon their gentle approach and phone etiquette.

Low, medium and high tolerance levels were also addressed in relation to the level at which a patron becomes blocked entirely from borrowing materials. It is currently at \$15 and the consensus was that most members are comfortable with this figure.

Currently there is no notification system or collection effort in place to inform patrons of their fines and overdue fees. The self-checkout also presents an issue as no one is there to notify them of their balance due. It was discussed that a notice could be displayed at the self-checkout which informs them of their account status. It could also be printed on their receipt.

Mr. Sovel explained that the Township Board is not pleased with the situation and they are seeking suggestions from the Library Board so that action can be taken. They need direction as to how to handle the matter.

Ms. Garbutt stated that the 90 day free trial seems worthwhile, but questioned how collections would be approached afterwards.

Mr. Suess stated that everyone using the Unique Management service has reported strong support for the system.

Ms. Sternberg agreed that enforcement is needed and she stated that she has a hard time seeing any downside to the free trial.

Mr. Sovel also agreed that something needs to be done, and currently nothing is being sent out.

Mr. Suess clarified that patrons are notified if their book is missing by email or mail, but beyond that, no other notices are sent.

Mr. Pernick speculated that the only people that respond to those notices are the responsible ones who would come in and take care of the matter. He also questioned how many people are in the target standard of \$25 or more.

Mr. Suess stated that there is about a 60-70% response rate with Unique Management.

Ms. Kelly added that there are 905 members who currently owe \$15 or more.

Ms. Keeler commented that after the trial, there would typically be about 35-40 people per month to contact. That may be able to be handled by the staff.

Discussion continued, including postage costs, PR concerns, and disadvantages of assigning the task to personnel. Some patrons may not be aware that they owe money. Others may know they have an overdue book, but are unaware of the actual amount of fines that have accrued.

MOTION by Keeler, supported by Garbutt, to receive and review, in detail, the information from Unique Management, including a sample letter that would be submitted to patrons for notification purposes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Further discussion continued on the topic following the motion.

Mr. Pernick discussed a similar process/service utilized by the Prosecutor's Office to resolve debts and collect on bad checks.

Ms. Kelly discussed the necessity for researching options of notifications that can be presented to the patrons at self-checkout. Mr. Suess will look into this further.

Ms. Garbutt discussed amnesty as an option, which is common practice with many libraries. It is sometimes tied in with a canned food drive. Amnesty encourages patrons to return overdue materials in exchange for relief of some of their fines/overdue fees.

Details for an amnesty event will be further reviewed and discussed with the Township Board.

Patrons also need to be aware of the specific fine amounts – overdue books are 10 cents per day, and media and movies are \$1.00 per day.

e. Sign

- Mr. Suess stated that one quote was submitted and he reviewed it with the Committee.
- Placement of the sign on the stone display, formerly the Eldorado sign, was discussed.
- Awaiting additional quotes for comparison.

f. Privacy Policy

Ms. LaFond addressed the following:

- In the Spinal Column on September 10th, it sounds as if we were remiss with regard to privacy policy concerns, but we were not.
- We did discuss this at the advisory board.
- Mr. Suess explained that the law requires the Library to protect the privacy of patrons, and therefore there is no need to have a policy that states that we obey the law. Our privacy policy is available for review at the reference desk.

NEW BUSINESS

a. DDA discussion re future of the Library

Wynn Berry presented a review of the DDA plans for the Library and the adjacent land. The plan includes pathways, department stores, shops and out lots for restaurants. There may be hospitality uses, possible hotels and convention center. Residential will also be part of the development. There will be 125,000 acres of open space and 6 miles of pathways leading to the Library. There will be a boardwalk and bridge area, which will also offer opportunities for fishing.

Mr. Berry discussed the complementary architectural design and building materials. He then explained the stages of the development process, including land balancing, utilities, roadways and paving. Asphalt will be used as opposed to concrete for cost consideration and resilience.

Mr. Berry also addressed in detail the roadway plans, and open discussion ensued with regard to redesigning intersections to include roundabouts.

Two groups have submitted plans for review. Many factors will be considered prior to making a final choice. After negotiations and a review of financial statements, a commitment will be made. At that point, construction may begin within 6 months. They have a target set for steel to go up in 18 months.

Mr. Berry estimates that construction will generate 7000-8000 jobs, 800-1200 homes will be built, and 2000 full-time jobs will be created by the final development.

A student inquired as to whether or not any of the development would be built “green”.

Mr. Berry replied that there is a master storm water plan, 12 acres of wetlands, pathways throughout the open space, and wetlands parallel to the road. It will be an award-winning

project. In addition to looking at putting in geothermal heating and cooling systems for the entire project, there is also the possibility of electrical generation using gas turbines. No final decisions have been made yet in this regard as the economical sense must be reviewed.

b. Benefits

Mr. Suess received a request to consider the possibility of offering some benefits to the part-time employees of the Library staff. Research was conducted and provided for review.

Ms. Keeler asked what the Township policy is regarding part-time employees.

Mr. Sovel explained that this would have to go before the Township Board for review. The Library Board does not have the authority to change these policies. He added that the Township Board is currently holding lengthy budget review meetings and this is not likely to be considered.

c. Children's Programming

Ms. Kelley – My son brought home an attractive, somewhat expensive looking flyer from school for the Walled Lake Library. It advertises their Fall Programs. We could do something similar, yet less expensive, and it is a great way to get information out to the community about our programs.

Mr. Suess – We do have flyers available at the desk, and they are distributed during school visits to the Library. They are also delivered directly to the schools.

TOWNSHIP BOARD REMARKS

Mr. Sovel brought the Library Board up to date on discussions held at the last Township Board meeting:

- With regard to the Library property, there are not any official offers on the table yet.
- The sewage treatment plant on Welch Road is being expanded and the Township purchased additional adjacent land for the expansion.
- It has been suggested to create a sledding hill and possibly a skating rink on the property at the plant.

Ms. Garbutt – The Parks & Recreation Committee was very much in favor of that idea.

Open discussion took place regarding the sledding hill and skating rink. Parking issues were addressed. Details will need to be sorted out for this proposed use.

Mr. Sovel continued his Township Board update:

- The Township is still trying to purchase the Wise Road property.
- We have started the budget review at length. This is our first year starting out with reduced revenues and it will be challenging, but we don't foresee cuts in the Library or Parks funding.

OTHER MATTERS

None

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Garbutt, supported by LaFond, to adjourn the meeting at 8:42 p.m.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Carol Keeler, Secretary

The next regular meeting of the Commerce Township Library Advisory Board will be Wednesday October 22, 2008 at 7:00 PM at the Commerce Township Community Library.